

## **THR 380 Hip-hop in Popular Culture**

Monday and Wednesday, 4:00-5:15pm  
4002 WESCO

**Professor:** Nicole Hodges Persley, Ph.D.

### **Course Description**

This course will explore Hip-hop's impact on American Popular culture. Focusing on the music and culture's contentious relationship to blackness, African American identity and notions of American multiculturalism, we will survey Hip-hop's impact on a wide range of social and artistic practices. The course objectives are as follows: 1) to explore Hip-hop inspired works in American popular culture framing these inquiries within larger theoretical and popular debates about Hip-hop music's impact on race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality; 2) to engage the larger social, economic and political histories that produce Hip-hop and its impact on popular culture. Each week our readings are framed by a theme that relates to one of the four "elements" of Hip-hop and weekly "key" words that interrogate how categories of difference shape Hip-hop and American popular culture.

### **Required Text**

The following texts are available at the University Bookstore.

- Foreman, Murray and Mark Anthony Neal, Eds., *That's the Joint: The Hip-hop Studies Reader* New York: Routledge, 2004
- Chang, Jeff. *Total Chaos: The Art and Aesthetics of Hip-hop*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2006.

**Reference Text** (on reserve at Watson Library)

- Chang, Jeff. *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A Hip-hop History*. New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2007.
- Hess, Mickey, Ed. *Icons of Hip-hop Vol. 1 and 2*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007.

### **Course Organization and Disclaimer**

This course is organized using an interactive and multi-media approach to Hip-hop and Popular Culture. **This is not a Hip-hop history or music appreciation course.** We will explore the music and culture of Hip-hop in the United States and the various ways that Hip-hop impacts our everyday lives. Each week, I offer readings and/ visuals that you must review. I also offer supplementary audio and/or visual text suggestions that may help you clarify some of the key themes discussed in a particular week. The course explores the many ways that Hip-hop circulates in popular culture, so it makes sense that we engage a multi-media approach. Before you commit to taking this course, you should read the following **course disclaimer**. This **disclaimer** addresses the theoretical frame for this course. Once you sign on to take the course you agree to the following:

- 1) That we will take for granted that race, ethnicity, gender, class, disability and sexuality shape popular culture and impact all of our perspectives. This means that we will discuss all of these issues as we discuss Hip-hop and popular culture. For example, you should not be shocked to hear a lecture that discusses race and sexuality in Hip-hop.
- 2) By taking this course, you agree to engage material that may contain explicit lyrics and/or visual content that maybe offensive. These works are presented as explorations of artistic practices and are not intended to offend and/or shock the class audience.

- 3) We will take for granted the fact that Hip-hop music is often created with the intention of provocation and subversion. This course engages larger socio-economic, historical and political situations that produce a particular Hip-hop inspired work.

**Attendance/Discussion Group – 20% = 200 points**

You must complete the readings each week for the course. I will lecture on Monday and have a guided class discussion on Wednesdays. ALL OF YOUR READING SHOULD BE COMPLETE BY WEDNESDAY. I, nor the GTA, will use class time or office hours to re-cap what you should have already read. You cannot participate in the course discussions if you have not completed the readings and you are not in class. The class will be divided into discussion groups that work together as a team to discuss the readings and supplementary texts. Each week a group will be assigned to lead the discussion. Reading assignments are mandatory for passing the course. Exams will draw directly from lectures, readings and discussion. Discussion groups (“crews”) will be selected alphabetically based on the roll and will be posted by the first Thursday of the second week of class on Blackboard.

**Come to class**

I purposely discuss things in class that you will not be able to make-up. We will circulate a sign in sheet for each course. Two (2) un-excused absences are permitted. After two unexcused absences, your final discussion grade will be lowered accordingly.

**Written Assignments – Reaction Blog – 15% of your grade = 150 points**

The only weekly written assignment for this course is your commentary on the class blog which consists of a response of a maximum of 200 words, single spaced, demonstrating your understanding of the KEY WORDS for each week.

