

- [Fall 2015 MLAS Course Roster](#)

MLAS 6100: The Music of the Infidels with Professor Slayton

MLAS 6300: The United States and the Vietnam War with Professor Schwartz

MLAS 6100: The Films of Clint Eastwood and Woody Allen with Professor Girgus

MLAS 6700: Cuba and the United States: Past & Future Relations (a core seminar) with Professor Robinson.

MLAS 6100

The Music of the Infidels

Instructor: Professor Michael Slayton

Days and Time: Monday, 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

First Meeting: Monday, August 31st, 2015

Course Description

“To some extent I happily don't know what I'm doing. I feel that it's an artist's responsibility to trust that.”

--David Byrne

How does music affect us as listeners? How are musical “standards” created? How does the unorthodox become orthodox? To what degree are composers and artists obligated to move us forward, to “push buttons”? What constitutes “going too far?” These are the types of questions raised, explicitly or inexplicitly, by concert-goers, educators, music critics, and composers. Perhaps more than any other medium, music has been expected to hold to certain standards of “beauty” or “sensitivity,” often at the expense of progressive thought. This course, then will venture into the world of the “infidels,” those composers and artists who challenge the world around them to think about music in new ways, to listen with unorthodox ears. Much can be learned from their approaches to what music actually is, and what it could be.

Michael Slayton is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Music Composition and Theory at Vanderbilt University's Blair School of Music. He has composed works in a cross-section of musical genres, with specific emphasis on chamber music. His continuing dedication to the value of artistic exchange has afforded him opportunity to write for distinguished performers all over the world, and his music, published by ACA, Inc. (BMI), is regularly programmed in the U.S. and abroad, most recently in London and Birmingham, United Kingdom; Melbourne, Australia; and New York, NY. Slayton is author/editor-in-chief of *Women of Influence in Contemporary Music*, a book detailing the lives and music of several of America's notable women in composition (Scarecrow Press 2011, winner of the 2013 Pauline Alderman Award). A member of the American Composer's Alliance, Society of Composers, Inc., the College Music Society, Connecticut Composers, Inc., and Broadcast Music, Inc., Slayton continues to be an active participant in the national and international music community.

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MLAS 6300

The United States and the Vietnam War

Instructor: Professor Thomas Schwartz

Days and Time: Wednesdays, 6:00-8:30 p.m.
First Meeting: September 2nd, 2015

Course Description

"From its very beginning the Vietnam War divided Americans." So writes the historian Gary Hess in a recent treatment of the war. This course will examine the history of America's involvement with Vietnam, an involvement which began with a limited commitment to the French war effort in the late 1940s and escalated into a full-scale American war in 1965. Readings will focus on the reasons for the growing American involvement, the question of military strategy, and the Vietnamese response to intervention. The course will also consider such questions as the role of the media, the impact of the antiwar movement, and the war's overall effect on American society. Finally, we will consider the defeat of the American effort in Vietnam, its consequences and legacies, and the many and varied ways in which the Vietnam experience has influenced and affected America's more recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Thomas Alan Schwartz is a historian of the foreign relations of the United States, with related interests in Modern European history and the history of international relations. He is the author of [*America's Germany: John J. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany*](#) (Harvard, 1991), which was translated into German, *Die Atlantik Brücke* (Ullstein, 1992). This book received the Stuart Bernath Book Prize of the Society of American Foreign Relations, and the Harry S. Truman Book Award, given by the Truman Presidential Library. He is also the author of [*Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam*](#) (Harvard, 2003), which examined the Johnson Administration's policy toward Europe and assessed the impact of the war in Vietnam on its other foreign policy objectives. He is the co-editor with Matthias Schulz of [*The Strained Alliance: U.S.-European Relations from Nixon to Carter*](#), (Cambridge University Press, 2009). He is currently working on a biography of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Professor Schwartz has held fellowships from the Social Science Research Council, the German Historical Society, the Norwegian Nobel Institute, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and the Center for the Study of European Integration. He has served as President of the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations. He served on the United States Department of State's Historical Advisory Committee as the representative of the Organization of American Historians from 2005-2008. Professor Schwartz has also received The Madison Sarratt Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching in 2013.

Books:

Mark Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (Oxford pb.)

Gary R. Hess, *Explaining America's Lost War* (Blackwell)

Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* ([Penguin Classics](#))

Bao Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (Berkely pb.)

David Maraniss, *They Marched Into Sunlight*

Recommended (Depending on the project you choose)

Karl Marlantes, *Matterhorn: A Novel of the Vietnam War*

Leo Thorsness, *Surviving Hell: A POW's Journey*

Duong Thu Hong, *Paradise of the Blind*

Tim O'Brien, *The Things They Carried*

Melvin Small, *The Antiwarriors*

There are some films that I would like to show dealing with Vietnam. We will discuss how best to schedule these at our first class.

There are innumerable web sites devoted to the Vietnam War. These vary enormously in quality. We will discuss the use of some of these in class.

