Course Description

This class explores liner notes written for vinyl records and other media formats. With a focus on the 1950s-1970s, we study essays printed on LP packaging – on the cardboard sleeves that contain, transport, and protect the recorded sound of an album – doing so in order to interpret and connect both specific texts, some pre-selected, some TBD, and also women’s overall contributions to the poetics of music production and consumption. Analyzing in particular the backs of record cases, we explore the types of writing women have historically circulated in this popular venue for expressive critique, with the goal of recognizing new facets of the roles women have played in the publishing, marketing, and distribution of music, its material culture, its related industries, and its fandoms.

Readings [and additional optional readings] are available on Canvas.

Assignments: writing exercises, 60 pts. short essay, 40pts.

Course Schedule subject to change

Introduction                   week 1        Jan 3, 5
writing exercises             week 2        Jan 10, 12
Gang of Four, Entertainment (1979) week 3        January 19
Jo Chambers, ...Will Be Free (1979) week 4        Jan 24, 26
Joni Mitchell, Summer Lawns (1974) week 5        Jan 31, Feb 2
essays                       week 6        Feb 7, 9
Further Discussion           week 7        Feb 14, 16
writing exercises             week 8        Feb 21, 23
Review                      week 9        Feb 28, March 2
Wrap-up                     week 10       March 7, 9
Reading

week 2  Brooks, “Liner Notes…”+ Page twitter ephemera  

week 3  Gang of Four, *Entertainment*  +  Jaffe  +  Cooper

week 4  Jo Chambers, 1979  [criticism packet (Maio, McDonald, Todd)]

week 5  Joni Mitchell, *The Hissing of Summer Lawns [Court and Spark]*

week 6  March Faxness, “The Longlist”  [“Sea on Playing Max”]

week 7  Kumar, “In Praise of Nonfiction” (*Everyday I Write the Book*)  
[Freud, “Dream-Work”?]  [Roach, “…in the quiet”]

week 8  Lewis, ” Diasporic Trickster Tales of Basquiat and Kendrick Lamar”  
[Sedgwick, Shyness/Whiteness]  [*Boricua Pop, Basquiat*]

week 9  Theme Time Radio Hour, “Questions”  
https://www.themetimeradio.com/episode-94-questions/  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jTzXBbGxEkY  

[Alyxandra Vesey, “Flipping Over ‘High Fidelity’”]

Content Warning  cw: This course solicits intensive self-exploration in academic study. Course material will call up personal histories of habitus formation and sexual and other gender dynamics. Exclusion, for example, or family and body issues are potentially hyperpresent content factors that may make coursework acutely painful. Contextual material may include slurs, nudity, violence, sex, misgendering, and reference to sexual assault and harassment. If this material, or representations and discussion of sensitive issues such as expressive sexuality, social variance, sex work, and social and sexual taboo transgression, may present a problem for you, please let the professor (and/or the group) know. Texts studied include ableism, cissexism, gay bashing, representations of racism, sexism, and suicide, and heterosexist social mores and assumptions, as well as highly charged humor. This material may appear without advance notice. Structural discrimination, oppression, and violence, namely racist cissexism, will be avoided, reversed, and studied. Let’s negotiate this contradiction, and derogatory, dehumanizing language, with collaborative ethics of care. * Practice self-care for trigger mitigation. Read, re-read, and study texts. Prepare questions and comments for discussion. Respect people’s space, backgrounds, names, pronouns, contributions, and frames of reference. Let the professor know (as soon as you can and along the way) of any accommodations. Respect your own needs and boundaries. Participate in communal covid navigation.