This is an opportunity to develop critical writing skills that allow you to express yourself succinctly and to prepare for **essay questions and identifications on the mid-term and final**. This is an academic exercise and should not be used to make comments that have nothing to do with the key words or class material. You are submitting work that is the equivalent to a short reaction paper. The GTA gives you points for these responses each week and will also alert you if your writing needs work.

### **Exams – (2) 50% of your grade = 500 points**

There are two exams (25%each) scheduled, a midterm and a final exam. The exams are open book; however this is more difficult than it appears. Exams are not comprehensive, however, knowledge is cumulative therefore any ideas that we learn in the first part of the course may appear in some context on the final exam. **You have the option of working together on a group exam or to take the exam alone.** If you choose to work in a group, you accept the final grade as a collective. If you work alone, you are responsible for completing the entire exam alone and for your final grade.

The tests will be uniform and will consist of ten (10) identifications and two (2) comprehensive essay questions. *You must site from a combination of the lecture, readings, images, films, videos, music, etc. in your exam responses, so it is important to take good notes in class and on the films/videos/songs.* You are responsible for developing your own review sheets and/or study guides. The best way to prepare for exams is to complete the readings, review your written assignments and notes, attend class and work in groups to master the material. You cannot pass the exams if you do not come to class.

### **Final Project – (15%) =150 points**

You have two options for your final project.

- **Option 1 – Critical Paper** – You may write a paper that engages Hip-hop and Popular Culture. You must decide on a topic by mid-term in consultation with your GTA. **The paper must be eight (8) pages typed, twelve (12) point Font, double spaced and stapled.** You must use proper citations such as APA, MLA, or Chicago. You must include a bibliography with a minimum of *five reputable* critical sources (articles, journals, scholarly books, etc.) not WIKIPEDIA.
- **Option 2 – Critical Creative Project** – Your final project can be any type of creative work that you conceive that critically relates to Hip-hop in Popular Culture. This “creative work” can be a short story, a one act play, a poem, a monologue, a breaking performance, etc. Your project must broadly address one or more of the themes we have discussed in the course. You must include a **two page, typed and double spaced paper** that describes your project and why you chose to do it. You must also include a one page **bibliography** of at least 3 *critical sources* used to develop your project using proper citation practices listed above.

Both the Option 1 and 2 require the student to make a five (5) minute presentation on their project to the class WEEK 17 – MARKED ON THE SYLLABUS AS “RAP SESSIONS.”

### **Grading Percentages**

Midterm = 25%

Final = 25%

Final Project = 15%

Written Assignments = 15%

Class Participation and Discussion = 20%

### **Blackboard**

This course will utilize Blackboard. Blackboard can be accessed through the KU Webpage by using your KU ID and password. Please check Blackboard regularly for supplemental readings. I will send out and email and/ or twitter alerts if we have changes to the syllabus or readings. Any supplemental readings, references, the course syllabus, web links and extra credit opportunities will be posted on Blackboard throughout the semester.

### **Disabilities and Special Needs**

The KU office of Disability Resources coordinates accommodations and services for all students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted DR, please do so as soon as possible.

### **GTA Respect**

An advanced doctoral student is assigned as the GTA for this course. S/he is my proxy in discussion section on Wednesdays and in discussing and delivering grades. If you feel that a grade is not fair, please address it with the GTA first. The GTA will help guide discussion and will also meet with you in by appointment if you have problems. You can always come to meet with me to talk about anything in class. However, it is unfair to discuss your grade with me without giving the GTA the opportunity to address any concerns first.

### **Course Etiquette**

Because this is a course on Hip-hop, many students feel that social protocols in a classroom environment can be relaxed. This is not the case. Please maintain social decorum when addressing faculty, the themes of this course and your peers.

