

The Rock Novel
English 4109/7109: Genres, 1890-Present
Prof. Samuel Cohen
University of Missouri
Spring 2017
MWF 12:00-12:50, Middlebush 309
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The Course

In this course we will read seven American novels that take rock and roll music as their subject and inspiration. We will read them for what they have to say about the music as a cultural phenomenon (and what they have to say about American culture through the music) and for how they are influenced as works of art by the music—that is, we'll talk and write about them not just as books about rock but as rock books, books whose form is shaped by rock and whose self-conception is influenced by their conception of rock as art and commerce. We will also read some rock history and criticism and listen to music that relates to the novels, more or less, in order to help us think about the music these books come out of and the larger culture that gave birth to them both.

The Texts

John Darnielle, *Master of Reality*
Don DeLillo, *Great Jones Street*
Jennifer Egan, *A Visit from the Goon Squad*
Camden Joy, *The Last Rock Star Book or: Liz Phair, A Rant*
Jonathan Lethem, *The Fortress of Solitude*
Lewis Shiner, *Glimpses*
Dana Spiotta, *Stone Arabia*
(Plus secondary reading to be provided)

Ten Things You Should Know

1. You will have to read a lot in this class, and it is important that you keep up. If you do not think you will be able to do so, consider another class. Also, the books (and songs) will contain adult material; if you have a problem with this sort of thing, you should not take this class, as you may not be excused from reading, listening to, and talking about this material.
2. This will be a discussion-centered class. You must bring the text(s) under discussion, as we will refer to them frequently, and you must keep other work/reading in your bag. It is also important that you do not do certain things that disrupt discussion and your attention, such as using cell phones or computers. I also have an annoying rule about not eating in class that I'm going to stick to no matter how annoying people think it is.
3. As this will be a discussion-centered class, a portion of your grade depends on your participation. As it is difficult to participate if you are absent, I am setting the maximum number of unpenalized absences at five. On the sixth absence I will drop your cumulative grade a step (B becomes B-, B- becomes C+, etc.). Every additional absence will result in another step drop.

4. You are responsible for keeping reading journals, one entry per class meeting, that you will bring to every class meeting. Journals will be collected a number of times during the semester; the entries will not be graded individually, but the journal as a whole will receive a grade, which will be based on the effort you put into reflecting, in any (substantive) way you wish, on the reading material for that day's meeting. Writing a bunch of entries at a time using different color pens will defeat the purpose of the reading journal; it will also make it difficult for you to refer to the day's entry when I ask you to share it in class, which I will do regularly. If I get the sense from the quality of discussion and of the journals that people are not keeping up, the journals will be augmented with quizzes.
5. You will write and revise a term paper on the subject of rock novels (final version minimum 3500 pages). You may write about one or more novels from the class or about other novels. You will also be required to write a two page proposal and hand in a partial draft (at least 1500 pages). You will also make a short presentation of your paper. Papers should be submitted electronically through Canvas.
6. Your grade for the course will reflect participation in class discussion (25%), reading journals (25%), and final paper (50%, of which 10% will come from your proposal, 10% from your draft, and 5% from your presentation).
7. Essays should be written (typed, of course) using MLA style according to the latest edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. (Also *Research and Documentation Online*: <http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities.html>.) Be especially aware of the section on plagiarism. I take this very seriously. See also Thing 8.
8. From the Provost's Web site: "Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. All members of the academic community must be confident that each person's work has been responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of the academic integrity rules as extremely serious matters. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor."
9. If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately. Please see me privately after class, or at my office. To request academic accommodations (for example, a note taker), students must also register with Disability Services, AO38 Brady Commons, 882-4696. Another resource, MU's Adaptive Computing Technology Center, 884-2828, is available to provide computing assistance to students with disabilities.
10. University of Missouri System Executive Order No. 38 lays out principles regarding the sanctity of classroom discussions at the university. The policy is described fully in Section 200.015 of the Collected Rules and Regulations. In this class, students may make audio or video recordings of course activity unless specifically prohibited by the faculty member. However, the redistribution of audio or video recordings of statements or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course is prohibited without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded. Students found to have violated this policy are subject to discipline in accordance with provisions of Section 200.020 of the Collected Rules and Regulations of the University of Missouri pertaining to student conduct matters.

