

## African Urban Hip-hop and Decolonial Futures

AFRS 3000 (3 Credits)

### Senegal: Hip Hop, African Diaspora and Decolonial Futures

#### Course Description

The goal of the course is to provide students with a deeper understanding of the vitality, resilience, and global breadth of contemporary African and African diaspora communities through an experiential engagement with hip-hop and urban cultures as decolonial voices that constantly engage the limits of coloniality, global capitalism, and local political realities. This course will particularly focus on the ways African urban hip-hop functions as decolonial pedagogical praxes and counterhegemonic movements against cultural and economic imperialism in the global African diaspora in general, and in the U.S., Senegal, and Ghana, in particular. Using music as a political and aesthetic expression against Empire, we explore the potential and limits of African Urban hip hop to offer disenfranchised masses, especially people of African descent, possibilities to critique and delink from coloniality in their everyday lives. Hip hop will be studied as a means to create links and spaces of solidarity between African descendants and economically disenfranchised peoples from the Global North and the Global South. Our ultimate goal is to question dominant narratives and create a transformative consciousness about economic and cultural globalization, immigration, identity, nation, nationality, democracy, human rights, and equality.

#### Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Analyze the concept of diaspora and its corollaries: (concepts of roots, nations, and nationality) from a decolonial perspective;
- Demonstrate knowledge of the vitality, resilience, and global breadth of contemporary African and African diaspora communities;
- Articulate the ways in which African urban hip hop functions as a means to create links, spaces, and solidarities between African descendants and economically disenfranchised peoples from the Global North and the Global South
- Illustrate the pervasive nature of coloniality in Black communities globally;

- Appraise and articulate the complex role of African urban hip hop as a decolonial pedagogy that engages the limits of coloniality, global capitalism, and local political realities.

### **Language and Methods of Instruction**

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to local vocabularies related to course content through in-country expert lectures, field assignments, and activities. Assigned and recommended readings are listed in the course schedule section below. Students are responsible for all the required readings and should be prepared to bring them to bear in class discussions. Students may submit assignments in either English or French and are expected to complete all assignments by their due dates.

Topics covered in each lecture will draw on site visits, guest lecturers, and other activities, in addition to the assigned readings. In both Senegal and Ghana, students will attend a series of classes structured around the key lines of inquiry outlined in the course overview. The order of the lectures may be rearranged to respond to activities or opportunities presented in each location.

### **Module 1: From Africa to the US and Back**

#### *Week 1: Introduction*

This module explores the birth and development of hip hop in the U.S. and in Africa. We will start with an exploration of the roots of the hip hop movement in the South Bronx through an examination of the ways African aesthetics and ontologies allowed disenfranchised diasporic communities from the South Bronx to engage critically the social and political realities of the 1970s USA before hip hop developed into a global phenomenon in the 1990s. We will subsequently trace the development and adaptation of hip hop on the African continent, revisit the diasporic exchanges that have led to its emergence on the continent, and examine the particularities, in Africa, of hip hop as a means to question the modes of definitions of the world and the epistemic and cultural foundations of eurocentrism and global capitalism. The module will ultimately engage in a more focused study of hip hop and urban cultures in Senegal. Starting with a genealogy of the movement, we will examine its relevance in the consolidation of democracy in Senegal while exploring the ways it has adapted to, and transformed, contemporary Senegalese cultures and cityscapes.

#### Site visits

With hip hop artist Xuman, students will visit Africulturban and learn about the way hip hop has evolved in Senegal. While Xuman, one of the pioneers of hip hop in Senegal is from the SICAP (I think Xuman is from Reubeus) neighborhood, Africulturban is in the Senegalese suburbs. The comparison between these two respectively upper middle-class and lower middle-class neighborhoods will show how, In Senegal, hip hop evolved from a Pan-African movement focusing on questions related to universal black

consciousness to a movement focused on issues of day to day survival. This will lead us to better understand the sociology of Senegalese urban dwellings and their implications on the socio-political particularities of Senegalese urban cultures.

