

Spring 2016 • RHE 309K
The Rhetoric of Country Music

Unique number: 43210
Class time: MW 11 AM-12:30 PM
Class location: FAC 9

Instructor: Dustin Hixenbaugh
Email: dustyh@utexas.edu and through Canvas
Office hours & location: MW 12:30-1:30 PM, T 2-3 PM, or by appointment, at FAC 16



The Maddox Brothers & Rose

Course Description

In this class, we will explore the arguments that have been made *about* country music and *through the conventions of* country music over the genre's nearly hundred-year history. Among other things, we will discuss what distinguishes country music from other forms of popular music, what makes particular country songs and performers more "authentic" than others, and how certain communities have used country music to express and reinforce the values of their members. In addition, we will use country music as a launching point for conversations about topics of present social debate, including gun control, sexual assault on university campuses, affirmative action, the legalization of marijuana, and the removal of Confederate iconography from state and university premises.

As a course on writing and rhetoric, the class encourages students to think critically about how country songs are constructed and to participate in conversations about country music that are taking place in digital spaces including industry websites and fan blogs. Toward these ends, the course is split into three units, each of which culminates in a major writing project. In **Unit 1**, we will break songs into smaller parts (verses, etc.) and use a classical rhetorical vocabulary to analyze how those parts work together to move the minds and hearts of their intended audiences. Students will begin reflecting on their experiences with country music in short blog posts, and at the end of the unit, they will post an extended analysis of an individual song to the *Country Music Project* website. In **Unit 2**, we will focus on writing about country music for a popular, online audience. In this unit, students will assemble a list of songs that express contrasting perspectives on a topic of social controversy and highlight the differences between them in a *Buzzfeed*-style listicle. Lastly, in **Unit 3**, we will turn our attention to the ways that the traditions of country music are shaped and preserved at the Country Music Hall of Fame. Halfway through the unit, students will write persuasive research papers proposing new members for the Hall of Fame. In the last several class meetings, students will present the proposals to the class, and as a class we will formally endorse at least one candidate with the hope that the actual Country Music Hall of Fame will consider it when determining their upcoming inductees.

Course Prerequisite: Rhetoric and Writing 306 or 306Q

Course Goals

Over the course of the semester, you will learn to:

- Write and speak more authoritatively about country music;
- Distinguish some of country music's most influential performers and subgenres;
- Conduct extensive research utilizing databases of print and electronic materials;
- Identify and fairly summarize the main arguments of texts in a variety of genres;
- Identify and analyze a text's relation to its historical and rhetorical context;
- Analyze the structural and stylistic mechanisms through which a text makes an argument;
- Compose lengthy, college-level writings in a variety of print and digital formats, including a "clickbait" electronic article, an extended rhetorical analysis, and a persuasive proposal;
- Revise ideas and compositions in response to feedback from the instructor and peers; and
- Practice the conventions of grammar and punctuation with more fluency and confidence.

Writing Flag

This class is designed to give you extensive experience writing in an academic discipline. Writing Flag courses meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, as established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Required Texts

1. *Textbooks you should purchase (from the University Co-Op or elsewhere):*

- Diane Pecknold. *The Selling Sound: The Rise of the Country Music Industry*. Duke, 2007.
- Mark Garrett Longaker and Jeffrey Walker. *Rhetorical Analysis*. Longman, 2011.
- Andrea Lunsford. *Easy Writer*. 5th ed. Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014.

2. *Readings available for download from the class's secure Canvas site:*

- Peter Cooper. "Pocketful of Gold." Collected in *Will the Circle Be Unbroken: Country Music in America* (eds. Paul Kingsbury and Alanna Nash). DK Publishing, 2006.
- Nicholas Dawidoff. Selections from *In the Country of Country*. Vintage, 1998.
- Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein. Selections from *They Say/I Say*. 3rd ed. Norton, 2014.
- Mark Garrett Longaker. Selections from *Controversies*. U of Texas Co-Op, 2014.
- Jocelyn Neal. Selections from *Country Music*. Oxford, 2013.
- Selections from online publications including *Buzzfeed*, *Salon*, and *Saving Country Music*.

Course Websites

You will interact with the following websites at various points throughout the semester. Please bookmark them in advance to save you the trouble of finding them later.

