

Writing critical ethnographies of Czech Popular Music

Music Department, Charles University Spring 2010

Tuesday 10:50am-12:30pm

Instructor: Daphne Carr

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This is a class that offers a practical methodology for conducting ethnographic research on popular music in the Czech Republic. The class is composed of three sections. First we will read popular music ethnography to analyze the ways in which participant-observation, interviews, musical analysis, archival research, critical theory, and scholarly analysis come together. Each student will prepare his or her own literature review and research project. Each student will then conduct five weeks of field research on a topic of his or her choice. In the remaining weeks we will focus on writing a scholarly paper on popular music using ethnographic fieldwork data.

The primary goals of this class are to learn the basic methodology of ethnographic fieldwork as it applies to popular music inquiry, to develop an original, critical research project, to carry out a small but well-organized amount of fieldwork, and to turn this fieldwork into a well-constructed descriptive and analytical scholarly paper. Along with these goals, we will learn how to constructively critique other students' research and writing.

This class will require 20 pages of English-language reading per week for the first four weeks, and then will switch to a more practice-oriented workload. This means that for two thirds of the class, each student will be expected to go to events, write fieldnotes, conduct interviews, and complete analytical texts that will become the reading material for the week.

This means that we will be sharing each other's work in class. We will be a team, which means that attendance is required. You will not complete the course if you miss more than three (3) classes. All assignments are mandatory, and late work will only be accepted for two weeks after the day it was due.

Requirements: Attendance, in-class participation, fieldwork of 3-5 events and 2-3 interviews, and a final paper of 10-15 pages.

February 23/1. What is popular music ethnography and why do it

Written Homework: Send me a paragraph about the research topic you are interested in. Tell me what are the three most interesting or most difficult questions you see in for this topic. Include three artists or other people that you would like to focus on and why you would focus on them.

Also buy a field notebook and keep it with you all semester, and set up a document system for yourself on your computer. Make the files

- interviews
- fieldnotes
- research materials
- bibliographic materials
- images
- recordings

March 2/2. Reading popular music ethnography — what does the “popular” change in musical ethnography?

Sarah Cohen “Ethnography and Popular Music Studies.” *Popular Music*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (May 1993), pp 123-138.

Sarah Cohen, “Introduction” and “Chapter 7: Style and Meaning in the Music” from *Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the Making*. Oxford: Clarendon/Oxford Univ. Pres. 1991.

Written homework: Refine your topic to a solid research question. List potential interesting people/sites for your topic.

Also look at the last 10 years of popular music journals such as *Popular Music* and the *Journal of Popular Music Study*. Collect at least 3 abstracts and titles for work that could relate to yours and send the document to me.

Collection of sites for popular music journals:
<http://www.iaspm.net/journals.htm>

March 9/3. Reading popular music ethnography – “native” ethnography

Charles Elavsky. “Chapter 5 – BMG Czech Republic Today: Local Mediations” and “Chapter 6 – BMG, Buty, and *Normale*” in *Producing “Local” Repertoire: Czech Identity, Pop Music, and the Global Music Industry*. PhD, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2005.

Written homework: Write an abstract of your potential research. Write a paragraph about your relationship to the research topic and how your subject position will impact your work.

Create a 5-10 piece annotated bibliography of your topic’s key texts and your theoretical perspective’s main texts.

HAVE PRIVATE MEETINGS 15 minutes each – discuss research topic and strategies

March 16/4. Fieldwork: establishing site/participant-observation

Charles C. Ragin. “Using Qualitative Methods to Study Commonalities.” *Constructing Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1994.

ASSIGNMENT: Go to at least one event or spend 3-4 hours online with your community. Write down your experiences afterward in your field notebook. Document the experiences either with a camera or by taking screen shots with your computer.

March 23/5. Fieldwork: writing fieldnotes

Clifford Geertz. “Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture.” *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books: New York, 1973.

Rene T.A. Lysloff. Musical Community on the Internet: An-Online Ethnography. *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 18, No. 2. (2003), pp. 233-263.

ASSIGNMENT: Conduct another 2-4 hours of ethnography and produce 2-3 pages of field notes (can be in Czech). Your fieldnotes are for you only – your research materials. Write a paragraph (in English) summarizing how your ideas about your research topic have changed with your initial fieldwork observation.

March 30/6. Fieldwork: conducting primary informant interviews/transcribing interviews

Charles Briggs, “Interview techniques vis-à-vis- native metacommunicative repertoires. *Learning how to ask, A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research*. Cambridge University Press, 1986

Barbara Sherman Heyl. “Ethnographic Interviewing” in *Handbook of Ethnography*. Eds. Amanda Jane Coffey, John Lofland, Sara Delamont, Paul A. Atkinson, and Lyn H Lofland. Sage Publications, 2007.

HOMEWORK: Conduct at least a 30 minute long interview with the person you consider to be a key informant. Make a transcription of this interview following the reading guidelines.

April 6/7. Fieldwork: Analysis of fieldnotes/transcriptions

Clifford Geertz. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

HOMEWORK: Select a key moment in your fieldnotes or interview and write 2 pages analyzing how this moment as it relates to your topic.

April 13/8. Fieldwork: Use of secondary textual materials and representation of sound

Christine Yano. "Chapter 6: Consuming Enka's Imaginary: Listening, Singing, Doing" in *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song*. Harvard University Asia Center, 2003.

HOMEWORK: Write one page that uses some element of your fieldwork and interviews to spark an analysis of a visual, sonic, or secondary textual element that is part of your topic.

April 20/9. Writing: Finding themes, using critical theory

April 27/10. Writing: Using ethnographic evidence

May 4/11. Writing: draft – style and tone

May 11/12. Writing: draft

FINAL PRESENTATION, date TBA: Three pages double spaced or talk for 6 minutes + present 1 sound/video clip or multiple images.

FINAL PAPER DUE, date TBA: 10-15 pages + bibliography + paragraph of plan for expansion

Final Paper structure: this is not necessarily the order that these parts must go, but these parts must all be in the final paper.

Title page

Title

Name, Email address

Rough draft of abstract

Final abstract

Main paper (10-15 pages)

Introduction: Hypothesis and explanation why this question is important/why you chose it

Literature review

Methods section

Case study

 Ethnographic descriptions

 Findings/analysis

Summary of argument

Conclusion

Bibliography