Songs and music lie at a culture's center, and folksong scholarship has shaped the study of Anglo-American culture and literature since 1700. We will study popular music and songs in Anglo-American tradition, emphasizing narrative songs (traditional, journalistic, and blues ballads) as well as non-narrative songs and contextualizing instrumental music. We will look into song origins and styles, content (murder, disguise, outlawry, disaster, lament, &c.), their function in people’s lives, and their popularity and histories. We will consider the study of song and music traditions in general, especially with regard to song creation and dissemination, folk communities, media (print, recording, &c.), and collecting.


WORK: Undergraduates: Midterm Exam; Reading Journal; Presentation/Report; Final Paper (25% each). Graduates: Midterm Exam (30%); Reading Journal (10%); Presentation/Report (20%); Final Project (40%).

OUTCOMES: Study of folklore methods & theory; song collections & fieldwork; collection, analysis & performance

WEEK 1 – 9/28: American Music and Song Traditions: Foregrounds & Backgrounds—Getting Started

M: Introduction—(1) Tunes, Songs & Singers, Places & Times: WHAT are folksongs & HOW have they been collected & studied? (2) Folk/Popular/Elite Cultures
Reading: Kip Lornell, Ch.1 (pp.3-41)

W: Songs in American Cultural History—An Early Boston Case Study Reading: Dugaw, “Modes & Voices of American Song” (Canvas); See also Isaiah Thomas Ballads (American Antiquarian Society): wireframes.thomasballads.org
Terms: folksong, ballad, lyric, oral tradition, folk culture, popular culture, elite culture, convention/conventionality

WEEK 2 - 10/5: The Spread & Study of Music & Song Culture—Oral Tradition, Media, Revival, & Research

M: Origins & Media Dissemination; Fieldwork, Collecting, & Oral History—Lornell, Ch.2, “Mass Media” & Ch.3, “Fieldwork”(42-81); Grimes, Stories &c. (1-64 plus CD and notes, 153ff.)

Terms: comparative approach—text (as mentafact), diachronic study, synchronic study, divergence model of tradition, convergence model of tradition; contextual approach—contexts: human, social, cultural-psychological, physical, time

WEEK 3 - 10/12: Anglo-American Traditions: Singers & Players, Origins, Features of Style & Content

M: Singers & Players— Grimes (65-151 plus CD and notes, 159ff.); Song Conventions—“Country Western Song Plot Formulator” (Canvas); “3 Ballad Types” (Canvas)

W: Traditions: Lornell, Ch.4, “Anglo-American Secular Folk Music” & Ch.5, “Anglo-American Sacred Music” (82-142) mp3 Set 1 (Canvas)
Terms: oral history, convention, ballad—traditional/Child ballad, journalistic/broadside ballad, blues ballad

WEEK 4 - 10/19: British Ballad Types (I): English & Scottish Traditional Ballad & the Origins of Folksong Study

M: The Persistence & Revival of Traditions: the ‘Medieval’ Ballad Style—Collection of Sung Ballads (mp3 Set 1, items 1-10 & 18-22 Canvas) w/ Variant Texts & Notes (through “2 Sisters” (Canvas); “Sir Patrick Spens Screen Play” (Canvas); “Twa Sisters” from F.J. Child (Canvas); Dugaw, “Ballad” (ency.def.) (Canvas)
W: Beginnings of Song Scholarship—F.J. Child, “Ballad Poetry” (Canvas); Bertrand Bronson, “Ballad Tunes & Texts” (Canvas) Lornell, Ch.10, “Folk Revivals”(281-322); Joseph Addison, “The Spectator Papers” (1711) (Canvas)

Terms: ballad, continuity & variation, variant, traditional ballad style, leaping & lingering narrative style

WEEK 5 – (10/26): British Ballad Types (II): Print Media & the Journalistic Broadside Ballad

M: **MIDTERM**

W: Collection of Ballads (mp3 Set 1, items 11-14; Canvas) w/Variant Texts & Notes (through “Chas.Guiteau” (Canvas); Ballads of “Chevy Chase” & “Children in the Wood” (Canvas); Susan Porter, “Children in the Wood”: The Odyssey of an Anglo-American Ballad” (Canvas); Dugaw, “Ballad” (ency.def.) (Canvas)

Terms: journalistic style, come-all-ye incipit, moralizing tone, topicality

WEEK 6 – (11/2): The Journalistic Ballad & the Tenacities of Tradition: Early Modern Habits into Modernity

M: Journalistic Songs, & Patterned Narratives of Social History—Hyder Rollins, “The Black-Letter Broadside Ballad” (Canvas); “London Mourning in Ashes” (Canvas); “Capt. Kidd” (Canvas)

W: Female Warriors—Dugaw, Warrior Women: “Mary Ambree”—from ‘New Hit’ to Collector’s Item, Warrior Women (ix-90 & CD recorded examples); G.Malcolm Laws, American Balladry from British Broadsides, N1-N23 (Canvas)

Terms: black-letter broadside, white-letter broadside, chapbook, topicality, structural pattern

WEEK 7 (11/9): Ballads & Songs in Socio-Historical Context—the Early-Modern Female Warrior Heroine

M: Topicality & Tradition: The Female Warrior Ballad Mode: Dugaw (91- & CD) SEE also: cdbaby.com/dugaw User=dtu Passwd=222hijinx

W: Contexts & Cultural Crossings—Dugaw (- 146

Terms: structural pattern, topos, female warrior motif, “new hits”/ “old favorites”/”reliques”

WEEK 8 – (11/16): Ballads & Context: Woman Warrior & Cultural Contexts; The Blues Ballad Mode & Contexts

M: The Female Warrior & the Early Modern World: Warrior Women (143-215)

W: African-American Traditions—Lornell, Ch.6, “African American Religious Folk Music” & Ch.7, “African American Secular Folk Music”(143-201); (mp3 Set 1, items 15-17 w/Variant Texts & Notes (thru “Stagolee” (Canvas)

Terms: hic-mulier, chapbook history, theatrical entertainment, ballad opera, tragedy, Herculean dilemma, parody


W: Ballads (mp3 Set 3; Canvas) w/Variant Texts & Notes; D.K. Wilgus & Eleanor Long, “The Blues Ballad &c.” (Canvas)

Terms: blues ballad, nodal/radial ballad style, anti-heroes, call-and-response singing

WEEK 10 – (11/30): Blues Ballad Heroes & Anti-Heroes—Song Traditions & Cultural History

M: The Blues Ballad & the Folk Roots of Contemporary Popular Music—Lornell, Ch.11, “Folk Roots &c.”

W: The Blues Ballad & the Folk Roots of Contemporary Popular Music—Lornell, Ch.12, “Urban Folk Music” (323-378)

***UNDERGRADUATE PAPERS DUE: 12/2 GRADUATE PAPERS DUE: 12/7