

Texas A&M University-Central Texas
F A 4312-125: The Blues
Spring 2020 (2nd 8 weeks) Online Course via Canvas
Component of the Fine Arts Minor
Writing Intensive Course

Instructor: Ryan S. Bayless, MFA
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(please use our course Canvas email whenever possible)

Office Hours: Regularly available by email through Canvas.

Mode of Instruction and Course Access

This Writing Intensive (WI) designated course meets 100% online with materials made available through the A&M-Central Texas Canvas Learning Management System. To access online components: <https://tamuct.instructure.com>

The Operation of the Online Course and Being an Online Student

Online learning requires students to be very self-disciplined, so be sure you understand and are prepared to comply with all required class assignments and deadlines. Please check the Announcements, Calendar, and Email/Messages on Canvas regularly for assignment details and due dates.

1.0 Course Prerequisite

Senior or junior standing *or* approval of department head.

2.0 Course Description

F A 4312 (The Blues) explores the origins, evolution, and influence of the blues as a musical and literary art form through its impact on American culture and society with special emphasis on analyzing blues lyrics as poetic expressions in the great American song tradition.

Course work includes weekly online lectures and discussions, reading assignments, extensive listening exercises, and writing projects that involve formal analysis of individual songs as well as the larger themes and influences of the blues in American society.

3.0 Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Understand and define the evolution of the blues in America from the 18th century to the present era with special emphasis on the mid-20th century
- Understand and define the function and purpose of blues music as it relates to the African-American American experience in the United States
- Understand and define the role of blues songwriters/musicians in American society
- Situate blues songs within the cultural, technological, and economic concerns in which they exist
- Respond to songs, related texts, and critical sources through writing and online discussions
- Write a formal critical analysis of an individual blues song
- Prepare and write a documented essay analyzing the larger themes, functions, and/or purposes of the Blues as a distinctly American art form

This class will at times deal with controversial issues and subject matter. Students should be able to tolerate innovation, viewpoints different from their own, as well as creative and cultural diversity in the arts.

4.0 Required Text

Robert Palmer, *Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History, from the Mississippi Delta to Chicago's South Side to the World*, Penguin Books, 1981 (Reprinted edition).

This course also makes use of a number of other texts, images, songs, and film clips. Links to these sources will be made available on a weekly basis through Canvas.

5.0 Course Requirements

This course has two non-gradable and four gradable categories of assignments. A discussion of each follows:

Non-Gradable Requirements:

Regular Reading and Viewing/Listening Assignments:

The reading in this course serves as a catalyst for everything we do. I have worked to keep the required reading to a minimum with the hope that students will have time to read and comprehend all that is assigned. Those who attempt to complete other assignments without first absorbing and actively engaging with the readings and various links to songs and related materials might be able to approximate the course requirements, but they will not be able to accomplish them.

Weekly Worksheets:

Weekly Worksheets focus your reading and direct the dialogue on the discussion board. The worksheet offers a written version of what we would do in-class were this a face-to-face section. It clarifies or redirects the readings, provides links and clips to illustrate points, introduces prompts for weekly response papers, and provides a context for online discussion.

Gradable Requirements:

Weekly Response Papers (40% of final grade):

Response Papers offer students the opportunity to demonstrate a command of the concepts introduced in the readings and worksheets, as well as provide analysis and critique of the blues songs and texts that accompany them.

The exact task for each assignment varies. In most cases, these assignments ask students to produce a 400-600 word discussion that responds to a specific topic, theme, and/or song. Specific prompts, directions, and due dates are provided in each week's worksheet.

These "papers" will not be submitted directly to the professor, but instead will be posted on the Discussion Board on Canvas, which will allow other students to read and analyze/respond to your ideas. In this sense, each student will continuously provide new content and discussion topics for the course. (These papers will be graded on a ten point scale each week and averaged at the end of the semester.)

Discussion Board Responses (10% of final grade):

The Discussion Board is the place where course content is negotiated, personalized, and connected to broader issues than those outlined in the readings. Students should expect to use this space regularly to initiate, support, and advance critical discussion of the assigned material.

Discussion Board Responses will be graded holistically on the basis of engagement with the ideas, texts, and songs explored in the Response Paper being commented on. Comments need not always be refined, but they do need to initiate meaningful discussion or contribute meaningfully to some discussion already underway. (Posts that simply say, "I (dis)agree," or that praise or critique the writer will not be deemed "meaningful.") Responses can be thought of as a way of "thinking out loud," similar to what would happen in a classroom discussion. That said, please edit them for errors and avoid overly informal writing (like abbreviations or "text/twitter speak").