Requirements

The requirements for this course are two short papers, a longer project, a short quiz, and class participation. The two short papers will be approximately 750-1000 words. The third paper or project can concern almost any aspect of the Vietnam War. This project will also be presented in class on December 5. This could involve any number of possibilities, but should be worked out in discussion with the professor. If this is a written paper, it should be between 1500 and 2000 words.

The short quiz will simply test your basic knowledge of the Vietnam War.

Class participation is also expected and required.

Percentages:

Class Participation – 10 percent

First Paper – 15 percent

Second paper – 25 percent

Quiz – 20 percent

Final project – 30 percent

For all examinations, papers, and other assignments, students are expected to observe the Honor Code. If you have any questions or uncertainty about the application of the Honor Code, please ask the instructor.

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MLAS 6700

Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy

Instructor: Professor Frank Robinson

Days and Time: Thursday, 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

First Meeting: Thursday, September 3rd, 2015

Course Description

Today, Cuba and the United States are taking historic steps to chart a new course in their relations. Throughout the twentieth century, and especially since Fidel Castro's takeover in 1959, the histories of Cuba and the United States have been deeply intertwined. Of all the peoples in Latin America none have been more familiar to the United States than Cubans--who in turn have come to know their northern neighbors equally well. In 1899, as the United States settled into its occupation of Cuba after the Spanish-Cuban-American War, President William McKinley offered his famous observation about the relationship between the two countries: "The new Cuba yet to arise from the ashes of the past must be bound to us by ties of singular intimacy." Clearly, Cuba occupies a unique place in the history of American imperialism, and this research seminar seeks to trace the history of the complex political, cultural, and economic ties between Cuba and the United States with an eye to assessing the likelihood of an eventual rapprochement between the two countries.

W. Frank Robinson is an Assistant Professor of History and the Associate Director of the Center for Latin American Studies at Vanderbilt University. He specializes in the history of Latin America and the Caribbean, with a focus on twentieth century political and social movements, nationalism and populism, and Caribbean Diaspora communities. His teaching interests include the rise and decline of the Iberian Atlantic empires, modern Central America, and the contemporary Caribbean.

MLAS 6100

The Films of Clint Eastwood and Woody Allen

Instructor: Professor Sam Girgus

Days and Time: Thursday, 6:00p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

First Meeting: Thursday, September 3rd

Course Description

The course will offer close readings of major films by two of America's greatest current directors who have profoundly influenced modern film and contemporary culture and values. Both directors have changed our understanding and appreciation of film as art and cultural product. They have directed modern masterpieces as cinematic scenes of cultural engagement, conflict, and transformation. Leaders in developing the creative potential of film art, these directors emphasize certain themes in their work, including changing views of masculinity, the revolution in sexual and gender relationships, violence in contemporary culture, ethnic and racial identities and tensions, the search for meaning and belief, irony and humor.

Course Instructor:

Sam B. Girgus is professor of English at Vanderbilt University. His most recent work includes *Clint Eastwood's America* (Polity Press, November 2013) as well as *The Companion to Woody Allen*, co-edited with Peter Bailey (Blackwell, March 2013). In addition, he has written the refereed essay on Woody Allen for the *Oxford Bibliographies in Cinema and Media Studies* (March 2013). He also is the author of *Levinas and the Cinema of Redemption: Time, Ethics, and the Feminine* (2010); *America on Film: Modernism, Documentary, and a Changing America*; *Hollywood Renaissance: The Cinema of Democracy in the Era of Ford, Capra, and Kazan*; *The Films of Woody Allen* (2nd ed.) which has been translated into several languages; *Desire and the Political Unconscious in American Literature*; *The New Covenant: Jewish Writers and the American Idea*; *The Law of the Heart: Individualism and the Modern Self in American Literature*.

Books

Girgus, The Films of Woody Allen, 2nd edition

Cornell, Clint Eastwood and Issues of American Masculinity

Girgus, Clint Eastwood's America

Sterritt, The Cinema of Clint Eastwood

Belton, America on Film—McGraw Hill text

Additional Readings and Research on Relevant Articles: The Oxford University Press Cinema and Media Studies Bibliographies on Allen (Girgus) and Eastwood (Bingham) and The Companion to Woody Allen, eds. Bailey and Girgus

Recommended Readings

Thomas Schatz, The Genius of the System; Hollywood Genres; Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era

Robert Sklar, Movie-Made America

Girgus, Hollywood Renaissance; Levinas and the Cinema of Redemption

Peter Bailey, The Reluctant Art of Woody Allen

Laura Mulvey, Death 24x a Second (for film theory)

Jennifer Smyth, Fred Zinnemann (a model of American studies film research and criticism)

Requirements

Students will keep a weekly Film Journal of insights and information along with a brief review and analysis of the film of the week

Two brief papers and a final paper and project

Required viewing of one Film a Week as a class at a time to be arranged with the class members along with individual viewings of relevant films

Serious class participation and discuss will be encouraged and expected from each student.