

The Music and Life of Bob Marley



Berklee College of Music 2 credits

Meeting Time: Monday's 6-8pm

Room: TBA

Instructor: **Matt Jenson** Email: mjenson@berklee.edu Web connect: www.mattjenson.com www.artofreggae.com

- **Final grade** will be determined by quality of class participation, a 'reaction paper' to two movies, your in-class "Overstanding Pages" presentation at the end of the semester and your overall participation and enthusiasm for the class.

FINAL PERFORMANCE

We will do an evening on campus show at the end of the semester and possibly a professional show.

Topical Outline:

- 1) SEPTEMBER 9: Auditions. Class introductions. Matt's introductory essay.
- 2) SEPTEMBER 16: Introductions and introductory remarks
(homework: Watch the MOVIE "The Harder they Come." Read the analysis PDF buy Julienne Burton. DVD 524 in Berklee library.)
- 3) SEPTEMBER 23: Marley early years in Nine Mile and first trips to Kingston. Conditions of extreme poverty
Slide show: MJ's trip to Trenchtown Culture Yard. Chris Blackwell and early Island Records years. *Catch a Fire* and *Burnin*.
Formation and split up of original Wailers. Early producers, *Simmer Down*, *Trenchtown Rock*
- 4) SEPTEMBER 30: ALL REHEARSE
- 5) OCTOBER 7: Intro to Jamaican history: A rebellious culture, Maroon history, Morant Bay Rebellion. READ #1
(Harder They Come reaction paper due by midnight.)
- 6) OCTOBER 14: **INDEGENOUS PEOPLE's DAY – the college is closed** (class meets Tuesday 9/15)
15: Recent Jamaican political background/history as it relates to international circumstances
How Bob Marley fits into Jamaican and International political background/history
- 7) OCTOBER 21: Haile Selassie, Marcus Garvey (class does indeed meet even though it's mid-term week)
- 9) OCTOBER 28: Rastafari
- 10) NOVEMBER 4: Smile Jamaica concert. Assassination attempt. One Love Peace Concert
(Watch the movie "Who Shot the Sheriff" a recent documentary. Netflix only)
- 11) NOVEMBER 11: ALL REHERASE
- 12) NOVEMBER 18: Matt's reflections on Smile JA, Assassination & One Love concerts
Marley's Foot injury and cancer diagnosis. *Exodus*. Mid-Career highlights
(Life & Debt reaction paper due by midnight.)
- 13) NOVEMBER 25: Bob Marley passes away - May 11, 1981; his legacy and reflections
- 13) DECEMBER 2: REHEARSE. Overstanding pages presentations.
- 14) DECEMBER 9: Overstanding Pages presentations.

REPERTOIRE:

No Woman No Cry (*Natty Dread, Roxy 76*)

Babylon System (*Survival*)

The Heathen (*Exodus*) *sol*

I Shot the Sheriff (*Burnin'*)

Jamming (*Exodus*)

Craven Choke Puppy (*Box Set, CD #2*)

Slave Driver (*album: Catch a Fire*) *sol*

Roots Rock Reggae (*Rastaman Vibration*)

Want More (*Rastaman Vibration*) *sol*

Waiting In Vain (*Exodus*)

SMART PHONE USE IN THE CLASSROOM.

“Smart” phones are distracting us and severely limiting our attention spans. Some research suggests they are even cutting into our basic level of intelligence! Putting it aside or even turning it off (can you imagine that?!) might actually make you a smarter person and allow you to get much more out of the class.

Indeed phones can be tremendously useful tools for your classes using them to record vocal parts, or record a rhythm section arrangement, or to take notes, HOWEVER, where do you draw the line for when it becomes a distraction, not only to you but to your peers and your teacher?