Students are expected to reply to at least 2 posted Response Papers per weekly assignment. Consider this the “participation” element of your overall grade. The quality, not the quantity, of comments is what I’m looking for, but feel free to comment and discuss as much as you like.

Short Analysis Paper (20% of final grade):

The Short Analysis Paper assignment (1000-1500 words) asks students to produce a close reading/explication of one or two individual blues songs, explaining and analyzing how its collective components work to produce meaning and express a theme. (Specifics about the assignment requirements and due date will come during week 3 of the course.)

Final Analysis Paper (30% of final grade):

The Final Analysis Paper assignment (1500-2000 words) asks students to produce a thesis-based analysis of how individual songs and songwriters reflected, contributed to, and/or evolved the blues as an American art form. Students will base their claims around the themes and social issues explored throughout the semester, using primary and secondary sources to support their thesis. (Specifics about the assignment requirements and due dates will come during week 5 of the course.)

The Final Analysis Paper should adhere to the conventions of MLA (see the link that follows for help: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>). See also the Grading Standards and Expectations below.

6.1 Grading Computation

Final Grades will be calculated using the following percentages:

Weekly Response Papers = 40%
 Discussion Board Responses = 10%
 Short Analysis Paper = 20%
 Final Analysis Paper = 30%

The distribution of final grades is as follows:

Semester grade: A=90-100; B=80-89; C=70-79; D=60-69; and, F=0-59 (Borderline grades will not be automatically rounded up.)

6.2 Grading Standards and Expectations

Along with the students’ adherence to the assigned prompt and engagement with artistic concepts and themes, the papers assigned in this course will be assessed and graded by the following standards:

C C indicates a satisfactory performance. A C paper demonstrates positive qualities and avoids serious errors. The positive qualities include the presentation of a central idea that is adequately developed and competently organized. The errors to be avoided include serious flaws in the construction of paragraphs and sentences, in the selection of appropriate words, and in the use of conventional written English. The style of the writing is generally clear.

B The B paper surpasses the C paper by demonstrating a higher level of effectiveness in the organization and development of a central idea. The B paper shows greater complexity of thought and development, while sustaining clarity in expression. It has few or none of the common errors in the use of conventional written English. The style of the writing is generally fluent and polished.

A The A paper is outstanding work. It is clearly a superior performance according to the criteria of clarity of expression and logical development of a central idea. It shows originality of thought and imaginative competence in the development of the material. It engages and holds the reader's attention and invites rereading. The style of the writing is consistently fluent, polished, and distinctive.

D D indicates an unsatisfactory performance. A D paper is flawed by any one or several of the following: weakness in establishing or developing a central idea; serious errors in sentence or paragraph construction; serious errors in grammar, spelling, or the mechanics of written expression.

F F indicates an unacceptable performance. An F paper is flawed by one or more of the following: failure to follow the assigned topic; failure to conceive, state, or develop a central idea; serious repeated errors in sentence construction or paragraph development; serious repeated errors in grammar, spelling, or the mechanics of written expression.

In addition to these general guidelines, I will assess your writing on the two analysis papers based on the following criteria:

I will be looking for solid thesis statements that clearly articulate and put forth the central argument of your essay. In order for a thesis statement to be strong, its stated intention must be sustained throughout a paper. I will constantly ask: How does each statement/paragraph/example in your paper relate to the central idea of your thesis?

Beyond cohesion of this central thesis throughout your paper, I will be paying close attention to how well you transition between different paragraphs/claims/examples. This is essentially the structure and flow of your paper. Ideally, the reader should not wonder how any one of your statements relates to another. Consider the appropriate use of topic sentences, supporting points, illustrations and examples as evidence, and sufficient explanation or analysis of the evidence provided as it relates to your thesis.

And remember...

Write to your academic audience. Stay objective in tone and use appropriate, professional language. Also, do not assume that the reader already knows what we go over in class. Be clear and specific with your wording. Proofread carefully for clarity and use the proper MLA formatting for citing quotations and secondary sources.

6.3 Late-work/Make-up/Extra Credit Policy

Neither late work nor make up work will exist in this class. Assignments that fail to be submitted by the deadline posted on the calendar in Canvas for that assignment will not be accepted (unless you get specific approval from me for unexpected and uncontrollable extenuating circumstances that occur before the due date). Likewise, I do not assign extra credit; therefore, students should focus on providing their best work on assignments throughout the semester.