## **Playlist**

Bambaataa, A. (1986). "Planet Rock" [Soulsonic Force]. Planet Rock: The Album. New York: Planet that Be. (1982)

Prophets of the City. (1994). "Neva Again" [Prophets of Da City]. Ghetto Code. [Vinyl]. South Africa: Beggars. (1994).

Awadi, D. (1995). "Je ne sais pas." [Recorded by Positive Black Soul.] Salam [CD] Universal Island Record (1995)

Holocauste. (2016). [Recorded by Dig Dund Guiss] Tay la Kagn [CD] Reptile Music 2016

Karballah (2017). [Recorded by Karballah] Lou xew Fi. [CD] TeK TanK 2017

Passion (2016). [Recorded by One Lyrca]. Sélébéyoon [CD] (The difftape). 2016

Elzo Jamdong. 2018. Coulisses. Macina. 2018

Omzo dollar. 2019. Sokhor. Beut ak Lamiñ. 2019.

## *Week 2*

### *Session 1: A Short History of Hip-Hop in Africa*

- Guest Lecturer: Maimouna back again (Wednesday)
- Visiting the SICAP neighborhood with Xuman (Friday)

#### *Required reading*

Chang, Jeff (2005). "Necropolis: The Bronx and the Politics of Abandonment." *Cant' Stop Wont Stop: A History of the Hip Hop Generation*. New York, Mcmillan

Charry, Eric, ed. (2012). *Hip Hop Africa: New African Music in a Globalizing World*. Indiana: Indiana University Press. Chapter 1: "A Capsule History of African Rap."

#### *Recommended reading*

S.H. Fernando, Jr., "Back in the Day: 1975-1979" *The Vibe History of Hip Hop*. Alan Light, ed. New York: Three Rivers.

Szwed, J. (1999). "The Real Old School." *The Vibe History of Hip Hop*. Alan Light, ed. New York: Three Rivers.

Listening: Sugar Hill Gang, "Rappers Delight" [1979] Kurtis Blow, "The Breaks" [1979] Afrika Bambaataa, "Planet Rock" [1982] Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, "The Message" [1982] Herbie Hancock, "Rockit" [1983]

Rose, T.(1994). *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. p.1-41 and 51-61

Blanchard, Becky. (2018). "The Social Significance of Rap & Hip-Hop Culture." *Poverty & Prejudice: Media and Race*. Retrieved on July 30, 2018. [https://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/poverty\\_prejudice/mediarace/socialsignificance.htm](https://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/poverty_prejudice/mediarace/socialsignificance.htm)

### Week 3

#### Session 2: The Boomerang Effect

- Guest lecturer: Xuman
- Workshop with Xeinixx and Salla Ngary at Africulturban and visit of Pikine Slam (on Thursday)
- Attend activities about the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Africulturban (in Pikine)

#### *Required reading*

Catherine M. Appert (2016) "On Hybridity in African Popular Music: The Case of Senegalese Hip Hop" *Ethnomusicology* Vol. 60, No. 2: 279-299

Mitchell, T. (2002). *Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside the USA*. Indiana: Wesleyan. "Introduction: Another Root—Hip-Hop outside the USA." Pp.1-38

#### *Recommended reading*

Clark, M. 2018. *Hip Hop in Africa: Prophets of the city and dusty foot philosophers*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press

Saucier, P.K, ed. (2011). *Native Tongues: An African Hip-hop reader*. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press. Forman, Murray "Forward;" Saucier "Introduction" in Saucier. Pp. ix-xxii

### **Module 2: Four or Five Elements? The development of Hip Hop in Senegal**

We will focus on the particularities and developments of graffiti, breakdancing, slam, rap, and DJing in Senegal and Ghana. This module will mainly be organized around workshops animated by major performers of hip-hop and urban cultures such as King Mo, Ndongo D, Xeinixx, and Salla Ngary. We will particularly look at the ways the so called four elements of hip-hop have developed in the African context and how they engage the social, political, and economic realities of Senegal and Ghana today. In Dakar, students will visit the Blaise Senghor cultural center with Docta and explore a design, and fashion shop with Fatou Kine Diouf. Students will get the chance to produce their own work and perform with Senegalese and Ghanaian hip hop artists.

