The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Department of Cultural and Religious Studies,

MAICS 2nd Semester, 2025-26

CULS5209A   Special Topics in Intercultural Studies:
Popular Music, Culture and Society 流行音樂, 文化與社會

Lecturer: Dr. Chan Ka Ming

Proposed Course Outline

Content of the Course

How did popular music emerge with modern social development?
How does modern society embrace music with images and entertainment?
How does entertaining culture transform with media technological advancement?

This course is designed for the analysis of popular music with cultural studies and social science - from historical development since the 1920s with the evolving electronic media, to the latest transformation because of various platforms for performing and listening to pop songs. Popular music always takes shape through revolutionary new media, soundscape and broadcasting / narrowcasting, although most people are unaware of or even turn a deaf ear to it. With these concerns, popular music will be treated "seriously" for textual, socio-cultural and industrial analysis. Through the discussion in lectures, there are three major areas of studies with the naming of three Hong Kong popular songs. They are:

A. off / ON (by COLLAR)
   – Fans, Reception and Consumption   (Lecture A1-A3)
B. Stand by ME (by Anita Mui)
   – Images, Identity and Representation   (Lecture B1-B6)
C. Little Fires EVERYWHERE (by Vincy Chan)
   – Media, Spaces and Recognition   (Lecture C1-C3)

In Area A, we will "turn on" the "giant machine" of popular music for seeing its historical development; and cultural theories – Frankfurt school and Birmingham school, will be introduced for understanding popular music critically. Fan culture and relevant studies are also the focuses of recognizing the activeness and energy of fandom in popular music.

With the background of understandings, Area B will then connect the discussion of popular music to cultural and phenomenal examination especially with the focus of identity. Issues of music composition, lyrics writing and band sound, as well as singers' images, lyricist styles and generational changes of pop song practitioners will be explored. Cases of Hong Kong and overseas contexts, for example J-pop, K-pop and the U.S., will be highlighted for contrast and discussion.

Area C will follow up the intertwining media forms and pop song transformation, and discuss regional / transnational chemistry of popular music. The course will then conclude with reflection in seeing the challenges of popular music development in the future.

Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:
    a. Explain the main features of popular music and popular music industries;
    b. Discuss the different emphases of popular music in cultural studies;
    c. Evaluate the role of popular music in contemporary society; and
    d. Interpret popular music in respective social context.

Medium of Instruction: English (With lecture notes written in English; and some reading material and case studies supplemented in Chinese)

Teaching / Learning Activities: Lectures, presentation and discussion

Teaching Period: 5 January – 18 April 2026

Class Schedule and Venue: Every Tuesday 6:45-9:30 pm, CKB UG05

Assessment
1. Lecture and Tutorial Participation   –20%
    Students are expected to attend at least 80% of all lectures and tutorials respectively; and students should contribute to our discussion, including lectures and tutorials. Those who cannot attend classes should provide proof of evidences to explain the absence. Students who cannot attend 80% of classes have to do extra written work (of not less than 1000 words) on reviewing articles for their particular absent classes; otherwise they may have the risk of failing the course.

2. Group Presentation and Discussion (20-25 minutes)   –40%
    Students will be divided into groups (each with 3-4 students depending on the class size) for presentation; and it will be started from the 4th teaching week. Students will be randomly assigned to specific lecture topic for presentation; and they can analyse corresponding example or issue related to that lecture for presentation. This is to help refreshing the topic of corresponding lecture; and the presenters are expected to run a "Question & Answer" session after their presentation. Each presentation lasts for 20-25 minutes with the remaining 35-40 minutes for discussion. Therefore when presentation starts in the 4th teaching week, the first part of the class (of around 1 hour and 45 minutes) will be for lecture; and the remaining 1 hour will be for presentation and discussion.

3. Final Paper (3000-4000 words, in English)   – 40%
    Students should write a final paper at the end of the course; and they should design a topic of their interest no matter on Hong Kong popular music or other phenonema of pop songs in different contexts. Assessment will be based on how students apply analytical tools to critically discuss text of pop songs, their representation and socio-cultural significance.
    (Guidelines of writing can be found below)
    Deadline for the paper submission will be on 24 April 2026 before 23:59.