6.4 Incomplete Policy

Students are responsible for turning in all assignments during the scheduled timeframe for the course. Incompletes should be reserved for unexpected, life altering situations that develop *after* the drop deadline. Students should drop a course should something happen that prevents them from completing the course ahead of the drop deadline. Failure to do so may result in failing grades on assignments or the course if missing work is not completed and submitted before the last day of the semester. Please let me know immediately if serious health or life issues prevent you from attending class or submitting assignments. (*Also see the university "Drop Policy" below.*)

7.1 Technology Requirements

This course will use the A&M-Central Texas Instructure Canvas learning management system.

Logon to A&M-Central Texas Canvas: <https://tamuct.instructure.com>

Username: Your MyCT username (xx123 or everything before the "@" in your MyCT e-mail address)

Password: Your MyCT password

7.2 Technology Support

For log-in problems, students should contact Help Desk Central. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

Email: helpdesk@tamu.edu

Phone: (254) 519-5466

Web Chat: <http://hdc.tamu.edu>

Please let the support technician know you are an A&M-Central Texas student.

For issues with Canvas, select “chat with Canvas support,” submit a support request to Canvas Tier 1, or call the Canvas support line: 1-844-757-0953, links to all are found inside of Canvas using the “Help” link.

For issues related to course content and requirements, contact your instructor.

8.0 Course Calendar

This calendar outlines the general themes covered in the course each week. Because we will build upon the topics and themes explored in each section, the material and assignments will be posted to Canvas on a weekly basis.

Each Tuesday morning, a new Worksheet will appear on our home page, which will provide and direct reading assignments, supply additional sources and links, and propose prompts for your weekly Response Paper. This will allow students to concentrate solely on the material as it is presented each week. There is no reason (or ability) to skip ahead.

Assignments and due dates will appear on each Weekly Worksheet and essay prompts as they are assigned, but can also be found on the course “Calendar” link in Canvas.

**This calendar is tentative, but will most likely be followed as written. I will make announcements and distribute revisions as I adapt instruction and materials to your needs.*

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Week 1: Introduction to course; discussion of syllabus; individual introductions

The Roots and Origins of the Blues from Slavery to Sharecropping

Week 2: The Early Blues: Jazz and Country Influences and the Emergence of the Blues as a Musical Form

Week 3: The Mississippi Delta: The Blues as a Poetic Expression of the African-American Experience

** Short Analysis Paper assigned*

Week 4: Transitional Blues: Migration into the Cities and the Beginnings of Electric Blues

Week 5: Urban Blues: the Rise of the Blues Bands in Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, and Houston

** Short Analysis Paper due*

Week 6: The Blues Had a Baby: the Evolution and Influence of Blues on Rock-n-Roll and Soul Music

****Final Analysis Paper assigned***

Week 7: The Legacy of the Blues: The Blues Revival of the 1960's and Beyond

Week 8: Conclusions; *Final Analysis Paper due*

****This 8-Week Online Course begins March 16 and ends May 8, 2020.****

9.0 Drop Policy

If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete a Drop Request Form: https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/docs/Drop_Request_Form.pdf

Professors **cannot** drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The record's office will provide a deadline for which the form must be returned, completed and signed. Once you return the signed form to the records office and wait 24 hours, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. Should you still be enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the records office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course.

10.0 Academic Integrity & Plagiarism

Texas A&M University -Central Texas values the integrity of the academic enterprise and strives for the highest standards of academic conduct. A&M-Central Texas expects its students, faculty, and staff to support the adherence to high standards of personal and scholarly conduct to preserve the honor and integrity of the creative community. Academic integrity is defined as a commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. **Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course.**

Academic misconduct is any act that improperly affects a true and honest evaluation of a student's academic performance and includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism and improper citation of sources, using another student's work, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. All academic misconduct concerns will be reported to the university's Office of Student Conduct. Ignorance of the university's standards and expectations is never an excuse to act with a lack of integrity. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action. More information can be found at

<http://www.tamuct.edu/departments/studentconduct/academicintegrity.php>

Depending on the severity of a student's act of academic dishonesty, a student found to have committed any of the above will receive nothing less than a zero on the assignment on which the infraction occurred and nothing more than expulsion from the university. A minor infraction

includes but is not limited to improper citations or allusions to an outside source (one not directly assigned or approved by me before submission). A major infraction includes but is not limited to the undocumented lifting of ideas, phrases, or any text from a source that finds its inspiration some place other than the student.