## Week 4

### Session 1 (?): *The Five Elements: Hip Hop then and Now*

- Guest Lectures: *Keyti and Nix about Rap* (Wednesday)
- Workshop with Nix-- Studio writing and recording (Thursday)
- Visit of UCAD campus with 2H (Friday)

### Required reading

Niang Abdoulaye (2006) "Bboys : Hip Hop Culture in Dakar, Sénégal" *Global Youth ? Hybrid Identities, Plural Worlds*, Pam Nilan and Carles Feixa (eds.) New York: Routledge,

Appert, C. (2011). "Rappin Griots: Producing the Local in Senegalese Hip-hop." Saucier, P.K, ed. *Native Tongues: An African Hip-hop reader*. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press.

### Recommended reading

Msia, C. 2012. "Hip Hop as a social commentary in Accra and Dar es Salaam." *African Studies Quarterly* 13 (3): 23-46.

<http://sites.clas.ufl.edu/africa-asq/files/Clark-V13Is3.pdf>.

Rattrey, M. (2018). Knowledge Session: The Griot Tradition Education. Retrieved from <http://www.iamhiphopmagazine.com/thegriottradition/>

## Week 5

### Session 2 (session 2 of module 2, no?): *The Five Elements: Hip Hop Aesthetic*

- Guest lecturer: *Docta About Graffiti* (Wednesday) with visit to the *Blaise Senghor center* (Thursday)
- Talk about *Hip Hop, Graffiti and Gender* with *Fatou Kine* and visit *A Design/Fashion shop* (Friday)

### Required readings

Leslie W. Rabine (2014) "These Walls Belong to Everyone: The Graffiti Art Movement in Senegal" *African Studies Quarterly*, Volume 14, Issue 3

Maggie Dickinson (2008) "The Making of Space, Race and Place: New

York

City's War on Graffiti, 1970 – Present" *Critique of Anthropology* Volume 28 Issue 1: 27-45

### Recommended reading

Hegert, N. (2013). "Radiant Children: The Construction of Graffiti Art in New York City." *Rhizomes*, Issue 25. Retrieved from <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue25/hegert.html>

Irwin, M. (2016). "Two Detroit Artists Face Up to Four Years in Prison for Political Graffiti," *Hyperallergic Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://hyperallergic.com/316946/two-detroit-artists-face-up-to-four-years-in-prison-for-political-graffiti/>

Imani P. (2016) "Stinging Like Tabasco: Structure and Format in Hip Hop Compositions." *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

15 Best Places for Graffiti in NYC (updated August 2016). Retrieved from <https://foursquare.com/top-places/new-york-city/best-places-graffiti>

Top 10 Graffiti Spots in NYC (Marc2015). Retrieved from <https://www.timeout.com/newyork/art/street-art-top-ten-spots-to-see-street-art-and-graffiti-in-nyc>

Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson & Ben Greenman. Eds. (2015). *Mo' Meta Blues: The World According to Questlove*. New York: Grand Central Publishing. Pps. 1-13; 180-184

Tricia Miranda Choreography: August Alsina, "I Luv This Shit," March 9, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9ypdIf85gl>

Wildabeast Adams Choreography: Chris Brown, "Poppin'," August 27, 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xMkH5Go3Xc>

Tricia Miranda Choreography: Rihanna, "Bitch Beta Have My Money," April 26, 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQraeOG-3L8>

*Week 6: Tambacounda: 96 Heures Kangam Eduk'ation*

### **Tamba: Hip Hop Pedagogy: Decentering Senegalese Hip Hop**

This module will be organized in Dakar and Tambacounda. Site visits for this workshop will include visits to radio stations, youth empowerment collectives, cultural centers, and political organizations working on urban cultures and education. We will work closely with Kangam Squad, one of the major rap crews in Senegal. Composed of teachers, Kangam Squad has been central in bringing hip hop into education spaces through hip-hop literacy. Students will have the chance to experience radical changes that hip-hop has brought in the Senegalese school system and political spheres.