Guidelines for Group Presentation and Final Paper

    a. Elaboration of Theories and Concepts

Students are required to provide clear elaboration and evaluation of theories / concepts introduced in the course. There is no need to incorporate all the theories / concepts taught in the class; but please choose a specific one or two for analysing relevant case and example.

    b. Review of Literature / Past Studies

Students are required to review literature and past studies of popular music with respect to the designed topic for presentation or writing; and please quote the most relevant studies so that it can act as the bases of analysis. Books and journal articles are encouraged as references; online written and visual materials are also welcomed but please be aware that these materials (generally have no strict academic review) may be subjected to contextual and discursive limitation.

    c. Discussion of Popular Music and Related Phenomena

Students are expected to incorporate theories and concepts into the analysis of cases or phenomena of popular music. For presentation and paper writing, there is no set examples for analysis; and students have to design a topic for discussion. The theories, ideas and cases are just choices of students for framing the topic. Issues not mentioned in lecture and tutorial with well illustration and discussion are also welcomed.

    d. Structure and Style of Writing

Students are expected to provide a well-structured writing (better with subtopics for clarified framework) of formal academic presentation. Academic citation should be provided with bibliography; any writing with no citation will have the risk of plagiarism. Please submit the writing with Veriguide report through Blackboard before the deadline. Late submission may invite mark deduction; and students have to provide reasons with proof of evidence for late submission.

Key References

Agger, Ben. *Cultural Studies as Critical Theory*. London: The Falmer Press, 1992.

Bennett, Andy et al eds. *The Popular Music Studies Reader*. London & New York: Routledge, 2006.

Bennett, Andy and Janssen, Susanne. eds. *Popular Music, Cultural Memory, and Heritage*. London and New York: Routledge, 2017.

Chu, Yiu-Wai. *Hong Kong Cantopop: A Concise History*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2017.

De Kloet, Jeroen. *China with a Cut: Globalisation, Urban Youth and Popular Music*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010.

Du Gay, Paul. *Doing Cultural Studies: the Story of the Sony Walkman*. London: SAGE Publications, 1997.

Frith, Simon. *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays*. Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate, 2007.

Frith, Simon and Goodwin, Andrew. *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*. London: Routledge, 1990.

Hamm, Charles. *Putting Popular Music in Its Place*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Harrington, C. Lee and Bielby, Denise D. eds. *Popular Culture: Production and Consumption*. Malden: Blackwell, 2001.

Iwabuchi, Koichi. *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

Jarman-Ivens, Freya and Fouz-Hernandez, Santiago. *Madonna's Drowned Worlds: New Approaches to Her Transformation, 1983-2003*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.

Kim, Kyung Hyun and Choe, Youngmin. eds. *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014.

Kim, Youna. ed. *Media Consumption and Everyday Life in Asia*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Lewis, Lisa A. ed. *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Redmond, Sean and Holumes, Su. eds. *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader.* London: SAGE Publications, 2007.

Whiteley, Sheila, Bennett, Andy and Hawkins, Stan. ed. *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

Williams, Katherine and Williams, Justin A. eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Singer Songwriters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

中文參考資料

于逸堯,《香港好聲音》。香港:三聯,2013 年

朱耀偉,《香港流行歌詞研究:七十年代中期至九十年代中期》。香港:三聯書店,1998 年。

———,《光輝歲月:香港流行樂隊組合研究》。香港:2 匯智出版,2000 年。

———,《詞中物:香港流行歌詞研究》。香港:三聯,2007 年。

———,《歲月如歌:詞話香港粵語流行曲》。香港:三聯,2009 年。

陳清僑編,《情感的實踐:香港流行歌詞研究》。香港:牛津大學出版社,1997 年。

陳智德,《樂文誌》,台北:時報出版,2023 年。

陳嘉銘,吳子瑜及海邊欄,《給下一輪廣東歌盛世備忘錄——香港樂壇變奏》,香港:突破出版社,2022 年。

———,《給香港樂壇寫笑忘書》,香港:突破出版社,2024 年。

曾慧佳,《從流行歌曲看台灣社會》。台北:桂冠圖書,2000 年。

黃志淙,《流聲》。香港:民政事務局,2007 年。

黃志華,《早期香港粵語流行曲》。香港:三聯書店,2000 年。

———,《粵語流行曲四十年》。香港:三聯書店,1990 年。

黃夏柏,《漫遊八十年代——聽廣東歌的好日子》,香港:非凡出版,2020 年。

黃國恩,《電視汁撈飯——跳進劇集歌大時代》,香港:非凡出版,2018 年。

黃霑,《粵語流行曲的發展與興衰:香港流行音樂研究 1949 - 1997》。香港:香港大學亞洲研究中心博士論文,2003 年。

黃霑著,吳俊雄編,《保育黃霑》。香港:三聯,2021 年。

Lectures
Area A off / *ON*
– Fans, Reception and Consumption

Week 1 **Lecture A1, Introduction**
How does MIRROR make people enchanted from TV contest to singing concert?
- Popular Music as an Industry, and the Frankfurt School