Schedule

- W Jan 18 Introduction
- F Jan 20 reading Greil Marcus, "Prologue," *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music*; James Miller, "Maybellene," "Elvis from the Waist Down," *Flowers in the Dustbin; The Rise of Rock and Roll 1947-1977*
listening Chuck Berry, "Maybellene"; Elvis Presley, "Hound Dog"
- M Jan 23 reading James Miller, "Beatlemania," *Flowers in the Dustbin; The Rise of Rock and Roll 1947-1977*; Ellen Willis, "Dylan," *Out of the Vinyl Deeps: Ellen Willis on Rock Music*
listening The Beatles, "Twist and Shout," "Hard Day's Night"; Bob Dylan, "Blowin' in the Wind"
- W Jan 25 reading *Great Jones Street*, Ch. 1-8 (pp. 1-53)
listening Bob Dylan, "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall," "Don't Think Twice, It's Alright"
- F Jan 27 reading *Great Jones Street*, Ch. 9-11 (pp. 54-94)
listening Bob Dylan, "My Back Pages,"
- M Jan 30 reading *Great Jones Street*, "Superslick Mind Contracting Media Kit"-Ch. 16 (pp. 95-157)
Alexis Petridis, "The Basement Tapes Complete Review"
listening Bob Dylan, "It Ain't Me, Babe"
- W Feb 1 reading *Great Jones Street*, Ch. 17-"The Mountain Tapes" (pp. 158-208)
listening Bob Dylan, "Maggie's Farm," "Like a Rolling Stone"
- F Feb 3 reading *Great Jones Street*, Ch. 21-end (209-265)
listening Bob Dylan "Positively 4th Street"; The Band, etc., "I Shall Be Released"
- M Feb 6 reading *Glimpses*, Ch. 1-2 (pp. 1-64)
Geoffrey O'Brien, "Seven Years in the Life"
listening The Beatles, "The Long and Winding Road" (*Let It Be* and *Get Back* versions); The Doors, "Celebration of the Lizard"
- W Feb 8 reading *Glimpses* Ch. 3 (pp. 65-85)
Joan Didion, "The White Album"
listening The Beach Boys, "God Only Knows," "Wouldn't It Be Nice"
- F Feb 10 reading *Glimpses* Ch. 4 (pp. 86-121)
Luis Sanchez, "California Unbound"
listening The Beach Boys, "Wind Chimes"
- M Feb 13 reading *Glimpses* 5 (pp. 122-190)
Scott Staton, "A Lost Pop Symphony"
listening Beach Boys, "Heroes and Villains," "Surf's Up"
- W Feb 15 reading *Glimpses* 6-7 (pp. 191-252)
listening Brian Wilson, "Love and Mercy"
- F Feb 17 reading *Glimpses* 8-10 (pp. 253-299)
Listening Jimi Hendrix, "Angel"

- M Feb 20 reading *The Last Rock Star Book* 2-35
 Ann Powers, "Liz Phair's Ambivalent Return to *Guyville*"
listening Nirvana, "Smells Like Teen Spirit"
DUE: paper proposals
- W Feb 22 reading *LRSB* 36-71
listening The Breeders, "Hellbound"
- F Feb 24 reading *LRSB* 71-106
listening The Rolling Stones, "Tumbling Dice"
- M Feb 27 reading *LRSB* 107-141
 Gina Arnold, "Gina Arnold on Liz Phair"
listening Liz Phair, "6'1"
- W Mar 1 reading *LRSB* 141-177
listening Rolling Stones, "Street Fighting Man"
- F Mar 3 reading *LRSB* 177-211
listening Liz Phair, "Flower," "Never Said"
- Mar 6 reading *The Fortress of Solitude*, Part One, Ch.1-6 (pp. 3-103)
 Jack Hamilton, "How Rock and Roll Became White"
listening Wild Cherry, "Play That Funky Music"
- Mar 8 reading *FS* 7-12, (pp. 104-199)
listening Marvin Gaye, "Got to Give It Up"
- Mar 10 reading *FS* 13-18 (pp. 200-292)
 Jonathan Lethem, "Prelude I: Talking Heads Have a New Album, It's Called *Fear of Music*," "Cities"
listening Talking Heads, "Cities"; Sugarhill Gang, "Rapper's Delight"
- Mar 13 reading *FS* Part Two—Part Three Ch. 5, "Liner Note," (pp. 295-381)
listening Curtis Mayfield, "Move On Up"
- Mar 15 reading *FS* Part Three Ch.6-12, (pp. 382-460)
listening Devo, "Girl U Want"; Run DMC, "Walk This Way"
- Mar 17 reading *FS* Part Three Ch. 13-end (pp.461-511);
 John Leonard, "Welcome to New Dork"
listening Brian Eno, "Golden Hours"
- Mar 20 reading *Master of Reality* pp. 1-32
 Lester Bangs, "Bring Your Mother to the Gas Chamber!"
listening Black Sabbath, "Sweet Leaf"; Beastie Boys, "Rhymin' and Stealin'"
- Mar 22 reading *MR* 33-65
 Robert Christgau, "A History of Rock Criticism"
listening Black Sabbath, "Into the Void"
- Mar 24 reading *MR* 66-end
listening Mountain Goats, "Hast Thou Considered the Tetrapod"

- Apr 3 reading *A Visit from the Goon Squad* Ch. 1-2 (pp. 1-38)
Lester Bangs, "Sham 69 Is Innocent!"
listening Pretenders, "Brass in Pocket"; Stooges, "Search and Destroy"
- Apr 5 reading VGS Ch. 3-4 (pp. 39-83)
listening The Who, "Pictures of Lily"
- Apr 7 reading VGS Ch. 5-6 (pp. 84-109)
Punk Number 1, Jan. 1976
listening Patti Smith, "Because the Night"
- Apr 10 reading VGS Ch. 7-9 (pp. 111-185)
listening Iggy Pop, "The Passenger"
- Apr 12 reading VGS Ch. 10-12 (pp. 186-309)
listening The Four Tops, "Bernadette"; Jimi Hendrix, "Foxy Lady"
- Apr 14 reading VGS Ch. 13 (pp. 310-340)
listening David Bowie, "Young Americans"
DUE first draft
- Apr 17 reading *Stone Arabia* 1-43
Howard Hampton, "Reification Blues"
listening Rolling Stones, "Dead Flowers"; Donovan, "Wear Your Love Like Heaven"
- Apr 19 reading *SA* pp. 44-85
Listening Richard Hell and the Voidoids, "Blank Generation"
- Apr 21 reading *SA* pp. 86-109
listening Lou Reed, "Walk on the Wild Side"
- Apr 24 reading *SA* pp. 110-142
listening Sex Pistols, "Pretty Vacant"
- Apr 26 reading *SA* pp. 143-184
listening The Clash, "Garageland"
- Apr 28 reading *SA* pp. 185-235
listening Guided by Voices, "Hardcore UFOs"
- May 1 Presentations
- May 3 Papers due