

Hip Hop and Language

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Office Hours: Wed 2-4pm, and by appointment.

Course Description:

This course examines the role of language in the aesthetics and cultural practices of hip hop music. We begin the semester with readings concerning the origins and evolution of hip hop music and culture, moving on to key topics including authenticity, class, language ideology, place and the spatial, and hybridity (among others – see tentative schedule below).

We will consider cases of hip hop localization in the global system, including hip hop scenes ranging from Munchen to Cincinnati, Quebec to Ghana. Place and spatiality factor centrally among themes key to popular, “mainstream” hip hop music. Accordingly, we will examine how artists make rhetorical use of place and indices of the spatial in order to portray “rooted” personae.

Though the focus in this course is on the place of language in hip hop cultural production, we will read chapters from Dyson’s (2010) *Reflections on Hip-Hop* to provide supplementary background for the linguistic readings.

Texts: (1) Alim, Ibrahim, Alastair (2009) *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language*. (GLF; required)
(2) Alim (2006) *Roc the Mic Right* (RMR; required)
(3) Dyson (2010) *Know What I Mean?: Reflections on Hip-Hop* (required)

I have also put some books on reserve that you will find useful to (selectively) thumb through during the semester. These books include:

Foreman & Neal (2010) *That’s the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader* (required)
Morgan (2009) *The Real Hip-hop: Battling for Knowledge, Power, and Respect in the LA Underground* (required)

Homework:

There will be a total of four reaction papers and two 5-7 page essays. The reaction papers, 1-2 pages, will require you to take a position on a topic from lecture or assigned readings. You will be evaluated on your ability to concisely synthesize material from class and readings.

The essays should be **typed, stapled** (when more than one page), and handed in the day they are due in class. I will not accept emailed submissions. If you know you will not be in class the day an assignment is due, please contact me ahead of time. Late papers will be accepted only in cases of emergency (if such a situation arises, please contact me).

Final Essay:

There will be no final exam. Instead, there will be a final essay (10-12 pages), similar in aims and format to the other two essays written earlier in the semester.

Grading:

4 Reaction Papers @ 5---- 20 %
 2 Essays @ 20----- 40
 Final Essay----- 40

TOTAL-----100 %

Grade Scale: 98-100: A+, 94-97: A, 91-93: A-, 88-90: B+, 84-87: B, 81-83: B-, 78-80: C+, 74-77: C, 71-73: C-, 68-70: D+, 64-67: D, 61-63: D-, < or = 60: F.

Tentative Schedule:

	Topics	Readings (for class days)	Assignments
Week 1: 8/27	Some Introductions: Syllabus and overview	(syllabus)	
8/29	Hip hop and the evolution of the Black image in American popular culture	Ogbar (2009)	
8/31	The street and the formation of a hip hop linguistics	Alim (RMR)	
Week 2: 9/3	No class: <i>Labor day</i>		
9/5	Dyson: How real is this?	Prelude & Ch 1	
9/7	Reality and lyrical meaning in rap	Newman (2008)	Reaction Paper 1 handed out
Week 3: 9/10	Hip Hop, Class, and Language	Dyson Ch 2	
9/12	The strategic construction of a street-conscious identity	Alim (RMR) Ch 5	
9/14	Doin' damage in my native language	Mitchell (2000)	Reaction 1 due
Week 4: 9/17	Hip Hop and Language Ideology	Morgan (2001)	Hip Hop Authenticity assignment handed out
9/19	Urban youth language	Morgan (2002)	

9/21	Hip hop language in sociolinguistics and beyond	Cutler (2007)	
Week 5: 9/24	The intertextuality of hip hop	Nicholson (1990) Ch 3	
9/26	Bay area underground hip hop tapes as subcultural artefacts	Harrison (2006)	
9/28	Language and the three spheres of hip hop	Androutsopoulos (GLF)	Reaction 2 handed out
Week 6: 10/1	Hip Hop, language, & place	Forman (2004)	Hip Hop authenticity due
10/3	“The Natti Ain't No Punk City”: An Emic View of Hip Hop Cultures	Alim (2006)	
10/5	Global Linguistic Flows, Identities, and the Politics of Language in a Global Hip Hop Nation	Alim (2008)	Reaction 2 due
Week 7: 10/8	Crossing & Hybridity	Cutler (1999)	Intertextuality assignemnt handed out
10/10	Hybrid identities in Quebec hip-hop	Sarkar & Allen (2007)	
10/12	White hip-hoppers’ discourse of language, race, and authenticity	Cutler (2003)	
Week 8: 10/15	Global(izing) Rap I	Pennycook & Mitchell (GLF)	
10/17	Conversational sampling, race trafficking, and the invocation of the gueto in Brazilian hip hop	Roth-Gordon (GLF)	
10/19	Global hip hop nation language in Tanzania	Higgins (GLF)	Reaction 3 handed out
Week 9: 10/22	Global(izing) Rap II	Sarkar (GLF)	Intertextuality due
10/24	The politics, poetics, and pedagogy of Cantonese verbal art in Hong Kong	Lin (GLF)	
10/26	On the notion of rhyme in Japanese hip hop	Tsujimura & Davis (GLF)	
Week 10: 10/29	The (linguistic) Politics of Rap	Alim (RMR)	Reaction 3 due
10/31	Culture, language, and social face	Morgan (2002)	
11/2	Culture, rhetoric, crack, and the politics of rap	Dyson: Ch 3	Reaction 4 handed out
Week 11: 11/5	Sexuality in Hip Hop I	Dyson: Ch 2	
11/7	Black female identity via rap music performance	Keyes (2004)	
11/9		Morgan (2002)	Reaction 4 due
Week 12: 11/12	Sexuality in Hip Hop II	Dyson: Ch 4	Final Essay (Hip Hop Globalization) handed out
11/14	Real women, tough politics, and female science	Morgan (2008)	

11/16	Black women rappers and sexual politics in rap music	Rose (1994)	
Week 13: 11/19	Toward an analytical schema of hip hop poetics	Alim (RMR)	
11/21	Structure and format in hip hop compositions	Perry (2004)	
11/23	No class: <i>Thanksgiving</i>		
Week 14: 11/26	Hip Hop, Consumption, and Parody	Perry (2004)	
11/28	Houston hip hop parody I	(lecture)	
11/30	Houston hip hop parody II	(lecture)	
Week 15: 12/3	Hip Hop Pedagogy	Alim (GLF)	
12/5	Métissage, affect, and pedagogy in a global hip hop nation	Ibrahim (GLF)	
12/7	Pedagogy and performance in black popular culture	Dimitriadis (2009)	Final Essay due

Other Things to Note:

If you have a documented disability please set up a time with me to discuss your needs; you must also register with Disability Services in the Student Center if you haven't already.

The Honor Code applies in this class. You are encouraged to discuss the homework assignments and final paper with classmates, but you must write them up on your own.

One Final Note:

If you carry a cell phone, please turn it off or set it to silent before class begins.