

—Rock and Roll: An American Story—

Course Syllabus



GRADING POLICY:

A student's letter grade in a course is just one of the ways progress and learning in a subject is measured. Progress reports and final semester grades will reflect work done up to that point in the grading cycle. In accordance with the Garfield High School grading policy, letter grades will be awarded using the standard grading scale in the GHS Student Handbook.

Grades are based on work done in four weighted categories:

- **Daily Class Work:** Totaling **60 percent** of the course grade, this category covers **student participation (40%)** in class activities and **assignments (20%)** such as daily journals, listening labs, discussions, multimedia, jam of the day, etc.
- **Tests (20%) & Quizzes (20%):** Students are expected to demonstrate some accountability and level of proficiency in identifying genres, artists, concepts, and trends from the history of Rock & Roll. From time to time students will be quizzed in various formats to achieve this goal. This category is **40 percent** of the student's grade.

To help improve communication with home and empower students to be responsible for their academic progress, students and parents will have access to grades and class information online through the district grading system. If you don't already have a password and individual logon, those should be established and communicated in the first few weeks of school. I have also created a class webpage which can be accessed either by the district and school website or directly at: <http://ghsrockhistory.weebly.com>

LATE WORK / ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Quite simply put, unexcused late work is not acceptable. While I encourage and expect every student to complete each assignment and/or project to the best of their ability, partial credit will be awarded, *at my discretion*, for incomplete work submitted *on time, but not for work turned in late*.

As always, late work issues not specifically covered in this policy will arise due to family emergencies, extenuating circumstances, etc. Students should **see me** with any individual concerns they may have, preferably prior to due dates. Please make every effort to minimize unnecessary absences. It is impossible to replace the learning situations and whole class activities students miss while out of the classroom. However, every effort will be made to keep the class website up-to-date with the latest lesson information. **IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY** to check the **CLASS ANNOUNCEMENTS** page of the class website to access any missed lessons or assignments for the class. For specifics on the GHS attendance policy we adhere to, consult the student handbook. ***Please note the following: For each day of excused absence one day is given to complete or make up work.***

—Rock and Roll: An American Story—

Course Syllabus



--- COURSE OUTLINE ---

Unit 1: The Birth of Rock

In the mid-1950s, Rock and Roll slammed into the consciousness of the American people. Whether you liked it or not, there was no denying that Rock and Roll had arrived. It was the first American musical tradition constructed from the many musical traditions that animated life in the 20th century, including Gospel, Blues, Country, Jazz and R&B. In bringing together these musical bloodlines, Rock and Roll also brought people together, from across regions, across race and class lines, and, finally, across oceans. It was the beginning of a historical turn that would change daily life in the modern world. This first section, The Birth of Rock and Roll, explores the roots of Rock and Roll, its emergence and its entrance into the cultural mainstream of America.

UNIT 2: TEENAGE REBELLION

From its raucous beginnings to the time of its mainstream acceptance, Rock and Roll was youth music. More exactly, it was the music of the teenager. Born of postwar affluence and the increased leisure time such affluence afforded young Americans, the teenager was a thing new to the American landscape. If for some they were an object of anxiety, this had everything to do with the fact that teenagers defined themselves in opposition to the parent generation. Rebellion was a part of being a teenager. And Rock and Roll was an expression of that rebellion and of the growing gap between generations. From the teen surf culture celebrated in the music of *the Beach Boys* to the mini-melodramas of the *Shangri-Las'* Girl Group sound and teen dances including the Twist, the Stroll, the Mashed Potato, and the Watusi, the world of the teenager was made larger and more powerful through the music itself. As 60s Soul and *the British Invasion* demonstrated, it would be the teenagers, inspired by their music, who would define American life moving forward.

UNIT 3: TRANSFORMATION

The teenage culture of the fifties and early sixties was the seedbed for the youth-driven counterculture of the late sixties and early seventies. This shift toward a countercultural sensibility among young people was reflected in the music itself. If in the fifties Rock and Roll had been viewed primarily as a popular entertainment, in the period of "transformation" it would come to be viewed as—in its most elevated forms—an Art. In the hands of *Bob Dylan*, *the Rolling Stones*, *the Beatles*, and others, music became a "serious" thing. As young people faced the troubling facts of a war that included them and a country that refused them the right to vote, music now offered, among other things, a megaphone through which their disillusionment could be voiced. As the nation saw the rise of the Civil Rights movement and the Black Power movement that followed, artists like *Marvin Gaye*, *James Brown*, and *Stevie Wonder* used music to express feelings of frustration about the racial divide and excitement around the possibility of change. And as the music addressed the world of which it was a part, the music grew more complex, more varied—but, importantly, that music was also changing the world in ways it hadn't previously.

UNIT 4: FRAGMENTATION

For a brief time, Rock and Roll seemed almost to be building its own utopia. In late sixties Rock and Roll culture in particular, the walls erected in the wider world - between the races, between men and women, between nations - seemed to collapse. The record collections of the young Rock and Roll audience often included R&B, Hard Rock, Blues, Pop, Jazz, Country, and more. Free Form FM radio mirrored this eclectic but inclusive approach to music by creating inventive playlists unbound by genre. And, then, as the "Fragmentation" crept in, the old walls seemed to reassert themselves. Fan communities, radio formats, and, indeed, even personal record collections came to be defined by genre. Hard lines were drawn. Punks defined themselves in opposition to the fans of arena rock groups like *Led Zeppelin*. Grunge borrowed from Heavy Metal but, more adamantly still, refused the theater of Heavy Metal. Radio was again split down racial lines. If Rock and Roll culture, in the broad sense, had been connected with youth culture as a whole, and this brought different genres and traditions into dialogue with one another, now Rock and Roll culture grew increasingly fragmented. It wouldn't mean the end of the music. But some of the promise of late sixties Rock and Roll was, for the moment, compromised.