AI POLICY:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tool Usage: AI tools can generate text, images, and other media very quickly. Since a central goal of this course is to help you become independent and critical thinkers, you are discouraged from using AI tools to in the classroom; in the creation of compositions, arrangements, and choreographic works; in courses and course-related works and materials for course assignments, projects, and exams; and in the use of any and all information and music technology resources. Any work submitted using AI tools will be treated as though it was plagiarized and will follow Berklee’s Honesty in Academic Work policy. If any part of this is confusing or uncertain, please reach out to me for a conversation before submitting your work.

FINAL PROJECT: OVERSTANDING PAGES and PRESENTATIONS

See attached sheet for the details.

Ongoing Homework Assignment: Even though charts have been written for the arrangements of this music, there are a great many subtleties have NOT transcribed, especially with the guitar and keyboard parts. You will be expected to learn these on your own thorough study of Marley’s recordings. Also, learn the arrangements: there are many differences between Marley’s versions and the arrangements for the class.

GRADING:

33.3% - Class participation, attitude, attendance and preparedness

33.3% - The Harder they Come and Life & Debt movie reaction papers

33.3% - In-class presentation project (Overstanding pages)

SOME DESCRIPTIVE TERMINOLOGY FOR PLAYING REGGAE

See “Reggae Performance Notes” in the “Reading Materials” PDF files for further info.

Chop, Skank, Strum, Bang – the aggressive rhythmic attack played on the 2nd and 4th beats of the measure, mainly by the guitar and keyboards.

One Drop – the rhythmic pattern played by the drum kit characterized by crisp high hat work off set by the kick drum “dropping” on the third beat of the measure. (There are many sub-styles within the one drop riddim.)

Steppers – the rhythmic pattern played by the drum kit characterized by crisp high hat work off set by the kick drum playing on all four beats of the measure (example: Exodus)

Bubble – the rhythmic pattern played mainly on the organ that incorporates the skank (on beats 2 and 4) and adds a subtle attack on all of the up beats of each measure.

Dead Picking / Stuck line – the muted, (plucked) staccato technique of playing guitar, often times used to double the bass line.

Nayabinghi – the “heart beat” drumming style that is used in Rastafarian religious ceremony (called a Groundation). The three drums used are called, 1) Thunder (bass), 2) Funde (middle drum that plays the ‘heartbeat’, 3) Akete or Repeater, (the high pitched lead drum). (The term Nayabinghi will often times be shortened to “Binghi.”)



My life is only important if me can help plenty of people. If my life is only about my own security, then me don't want it. My life is for people.

-BOB MARLEY

The Music and Life of Bob Marley

Professor Matt Jenson mjenson@berklee.edu www.mattjenson.com



IN-CLASS PRESENTATION PROJECT (for the final)

Metaphor: *A figure of speech or an image in which is used to refer to something that it does not literally denote in order to define a much deeper description or understanding.*

PART 1) Overstanding Pages

(“Overstanding” is the Rastafarian reinterpretation of the word ‘understanding,’ implying a deeper level of impact.)

During the first class you will be asked to describe, through the use of metaphor, what your impressions are of what you thought this class was going to be about and what you might learn from it. You’ll write down your ideas/images/poems/drawings etc., on your “Overstanding Pages” and share them with the class. As the class progresses, you’ll be asked to continue writing down such metaphors, ideas and moments of discovery and inspiration on the same sheets of paper as used in the first class. You can write an entry any time you want, not just when Matt asks you to!

Bring your Overstanding Pages to every class and have them ready to be written on at any time.

Absolutely anything goes! Often times simply writing down the very first thing that comes to mind after hearing a point made in a lecture, a video watched, a particular poignant moment in rehearsal, a discussion with a classmate, etc., will reveal surprising depth and clarity. Other times you might have to struggle with something that you’re trying to understand or express. Don’t forget to experiment with thinking in metaphor. Expressions made on these pages are all about freeing and opening your mind, to really think out of the box and do NOT necessarily have to be words. Sometimes a drawing, or a song, or a poem will better capture better anything that you might be feeling.