References:
Agger, Ben. *Cultural Studies as Critical Theory*. London: The Falmer Press, 1992. (Chapter 4 – The Frankfurt School's Aesthetic Politics)
Frith, Simon. "The Industrialization of Music." In *The Popular Music Studies Reader*, edited by Andy Bennett, Barry Shank and Jason Toynbee, 231-238. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
Middleton, Richard. "In the Groove or Blowing the Mind?: The Pleasure of Musical Repetition." In *The Popular Music Studies Reader*, edited by Andy Bennett, Barry Shank and Jason Toynbee, 15-20. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Week 2 **Lecture A2**
*How did Beatles astonish the world with band sound?*
- Pop Song as a Site of Resistance, and the Birmingham School

References:
Agger, Ben. *Cultural Studies as Critical Theory*. London: The Falmer Press, 1992. (Chapter 5 – The Birmingham School of Cultural Studies)
Du Gay, Paul. *Doing Cultural Studies: the Story of the Sony Walkman*. London: SAGE Publications, 1997. (Introduction and Section 1 – Making Sense of the Walkman.)
Ehrenreich, Barbara, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs. "Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun." In *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, edited by Lisa A. Lewis, 84-106. London: Routledge, 1992.
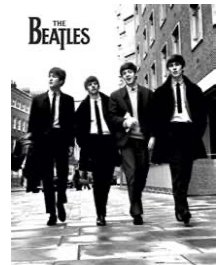
Week 3 **Lecture A3**
How did the death of John Lennon differ from the death of Leslie Cheung (張國榮)*?*
- Fandom as a Fantasy, and Idol Consumption

References:
Bennett, Andy and Rogers, Ian. "Popular Music and Materiality: Memorabilia and Memory Traces." In *Popular Music, Cultural Memory, and Heritage*, edited by Andy Bennett and Susanne Janssen, 27-41. London and New York: Routledge.
Jensen, Joli. "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization." In *Popular Culture: Production and Consumption*, edited by C. Lee Harrington and Denise D. Bielby, 301-14. Malden: Blackwell, 2001.
Wang, Yiman. "A Star is Dead: A Legend is Born: Practicing Leslie Cheung's Posthumous Fandom." In *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, edited by Sean Redmond and Su Holumes, 326-40. London: SAGE Publications, 2007.

Area B Stand by *ME*
– Images, Identity and Representation

Week 4 **Lecture B1**
Why could Joseph Koo (顧嘉煇) *and James Wong* (黃霑) (re)define Hong Kong pop songs?
- *Composing for the Hong Kong Entertainment*

References:
Daynes, Sarah. "The Music Construction of the Diaspora: the Case of Reggae and Rastafari." In *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, edited by Sheila Whiteley, Andy Bennett and Stan Hawkins, 25-41. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.
Frith, Simon. *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays*. Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate, 2007. (Chap. 12 "Look! Hear! The Uneasy Relationship of Music and Television")
朱耀偉，《歲月如歌：詞話香港粵語流行曲》。香港：三聯，2009 年。（第三章：翡翠劇場——越界歌聲，狂潮捲起）
黃霑著，吳俊雄編，《保育黃霑》之《第三冊：黃霑書房——流行音樂物語》。香港：三聯，2021 年。（第三章：同行——顧嘉煇，創作流行音樂）

Week 5 **Lecture B2**
Why could Sam Hui (許冠傑) *bypass away from Roman Tam* (羅文)*, George Lam* (林子祥) *or others?*
- *Writing for the Local Consciousness*