- *Canvas* (<http://canvas.utexas.edu>). Canvas is the official course management site and where you will be able to access grades, download course files, and email the instructor.
- *Country Music Project* (<http://faigley.dwrl.utexas.edu/countrymusic>). The *CMP* is a public site that we will build collaboratively over the course of the semester. Your blog posts, your blog comments, and the majority of your final essay assignments will be published here.
- *University of Texas Libraries* (<http://lib.utexas.edu>). Use this link to conduct searches through the Library's print catalog and online databases. You may also request scans of articles and chapters.
- *Digital Writing and Research Lab (DWRL)* (<http://www.dwrl.utexas.edu>). As a student in this course, you have access to the DWRL's Open Lab (PAR 102), a variety of software programs, and other resources that are restricted to other students. Use this link to learn more.

- *Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC)* (<http://uwc.utexas.edu>). The UWC provides free writing assistance for any undergraduate student. At the UWC website, you can schedule appointments and download handouts related to a number of grammar and composition issues.

Coursework and Grades

Over the course of the semester, you will compose a number of short and long writing assignments. These will be calculated into your final course grade as follows:

Blog Posts 1-5	25%	Hall of Fame Draft	5%
Blog Comments 1-28 (4 drops)	10%	Hall of Fame Final	10%
Song Analysis Table & Draft	5%	HOF Group Presentation	5%
Song Analysis Final	10%	Online Quizzes 1-11 (1 drop)	15%
Buzzfeed Article Draft	5%		
Buzzfeed Article Final	10%		

Final grades will be determined according to the following rubric. Please note that to ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute and will not be rounded up or down at any stage. For example, a B- will be inclusive of all scores of 80.0000 through 83.9999. Because the University does not recognize the grade of A+, any score 94.0000 or above will be considered an A.

A	94-100	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	84-86	D	64-66
B-	80-83	D-	60-63
C+	77-79	F	0-60

Final Exam

There will be no final exam for this class.

Attendance and Tardiness

You are expected to attend every class and to arrive before the official start time. Students who arrive after the official start time will be marked tardy, and three tardies will become one absence. Following the Department of Rhetoric and Writing's policies, students are permitted four absences but will fail the course upon the fifth absence. For details about what constitutes an "excused" absence or tardy, see below.

Submitting Assignments and Late Work

The Course Calendar, which you should consult daily, indicates the date and time that your major writing assignments are due. Late work that is submitted within 24 hours of the deadline will be docked 10% (one letter grade). Late work that is submitted more than 24 hours after the deadline will receive half credit, with a maximum potential score of 50%. If an emergency situation prevents you from being able to finish your work on time, you should let your instructor know as soon as possible.

Department of Rhetoric & Writing RHE Course Policies Statement, 2015-16

WRITING FLAG

This course carries the Writing Flag. You will write regularly during the semester, completing both short and long writing projects. Furthermore, you will, and receive feedback from your instructor and your peers. Based on this feedback, you will have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments. A substantial portion of your grade to comes from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rhetoric & Writing has established this attendance policy for all RHE courses. Any questions or appeals concerning this policy must be made directly to the department Associate Chair.

You are expected to attend class, arrive on time, have prepared assigned reading and writing, and participate in all in-class editing, revising, and discussion sessions. **Should you miss the equivalent of five TTH or MW class sessions or seven MWF sessions this semester, excused or not, you will fail the course.** If you find that an unavoidable problem prevents you from attending class, you should contact your instructor as soon as possible, preferably ahead of time, to let him or her know.

You will not be penalized for missing class on religious holy days. A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor, in writing, well in advance of the absence, so that alternative arrangements can be made to complete work. If you know you will have to miss class(es) for this reason, provide your instructor with the date(s) as early as possible.

Please note that the University specifies very few other excused absences (e.g., jury duty).

When you must miss a class, you are responsible for getting notes and assignments from a classmate.

SCHOLASTIC HONESTY

Turning in work that is not your own, or any other form of scholastic dishonesty, will result in a major course penalty, possibly failure of the course. This standard applies to *all* drafts and assignments, and a report of the incident will be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students and filed in your permanent UT record. Under certain circumstances, the Dean of Students will initiate proceedings to expel you from the University. So, take care to read and understand the *Statement on Scholastic Responsibility*, which can be found online at <http://www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/rhetoric/firstyearwriting/plagiarismcollusion.php>. If you have any doubts about your use of sources, ask your instructor for help *before* handing in the assignment.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. More information is available online at <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd>.

EMAIL ACCOUNTS

Email is an official means of communication at UT-Austin, and your instructor will use this medium to communicate class information. You are therefore required to obtain a UT email account and check it daily. All students may claim an email address at no cost by visiting www.utexas.edu/its/utmail/.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Occupants of buildings on the UT-Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050.