11.0 Access & Inclusion/Disability Support

At Texas A&M University-Central Texas, we value an inclusive learning environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed and has the right to a barrier free education. The Department of Access and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability receive equal access to the University's programs, services and activities. If you believe you have a disability requiring reasonable accommodations please contact the Department of Access and Inclusion at (254) 501-5831. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

For more information please visit our [Access & Inclusion](https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html) webpage:
<https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html>

Texas A&M University-Central Texas supports students who are pregnant and/or parenting. In accordance with requirements of Title IX and guidance from US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, the Dean of Student Affairs' Office can assist students who are pregnant and/or parenting in seeking accommodations related to pregnancy and/or parenting. For more information, please visit <https://www.tamuct.departments/index.php>. Students may also contact the institution's Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to read more about these [requirements and guidelines online](#), please visit the website:
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf>

12.0 Tutoring

Tutoring is available to all A&M-Central Texas students, both on-campus and online. On-campus subjects tutored include Accounting, Advanced Math, Biology, Finance, Statistics, Mathematics, and Study Skills. Tutors are available at the Tutoring Center in Warrior Hall, Suite 111.

If you have a question regarding tutor schedules, need to schedule a tutoring session, are interested in becoming a tutor, or any other question, contact Academic Support Programs at 254-519-5796, or by emailing Larry Davis at lmdavis@tamuct.edu.

Chat live with a tutor 24/7 for almost any subject on your computer! Tutor.com is an online tutoring platform that enables A&M-Central Texas students to log-in and receive FREE online tutoring and writing support. This tool provides tutoring in over forty subject areas. Access Tutor.com through Canvas.

13.0 University Writing Center

Located in 416 Warrior Hall, the University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University-Central Texas is a free workspace open to all TAMUCT students from 10am-5pm

Monday-Thursday with satellite hours in the University Library on Mondays from 6:00-9:00pm. Students may arrange a one-on-one session with a trained and experienced writing tutor by visiting the UWC during normal operating hours (both half-hour and hour sessions are available) or by making an appointment via [WOnline](https://tamuct.mywconline.com/) <https://tamuct.mywconline.com/>. In addition, you can email Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu to schedule an online tutoring session. Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process.

While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will assist students in developing more effective composing practices. By providing a practice audience for students' ideas and writing, our tutors highlight the ways in which they read and interpret students' texts, offering guidance and support throughout the various stages of the writing process. In addition, students may work independently in the UWC by checking out a laptop that runs the Microsoft Office suite and connects to WIFI, or by consulting our resources on writing, including all of the relevant style guides. Whether you need help brainstorming ideas, organizing an essay, proofreading, understanding proper citation practices, or just want a quiet place to work, the University Writing Center is here to help!

If you have any questions about the University Writing Center, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu.

14.0 Library Services

The University Library provides many services in support of research across campus and at a distance. We offer over 200 electronic databases containing approximately 250,000 eBooks and 82,000 journals, in addition to the 72,000 items in our print collection, which can be mailed to students who live more than 50 miles from campus. Research guides for each subject taught at TAMUCT are available through our website to help students navigate these resources. On-campus, the library offers technology including cameras, laptops, microphones, webcams, and digital sound recorders.

Research assistance from a librarian is also available twenty-four hours a day through our online chat service, and at the reference desk when the library is open. Research sessions can be scheduled for more comprehensive assistance, and may take place on Skype or in-person at the library. Assistance may cover many topics, including how to find articles in peer-reviewed journals, how to cite resources, and how to piece together research for written assignments.

Our 27,000-square-foot facility on the TAMUCT main campus includes student lounges, private study rooms, group work spaces, computer labs, family areas suitable for all ages, and many other features. Services such as interlibrary loan, TexShare, binding, and laminating are available. The library frequently offers workshops, tours, readings, and other events. For more information, please visit our homepage:

<http://www.tamuct.edu/departments/library/index.php>

15.0 911 Cellular

Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University – Central Texas

911Cellular is an emergency notification service that gives Texas A&M University-Central Texas the ability to communicate health and safety emergency information quickly via email, text message, and social media. All students are automatically enrolled in 911 Cellular through their myCT email account.

Connect at 911Cellular [<https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Texas-AM-Central/alert-management>] to change where you receive your alerts or to opt out. By staying enrolled in 911Cellular, university officials can quickly pass on safety-related information, regardless of your location.

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**The professor reserves the right to amend this syllabus at any time during the semester as issues or needs arise. Written addendums will be distributed should this need occur.*
