

Syllabus: “Of Thee I Sing: Celebrating Songs about America at 250

When: Wednesdays, 1-3 pm, starting 9/23. No class 10/28, last class 11/4.

Where: The Freight, and on Zoom

This new course will examine 48 American songs of the past 80 years from every musical genre, and will ask the question: *What makes these songs unique to America?* For each of the six sessions we will examine a different theme, and explore eight songs (see below): the story behind the song, the composer (s) and artists and their backgrounds, an analysis of the lyrics, the music and the recording, and the impact that each song has had on American culture.

From the 1940’s to the 2020’s, from Tin Pan Alley to folk, country, rock and roll and hip hop, this select group of special songs have inspired endless conversation--and countless acts of courage. They represent the soundtrack of our shared experience, our heritage, our legacy, our birthright, our art, our heart, and, ultimately, our soul. Please join us on what promises to be an interesting, fun, musical trip through our history, celebrating songs about *America at 250*.

As we always remind you--this class is best experienced live, especially since we can take advantage of the terrific sound and big screen (and the lovely grand piano) and wonderful ambience at the Freight. We certainly understand that many students do not have the option, and we appreciate that you zoom in with us.

For this class, there is no “suggested viewing” or “suggested reading.” I simply recommend that you try to *listen to as many of these songs as you can* before class, where they will all be played, either on audio or video, or live.

***listed below are the youtube video links for videos shown live in class, but sometimes get deleted from the OLLI recording for licensing purposes.**

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Week One: Social justice, heroism and history

This Land Is Your Land, Woody Guthrie

Abraham, Martin and John, Dick Holler

The Ghost of Tom Joad, Bruce Springsteen

The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down, the Band

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dDbnwQICek&list=RD6dDbnwQICek&start_radio=1)

[v=6dDbnwQICek&list=RD6dDbnwQICek&start_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dDbnwQICek&list=RD6dDbnwQICek&start_radio=1)

The Ballad of Ira Hayes, Johnny Cash

My Shot, Lin Miranda, from Hamilton

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wk01z2f5akg&list=RDwk01z2f5akg&start_radio=1)

[v=wk01z2f5akg&list=RDwk01z2f5akg&start_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wk01z2f5akg&list=RDwk01z2f5akg&start_radio=1)

People Have the Power, Patti Smith

Blowin’ in the Wind, Bob Dylan

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Week two: From sea to shining sea; the country and the cities

The Promised Land, Chuck Berry

City of New Orleans, Steve Goodman

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SfPyg-mGhU&list=RD2SfPyg-mGhU&start_radio=1

America the Beautiful, Ray Charles

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8xk1P1913y0>

Hotel California, the Eagles

Walking in Memphis, Marc Cohn

New York State of Mind, Billy Joel

The Heart of Rock n' Roll, Huey Lewis and the News

Streets of Minneapolis, Bruce Springsteen

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDaPdpwA4Iw&list=RDGDaPdpwA4Iw&start_radio=1

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Week Three: Songs about--and against--war

With God on Our Side, Dylan

I Ain't Marchin' Anymore, Phil Ochs

Fortunate Son, John Fogerty.

Ohio, CSNY

Travelin' Soldier—Dixie Chicks

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y45yHd9Lg_k&list=RDY45yHd9Lg_k&start_radio=1

Copperhead Road, Steve Earle

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvaEJzoaYZk&list=RDxvaEJzoaYZk&start_radio=1

Born in the U.S.A., Bruce Springsteen

War, Edwin Starr

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Week Four: Songs of the strength&resilience of American women

Strange Fruit, Billie Holiday

Mississippi Goddam, Nina Simone

You Don't Own Me, Lesley Gore/Dusty Springfield

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDUjeR01wnU>

Nine to Five, Dolly Parton

American Girl, Tom Petty

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1t4ygBn6NJM&list=RD1t4ygBn6NJM&start_radio=1

Girls Just Wanna Have Fun, Cyndi Lauper

Independence Day, Martina McBride

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VPpAZ9_qAw&list=RD4VPpAZ9_qAw&start_radio=1

Not Ready to Make Nice, the Chicks

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Week Five: Diversity, race, immigration and emigration

Times they are a changin'—Dylan

“America” from West Side Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqOFi6c2Dv8>

Change is Gonna Come, Sam Cooke

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEBlaMOmKV4&t=34s>

What's Going On, Marvin Gaye

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5TmORitlKk&list=RDo5TmORitlKk&start_radio=1

Living for the City, Stevie Wonder

Broken Arrow, Neil Young.

Deportees, Woody Guthrie

American Land, Bruce Springsteen

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Week Six: The American Dream

Chimes of Freedom, Bob Dylan

American Pie, Don McLean.

America, Simon and Garfunkel

The Last Resort, the Eagles

The End of the Innocence by Don Henley

Rockin' in the Free World, Neil Young

American Idiot—Green Day

Land of Hopes and Dreams, Bruce Springsteen

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2-y-3a9RPg&list=RDM2-y-3a9RPg&start_radio=1