

“It’s Bigger Than Hip Hop”
Hip Hop History, Appreciation and Overstanding
Course Syllabus

English 220.004
MWF 12:00-12:50pm
Mitchell Hall 219
Class Website: <http://engl220004.weebly.com>

Instructor: Clare Russell

Email: cjr@unm.edu

Office: Humanities 319

Office Hours: Thursdays 1:00-4:00pm (and by appointment)

Course Description: Welcome to the class! In English 220 you will practice developing as a writer and researcher. The classes are based around themes which give you subject matter and direction for focusing your research and writing practices. The themes of this class are hip hop music and culture. As we explore the history of the genre, we will also listen to hip hop music spanning from 1970s to present day. As we listen and learn, we will talk about the racial, social, political and economic issues that are bigger than hip hop, but have been tied to the genre and the culture. Through readings, lyrical analysis and class discussions you will learn to understand hip hop culture, but as a class we will also seek to overstand hip hop. In the words of teacha KRS-One, “someone who overstands actually experiences the information that has been taught and comprehended.” We have a thriving and active hip hop community here in Albuquerque and I will attempt to bring as many of them to you as I can, but you still must seek overstanding on your own. I will require you to attend 1 spoken word or hip hop performance outside of class (any additional performances you attend will be extra credit). I will keep you informed of overstanding opportunities to the best of my ability.

English 220 outcomes: As with first year writing courses, English 220 and the course writing assignments focus on meeting a set of outcomes. These outcomes are as follows:

- **Analyze Rhetorical Situation:** Students will analyze the subject, purpose, audience, and constraints that influence and determine what kind of document (genre) they will write.
- **Find and Evaluate Information:** Students will develop research strategies for their rhetorical situation, and then gather information from primary and secondary sources; they will evaluate the sources for quality, validity, and appropriateness for the rhetorical situation.
- **Compose Documents:** Students will develop strategies for generating content, organizing it into a logical structure, and otherwise shaping it to address the needs of their audience within particular disciplines.
- **Present Documents:** Students will edit and revise their writing to provide clear meaning and coherent structure; they will use effective document and paragraph structure, documentation and genre conventions, and document design to create a rhetorically complete presentation.
- **Reflection:** In reflecting on major writing assignments, students will be able to explain course outcomes and how they have achieved them.

In order for the English Department to assess student progress towards these goals you must turn in a final research paper and a reflective letter in which you explain your progress towards the goals listed above. We will discuss the final project in more detail throughout the semester.

Required Materials:

The Anthology of Rap by Adam Bradley

Decoded by Jay-z

The rest of the readings are on the class website: <http://engl220004.weebly.com>

A listening journal (digital or paper, details below)

A way of taking notes on class films, speakers and responding to freewrites

Weekly Response Assignments: Weekly you will have assigned readings that must be completed and responded to before Monday of each week. Your timely completion of the weekly readings and responses insures productive class discussions and my ability to guide the class in understanding the material. The response papers will be due by 5pm on Sundays via UNM Learn, and will be in response to the assigned readings for the upcoming week. Your weekly responses should be no more than one page long, and will take the form of one of four possible structures:

- A. *Summary*—Definition of key terms and a description of the plot/main argument.
- B. *Critique*—What is the main argument? Are there any logical fallacies? Is the argument successful or convincing? Why or why not?
- C. *Rhetorical analysis*—Who is the audience? What is the genre? What is the purpose? How does the language effectively meet these ends?
- D. *Style analysis*—What kind of punctuation does the author use? What kind of vocabulary/language? How does the author structure the sentences, paragraphs, and/or overall argument?

Each response will include two discussion questions you have after completing the readings.

Your questions should address the following:

1. *Questions of interpretation*—Surface level questions about the reading; what things did you not understand?
2. *Questions of substance*—Questions regarding the implications of the argument; what does this reading mean for us?