### *Week 7: Hip-Hop, Urban Cultures, and the Grammar of Decoloniality*

This module looks at the ways African urban hip-hop challenges the colonial matrix of power and participates in the consolidation of democracy in Senegal. Students will examine the ways African urban hip-hop functions as decolonial pedagogical praxes and counterhegemonic movements against cultural and economic imperialism in the U.S., in Africa, and in Europe. In light of all the readings and experiences accumulated during the semester, students will explore further the ways hip hop and urban cultures function as political and aesthetic expressions against Empire and corrupted local elite. The module will subsequently explore the role of hip-hop and urban cultures in the creolization of local cultures through a discussion of the ways it has led to modern and creole yet fundamentally African cultures thereby showing the complexity the very idea of root that traditionally constitutes the foundation of the idea of diaspora.

### Session 5: Hip Hop and the Grammar of Decoloniality

- Guest lecturers: Thiat, Ina and DJ Zeyna (Wednesday)
- Talk with Malal Tall “The Revolution Will be Televised” at G Hip Hop center (Thursday)
- Visit of *Y en A Marre* headquarters in Parcelles Assainies (Friday)

#### *Required reading*

Maramé, G. (2013). “Urban Guerrilla Poetry: The Movement Y’ en a Marre and the Socio-Political Influences of Hip Hop in Senegal.” *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 6, 3, 2013

Bryson, Devin (2014) “The Rise of a New Senegalese Cultural Philosophy” *African Studies Quarterly* Volume 14, Issue 2: 33-56

Mays, Kyle T. (2019) “Decolonial Hip Hop: Indigenous Hip Hop and the disruption of settler colonialism” *Cultural Studies* 33(4):1-20

#### *Recommended reading*

Mignolo, W. (2007). “Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality” *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3), 449 – 514

Ben Herson, Magee McIlvaine, and Christopher Moore (Directors). *African Under ground: Democracy in Dakar*. USA: Nomadic Wax, Sol Productions Foundation.

- *Week 8-9 : Ghana*
- *Week 10: Mid-semester break and final papers due (Saturday 4/4/20)*
- *Week 11 to 14: ISP and Internship with weekly debriefing meetings*

- *Week 15: ISP/Internship Presentations, farewell dinner and departures for home*

**Assignments:**

Response papers 35%  
Final Paper 25%  
Creative Project 25  
Participation 15 %

**Grading Scale:**

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

**Description of Assignments**

Response papers will be biweekly reflections (every two weeks) on the assigned readings and the experiential engagement with communities we will interact with, concepts we will discuss and experiences we will have. The formats of these assignments are not limited to written responses. It is highly recommended that students come up with other media to convey their work and ideas, such as music, podcasts, blog entries, video and photography. The biweekly assignments are due on **Sunday, 2/16, Sunday 3/1 and Friday 15/3 by midnight. Every delay equals half a grade lower**

The final paper is a 10-page critical reflection on hip hop as a decolonial praxis in light of students' readings, their engagement with the hip hop community and their visits of hip-hop sites. More details about the structure of the paper will be provided before **Saturday 4/4 by midnight.**

For the creative project, students will be asked to produce artistic works based on elements of hip hop such as rap, graffiti, dance, slam, djing, film or video in response to the general theme of the course. The project should be decolonial and Africa-centered in scope. Each project must be submitted along with a three-page typed paper explaining the process by which it was created and how it relates to the themes and materials of our course. The grade will not be primarily based on the artistic skills of the project. The instructor will seriously consider the critical thinking methods involved in the process as well as the effort and time commitment of the author.

## **Class Participation**

Participation in class refers to attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all lectures, discussions, written questions for class, field trips and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. In addition, the following are expectations of all participants:

- \* Come to class prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- \* Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- \* Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- \* Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- \* Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

**Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook** for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment, and the academic appeals process.

**Disability Services:** Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at [disabilityservices@sit.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@sit.edu) for information and support in facilitating an accessible educational experience. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services, including a link to the online request form, can be found on the Disability Services website at <http://studyabroad.sit.edu/disabilityservices>.