References:
DeNora, Tia. "Music and Self-Identity." In *The Popular Music Studies Reader*, edited by Andy Bennett, Barry Shank and Jason Toynbee, 141-147. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
Hoeven, Arno van der, Janssen, Susanne and Driessen, Simone. "Articulations of Identity and Distinction: The Meaning of Language in Dutch Popular Music." In *Popular Music, Cultural Memory, and Heritage*, edited by Andy Bennett and Susanne Janssen, 42-57. London and New York: Routledge.
吳俊雄，《此時此處——許冠傑》。香港：三聯，2007 年。(第二章：登台入室 明星初現 1967-1973；第三章：天皇巨星 庶民子佢 1974 - 1981)

Week 6 **Lecture B3**
Why could Anita Mui (梅艷芳), *Sally Yeh* (葉蒨文) *and Sandy Lam* (林憶蓮) *claim their love to Madonna before Lady Gaga?*
- *Dancing with City-Pop and Femininity*

References:
Hawkins, Stan. "On Performativity and Production in Madonna's Music." In *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, edited by Sheila Whiteley, Andy Bennett and Stan Hawkins, 180-190. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.
Pisters, Patricia. "Madonna's Girls in the Mix: Performance of Femininity Beyond the Beautiful." In *Madonna's Drowned Worlds: New Approaches to Her Transformation, 1983-2003*, edited by Freya Jarman-Ivens and Santiago Fouz-Hernandez, 22-35. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
李展鵬與卓男編，《最後的蔓珠莎華：梅艷芳的演藝人生》。香港：三聯，2014 年。(第一章：台上艷光四射)
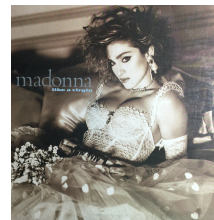
Week 8 **Lecture B4**

Why could Beyond differ from Rolling Stones and Tat Ming Pair (達明一派) *cross-reference from Bob Dylan?*

References:

Buxton, David. "Rock Music, the Star System, and the Rise of Consumerism." In *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, edited by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin, 427-40. London: Routledge, 1990.

Frith, Simon. *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays*. Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate, 2007. (Chap. 2 "The Magic That Can Set You Free': The Ideology of Folk and the Myth of the Rock Community")

朱耀偉，《光輝歲月：香港流行樂隊組合研究 (1984-1990)》，香港：匯智出版社，2012 年。（〈昔日舞曲：懷舊、童真、自我空間 〉、〈都市想像：空間、浪遊、生活〉及〈家國寓喻：後殖民身分認同〉，頁 194-259）

Week 10 **Lecture B5**

Why could Albert Leung (林夕) *and Wyman Wong* (黃偉文) *push the boundaries of love songs?*
- *Style and Textual Reform, and the Reclaiming of Local Creativity*

References:

Frith, Simon. *Taking Popular Music Seriously: Selected Essays*. Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate, 2007. (Chap. 14 "Why Do Songs Have Words?")

朱耀偉，《詞中物：香港流行歌詞研究》。香港：三聯，2007 年。(第一章：背景編；第二章：作者編)

朱耀偉，《歲月如歌：詞話香港粵語流行曲》。香港：三聯，2009 年。（第十七章：習慣失戀——純真傳說，情歌已死）
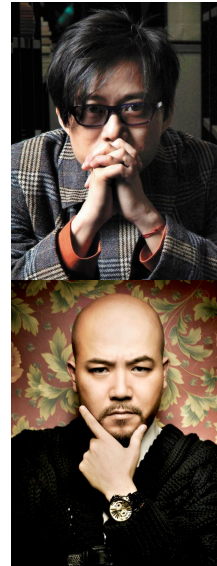
Week 11 **Lecture B6**

Why could my little airport and Khalil Fong (方大同) *… and Terence Lam* (林家謙) *and Panther Chan* (陳蕾) *… share the naming of "Singer-Songwriter"?*
- *Hong Kong Sight and Sound, and the New Generations*

References:

Shumway, David R. "The Emergence of the Singer Songwriter." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Singer Songwriters*, edited by Katherine Williams and Justin A. Williams, 11-20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

于逸堯，《香港好聲音》。香港：三聯，2013 年。（第十一章：訪談 陳大文@3C Music X 于逸堯）

朱耀偉，《歲月如歌：詞話香港粵語流行曲》。香港：三聯，2009 年。（第十八章：幾許風雨——十年人事，談新說舊）

海邊欄,《離不開的愛——謝安琪與香港文化》收於陳嘉銘, 吳子瑜及海邊欄著 《給下一輪廣東歌盛世備忘錄——香港樂壇變奏》，香港：突破出版社，2022 年，頁 151-162。
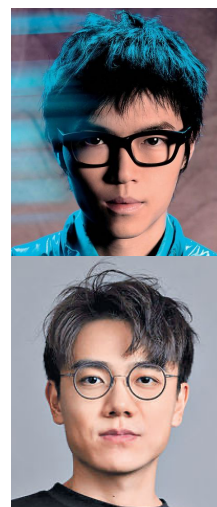
Area C   Little Fires *EVERYWHERE*
– Media, Spaces and Recognition