Major Writing Assignments and Final Paper: Major writing assignments will demonstrate an understanding of the major themes covered up to that point in class, and show advancement in your under/over standing of hip hop, as well as your ability to convey an idea or argument with rhetorical clarity. Each major paper will be accompanied by a cover letter discussing your reflections on the unit and how effectively you feel you have reached each of the outcomes listed above. Each major writing assignment is worth 100 points, comprising 20% of the total course grade.

The course will culminate with a Final Paper, worth 200 points (20% of your grade). This paper may be either a substantially revised and expanded version of one of the previous major assignments, or may address one of the topics we've discussed from a different angle or at a greater depth. The final paper will be accompanied by a reflective cover letter as well. More information regarding the Final Paper will be provided as the semester progresses.

Submitting Assignments: This class will try to conserve as much paper and printed materials as possible. Therefore, all written assignments will be submitted to me via Blackboard Learn. Please save all files as .doc or .docx. If you do not have MS Word, save the file in .rtf format. Save all homework assignment files as “LastNameassignment#.doc”. For example, if your name is Joe Smith, and you are turning in Major Assignment 3, you would save the file as **SmithMA3.doc**. I will return all assignments via Blackboard Learn. Using Learn will simplify the grading process for both of us and ensure that I don’t lose any of your assignments in my very cluttered inbox.

Note on Late Work: All assignments are due via UNM Learn before the scheduled deadline. Work sent or received after the deadline will not be accepted via the assignment link and you will have to send your work to me via the UNMLearn email system. Please don’t send any class writing assignments to cjr@unm.edu. I ask this for your own benefit because my inbox is frequently chaotic and submitting assignments via UNMLearn insures I receive them as timely as possible. If your work is late, I deduct one letter grade per day (24hrs) it is late. If you turn an assignment in 48 hours after the due date, you will not receive credit for that assignment. For example, if you miss a Friday 12am writing assignment deadline, but you submit your work before midnight on Saturday, you will only lose one letter grade. If you submit your paper after midnight on Saturday, you lose two letter grades. After midnight on Sunday you will not receive credit for that assignment. I understand that emergencies and sick days happen, so everyone will get TWO late paper allowances. But, you must e-mail me your assignment before the next class period. If you have used up your two late paper allowances, I will not accept another late paper. If you anticipate difficulty turning your work in on time, please come talk to me before it negatively affects your grade. I am here to help you.

Listening Journal: You will also be required to keep a listening journal throughout the semester. This can be a digital journal on Weebly, Tumblr or another website creator you are comfortable with. You can also keep a traditional paper listening journal, but you must make this decision within the first week of class. You will make weekly entries in your journal and share the songs, albums, and artists that you have been listening to bi-weekly with the class. I will grade your listening journal at the end of the semester and it is worth 15% of your grade.

Overstanding Experience: As mentioned in the course description, you will have to attend one live spoken word or hip hop culture performance this semester. Keep your ticket stub or the show program as proof of your attendance. I will do my best to keep you informed of overstanding opportunities. The first opportunity you have for overstanding is to attend the War and Peace Tour featuring Brother Ali and Immortal Technique on Tuesday, September 17 at the Sunshine Theatre. The concert is ALL AGES and those opportunities are, unfortunately, rare in this town. So even though tickets are \$20, I HIGHLY ENCOURAGE you to attend as part of your overstanding requirement. I am going, so I would love to see some of you there.

Celebration of Student Writing: Our class is participating in the fifth annual Celebration of Student Writing to be held Wednesday, October 16 in the SUB Ballrooms A-C from 9am-3pm. CSW is about showcasing and celebrating the work of our undergraduate writers. This year we expect participants from ENGL 101, 102, 219 and 220 classes, as well as classes from Africana Studies, Women’s Studies, and Sustainability Studies. As part of your overstanding requirement, each of you will contribute to building/designing/implementing the class CSW project, helping

out the day of the event, or helping to promote the event. I will give you more details as the date approaches. Just remember for now that this will be a fun opportunity to share the work you've been doing with other writing students in a celebratory setting! We want to bring overstanding to the CSW participants!