PART 2) In-Class Presentation: During the last two classes of the semester each one of you will be given 10-15 minutes to deliver an inspiring presentation to the class starting first with reminding of us of your original class expectation metaphor and then taking us on your journey of discovery through the class as you have recorded on your “Overstanding Pages.” You are encouraged to be creative and may use audio/visual aids or you may simply describe your experience. **The one requirement you have is that you must incorporate into your presentation some concrete material that you took directly from class.** Here are some examples:

- * Lyrics: Give an example of how a Marley lyric that you have known, or learned for the first time in class, has revealed new meanings to you and tell us what the new levels of ‘overstanding’ are.
- * Musical: Give an example, while learning and performing the Marley songs in class, of how your interpretation of playing, or singing your part changed. Cite a specific “peak” moment when you made a breakthrough in “overstanding” your part in a new way.
- * Musical / Poetic: Write and perform a song or recite an original poem that tells the story of your development across the time of the class that takes some information you learned as part of the lyrics/poetry.
- * Socio-Political-Spiritual context: Perhaps you never thought music could so powerfully influence people’s lives through on a socio-political-spiritual level. Give an example of how Marley did this and what it means to you.
- * Socio-Political-Spiritual context: Write and perform a song about how what you learned in class relates to today’s socio-political-spiritual issues and how you bring awareness and healing, or incite revolutionary thinking and action to your audience.
- * Descriptive: If any of the above examples don’t find their way into your expression, then you may eloquently describe your experience in a less artistic fashion.

MOVIE REACTION PAPERS PROJECT

You are required to watch two movies this semester and to write a one page (or more), single-spaced, 'reaction' paper summarizing your thoughts. You must hand them in electronically through the CANVAS before the deadline for each paper. There are no exceptions for late papers, except in the case of an emergency.

Do not plagiarize or use Artificial Intelligence! Cutting and pasting from various internet sources or copying other scholarly work is not permitted and illegal. You can certainly gain insights from such research but your reaction must ultimately be your own.

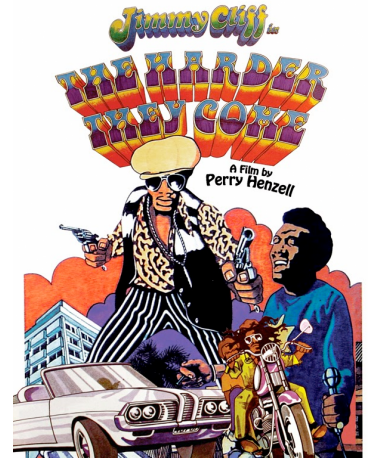
MOVIE 1

THE HARDER THEY COME

No less than 1, single-spaced page

Be SURE to read the analysis PDF by Julienne Burton located on Canvas.

This is not to be a retelling of the story. (Your teacher knows the story well!) What is your reaction to the story? Is Ivan simply a lawless criminal or a symbol for rebellion against an oppressive system? Do you see any similarities between the socio-economic system in the movie and how things are being run in our society today? Are there any parallels between the music industry today and back then? What does this movie say about freedom, is there such a thing at all?



MOVIE 2

LIFE AND DEBT

No less than 1, single-spaced page

Life and Debt is a feature-length documentary, which addresses the impact of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and current globalization policies on a developing country such as Jamaica.

www.lifeanddebt.org (You can't watch the movie from this link, but you can get information about the production and other useful information.)



MOVIES NOT REQUIRED FOR CLASS

...but very good to further your understanding of Bob

ONE LOVE

This is the first ever BIOPIC about Marley's life. Released February 14, 2024. There are some things about the movie that are controversial and leave out certain truths, but over all it does a very good job of capturing Bob's essence and meaning of his life including the stories of those in his band and in his inner circle.



WHO SHOT THE SHERIFF

A recently produced documentary that takes a deeper look at the circumstances around the assassination attempt on Bob's and the Wailers lives. Released October 12, 2018.