Week 12 **Lecture C1**
What does Keung To (姜濤) mean when he claimed to aim at the "Asian No. 1 (亞洲第一)"?
- Japanese pop music and Asianness

References:
Huat, Chua Beng. "East Asian Pop Culture: Layers of Communities." In *Media Consumption and Everyday Life in Asia*, edited by Youna Kim, 99-113. New York: Routledge, 2008.
Iwabuchi, Koichi. *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. (Chapter 1: Taking "Japanization" seriously: Cultural globalization reconsidered; Chapter 2: Trans/nationalism: The discourse on Japan in the global cultural flow.)
Rothenbuhler, Eric W. and McCourt, Tom. "Commercial Radio and Popular Music: Processes of Selection and Factors of Influence." In *The Popular Music Studies Reader*, edited by Andy Bennett, Barry Shank and Jason Toynbee, 309-316. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Week 13 **Lecture C2**
What does BLACKPINK dance to go beyond J-Pop and even K-Pop?
- Girls' Group Politics and Transnationality

References:
Epstein, Stephen and James Turnbull. "Girls' Generation? Gender, (Dis)Empowerment, and K-pop." In *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*, edited by Kyung Hyun Kim and Youngmin Choe, 314-36. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014.
Gauntlett, David. "Madonna's Daughters: Girl Power and the Empowered Girl-pop Breakthrough." In *Madonna's Drowned Worlds: New Approaches to Her Transformation, 1983-2003*, edited by Freya Jarman-Ivens and Santiago Fouz-Hernandez, 161-75. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
Warwick, Jacqueline. " 'He's Got the Power: the Politics of Production in Girl Group Music." In *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, edited by Sheila Whiteley, Andy Bennett and Stan Hawkins, 191-200. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

Week 15 **Lecture C3, Conclusion**
What do singers' online busking break through the coliseum?
- The Death of Pop Music, and its Resurrection?

References:
Bennett, Andy. "Subculture or Neotribes?: Rethinking the Relationship between Youth, Style and Musical Taste." In *The Popular Music Studies Reader*, edited by Andy Bennett, Barry Shank and Jason Toynbee, 106-113. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
Bennett, Lucy. "Singer-Songwriter and the Fandom in the Digital Ages." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Singer Songwriters*, edited by Katherine Williams

and Justin A. Williams, 329-340. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Hernandez, Deborah Pacini and Garofalo, Reebee. "The Emergence of Rap Cubano: an Historical Perspective." In *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, edited by Sheila Whiteley, Andy Bennett and Stan Hawkins, 89-107. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

吳子瑜，《明星做自己？——網絡時代，明星的自由與限制》收於陳嘉銘，吳子瑜及海邊欄著 《給下一輪廣東歌盛世備忘錄——香港樂壇變奏》，香港：突破出版社，2022 年，頁 315-320。

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Information regarding the academic honesty and plagiarism policy in the University is located at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/

All assignments should be submitted through Veriguide. Any assignment (i.e., project, paper or essay) that shows evidence of plagiarism will be marked down severely. In simple terms, plagiarism is copying passages and or/ ideas from other sources without referencing those sources. It is the writer's responsibility to cite the ideas and work of other correctly and properly in your paper or essays. Please visit the above websites for details and to avoid plagiarism.

About the Concern on the Uses of AI – Prohibit all use of AI tools

In assessing the level of achievement of learning outcomes and students' performance, students are expected to produce their own work independently without any collaboration with the use of AI tools.

> **All use of AI tools is prohibited in assignments and assessment tasks**
> For assignments and assessment tasks that count towards the final course grades, students are not allowed to submit work which is produced with the collaboration of or supported by the use of any generative AI tools.
> Any breach of the regulations will be considered an act of academic dishonesty and will be handled according to the University's *Procedures for Handling Cases of Academic Dishonesty.*
> In case of queries, students should seek advice from the course teacher.