Conferences: You will be required to set up two conferences during the semester with me outside of class (preferably during my office hours) to discuss the major assignment you are working on. These conferences must be scheduled in advance and must be initiated by YOU—conferences are worth 50 points toward your final grade for the course. Of course, you can always talk to me during my regular office hours as often as needed outside of your two required conferences.

Attendance and Class Participation: This class will not be all about me lecturing you about hip hop. I want to hear what you have to say about it, and your classmates learn more by hearing what you have to say about it. I do not have all the answers to your hip hop questions, but together we can come up with the best answers possible. In other words, we will “school” each other. We will also frequently watch movies and documentaries, and have guest speakers, so if you miss class you might miss something fun! On your sixth absence you may be dropped from the course, as per department policy. Occasionally problems arise and absences cannot be prevented; if you must miss a class, I encourage you to let me know as far in advance as possible. Whether you contact me or not, you are responsible for turning in all assignments and preparing for the next class.

Note: Two tardies (more than 15 minutes late to class) equates to one absence, so please come to class on time. If you think you will be tardy frequently, let's talk about it before it becomes a problem.

Class Conduct: With politically charged subjects such as this class will explore, it can be easy to get carried away in our arguments. However, since we are working together to come to better understanding of our subject, aggressive antagonism, shouting, name-calling, bullying, and any other disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. Together we will create a class contract regarding specific language use that we will all sign in week one.

Equal Access: If you have a qualified disability that requires some form of accommodation to ensure your equal access to learning in this class, please see me as soon as possible so that we can work together to address your needs. Accessibility Services is located in Mesa Vista Hall 2021. Ph: 277-3506

Sexual Harassment and Respectful Campus Policies: The English Department and the Core Writing program are committed to providing a safe, productive, and harassment-free workplace for instructors and students. Therefore, the English Department affirms its commitment to the joint responsibility of instructors and students to foster and maintain a positive learning environment. For information and assistance, consult the UNM Office of Equal Opportunity at <http://www.unm.edu/~oeounm/index.htm>

English Department Plagiarism Policies and Procedures: Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. “Plagiarism” is a type of academic dishonesty that occurs when writers deliberately use another person's language, ideas, or materials and present them as their own without

acknowledging the source. Every first-year writing class covers plagiarism in great detail, so there is little excuse for failing to understand what constitutes plagiarism or the consequences that will result. Plagiarism can include any of the following:

Types of Plagiarism:

- Failing to quote material taken from another source.
- Failing to cite material taken from another source.
- Submitting writing that was written by another person or for another class.
- Submitting writing that was substantially edited by another person (It’s okay to get help, but your helper should not be rewriting your work).

Procedures for Plagiarism Cases:

1. Meet with you and a witness (another instructor or a director) to discuss the assignment in question;
2. Meet with the Associate Director of Core Writing to review your case;
3. Identify the appropriate consequence;
4. File a report with the Dean of Students.

All students who plagiarize will be reported to the Dean of Students, who maintains a file of past plagiarism cases. In addition to the academic consequence imposed by the Dean of Students, students who plagiarize may also:

- Fail the class;
- Be dropped from the class with a W: or
- Fail the assignment in question.

Questions: If you have questions about plagiarism or about a particular plagiarism case or any other departmental policies, feel free to ask me or to contact Dr. Charles Paine, Director of Core Writing, at cpaine@unm.edu.

Grading Policy:

Point distribution:

Assignment	Points
Weekly Reading Responses (12@ 25pts each)	300
Major Writing Assignments (2@ 100 pts each)	200
Final Paper	200
Listening Journal (15 entries @10pts each)	150
Overstanding Experience	50
Celebration of Student Writing	50
Conferences (2@25 each)	50
Total Points Possible	1000

Grade Distribution:

Grade	Total Points
A+	970 +
A	930-969
A-	900-929
B+	870-899
B	830-869
B-	800-829
C+	770-799
C	730-769
C-	700-729 (Failing)
D	600-699 (Failing)
F	Below 600 (Failing)

Reading and Assignment Schedule

This schedule is subject to change, but I will give you advance notice of any changes.

*All readings not in *The Anthology of Rap* or *Decoded* are on the class website.
<http://engl220004.weebly.com>

Week 1: 8/19-8/23 Let's Start Rappin'

M 8/19-Introductions and discussion of class contract.

Homework: Listen to Cornel West's spoken word piece "911" and the "The N Word" discussion. Access the files from the course website. Be prepared to vote on how the class will use the n-word in class, and to explain your answer.

W 8/21- Discuss listening homework. Finalize class contract.

F 8/23- What do others think of hip hop? Discuss reading journal requirements.

Weekly Response Assignment #1 due by Sunday at 5pm

LJ Entry #1: Decide whether you will keep a digital or traditional listening journal. Choose two of your favorite hip hop artists, or songs, and tell us why they are favorites. If you aren't familiar with hip hop, explain why and how music is meaningful to you.

Week 2: 8/26-8/30 Listen Up Y'all

Readings:

Ratcliff, Krista. "Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and A Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct," pgs. 204-220. (*you don't have to read this entire article, only the pages listed*).

Bradley, Adam. *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop*, Prologue, Rap Poetry 101, and Epilogue

Weekly Reading Response #2 due by Sunday at 5pm

LJ Entry #2

Major Writing Assignments and Final Paper

MWA #1 "The Message": Where did hip hop come from?

Students will write a 2-3 page critical review of a hip hop album released in the 1980s or 1990s (preferably an album you haven't listened to before). Write your review for young, contemporary hip hop fans. Assume that the audience is not familiar with early hip hop history, and has not heard the album before. Communicate to this audience the relevance of the chosen album to hip hop history and how it influenced contemporary hip hop artists. Why should a contemporary hip hop fan listen to this album made before they were alive (or just children)?

MWA #2 "Move Somethin'": How is hip hop changing?

Students will write a 2-3 page critical review of a contemporary hip hop album released after 2000 (preferably an album the writer hasn't listened to before). The audience will be contemporary "hip hoppers;" therefore the writer can assume that the reader is familiar with hip hop culture and history. Students will analyze and explain how the album demonstrates overall

changes in the hip hop movement, and why those changes are positive or negative for hip hop culture. If students wish, they can choose an album by the same artist used in MA #1, but the review must analyze the artist's impact on larger socio-political trends in the post-hip-hop movement.

Final Paper:

First Draft Due: Friday, November 22

Class Presentations: 12/2-12/6

Final Draft Due: Monday, December 9

“Bird’s Eye View”: What is the future of the hip hop?

Students will write an 8-10 page rhetorical analysis using hip hop lyrics of their choice. These lyrics can be chosen from the *Anthology of Rap*, or they can be from an outside source. Students will analyze the rhetorical content of the lyrics and place them within the historical context of the hip hop discourse community. At least two outside sources must be cited in explaining the socio-political significance of the lyrics to the future of the hip hop activism movement.

Questions students must address:

How do the lyrics portray the hip hop artist? Is the artist image generated from the lyrical content consistent with the media's portrayal of the artist?

What hip hop history and/or traditions does this particular piece pay homage to and how do those references enhance the credibility of the song?

How do the lyrics conform to the conventions/ideals of the hip hop discourse community?

How does the song challenge any conventions/ideals of the hip hop discourse community?

How does this song represent/not represent your vision of hip hop culture?

The final paper will also include a 2 page reflective letter in which you discuss your progress towards the student learning outcomes listed at the beginning of the syllabus. The reflective letter is used by the English Department to assess student success in English 220.