#### *Writing*

- This is an upper level undergraduate course. At this point in your academic career, I expect your writing to reflect your ability to think critically and cite sources properly. The study of Hip-hop is an academic exercise. Please do not write papers or responses using colloquial terms or “styles.” I will ask you to visit a writing lab to improve your skills if I see that your writing lacks critical analysis and clarity. If you do not understand what you are saying, neither will I.

#### *Technology*

- Cell phones are disruptive to everyone in class. All cell phones and PDAs must be turned off and put away during class. If you have to take a call, just politely get up and leave, then re-enter as to not disturb the class. *You will be asked to leave immediately if you are seen texting in the course.* You may use laptops on Wednesday only during the class discussion sessions. When you are in lecture on Monday, take handwritten notes please.

#### *Email and Phone Correspondence*

- When addressing email correspondence and leaving voicemails, please identify yourself with your first and last name, contact information and the reason why you are calling and/or writing. Please address the professor and GTA with their name (not “Whas’ up? Or “Hey...”). We respect you as students and ask that you respond in kind. We have many students, so first names will not suffice.

### **Classroom Conduct**

- The instructional program, as KU is based upon the premise that students enrolled in a class are entitled to receive instruction free from the interference by other students. If an instructor believed that student's behavior is disrupting the class and interfering with normal instruction, the faculty member may direct the student to leave the class for the remainder of the class time. In such circumstances the professor is the sole judge that student's behavior is sufficiently disruptive to warrant a temporary dismissal from the classroom.

### **Academic Integrity**

- The KU Policy of academic integrity is as follows: "Academic integrity is a central value in higher education. It rests on two principles: first, that academic work is represented truthfully as to its source and its accuracy, and second, that academic results are obtained by fair and authorized means." "Academic misconduct" occurs when these values are not respected. Academic misconduct at KU is defined in the University Senate Rules and Regulation [www.ku.edu/~unigov/usrr.html#art2sect6](http://www.ku.edu/~unigov/usrr.html#art2sect6). A good rule of thumb is "if you have to ask if this is cheating, it probably is."

### **Right to Amend the Syllabus**

- I reserve the right to amend the syllabus at anytime in the semester in order to meet the needs of the students. In order to do this, I may make adjustments from time to time. I will always give notice in advance of any changes.

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

### Week 1

**Monday 8/24**

#### **Introduction to the Course**

**Wednesday 8/26**

#### **Readings:**

- “Beyond Beats and Rhymes: A Hip-hop Timeline” read on the web at [http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/hiphop/about\\_hiphop.htm](http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/hiphop/about_hiphop.htm)
- Hodges Persley, Nicole. “A Timeline of Hip-hop History.” *Icons of Hip-hop: Encyclopedia of the Music and Culture* (Passed out in class Monday 8/24)
- Hebdige, Dick “Rap and Hip-hop: The New York Connection.” pp. 223-232 (Forman and Neal)

#### **Supplementary Audio References to Regional Sounds**

##### **West Coast**

- Los Angeles – NWA – “Niggas with Attitude”; Tupac Shakur – “*To Live and Die in LA*”; Dr. Dre and Snoop Dog – “*The Chronic*”, Ice-T “*Cop Killer*”

##### **East Coast**

- Eric B and Rakim – “New York, New York”; MC Shan- “The Bridge”; KRS- One – “South Bronx”; Beastie Boys – “No Sleep Till Brooklyn”; Run DMC – Run-DMC – “It's Like That”

##### **Mid-West**

- Detroit – Eminem- “Lose Yourself”
- Ohio – Bone Thugs and Harmony – “For the Love of Money”
- Chicago – Common – “A Song for Assata”; Kanye West – “Homecoming”
- Kansas City – Krizz Kaliko “Anxiety”

##### **South**

- Atlanta – Outkast – “Welcome to Atlanta”; T.I. – “What You Know Bout That?”
- Texas – Paul Wall “They Don’t Know”; Robb Bass “I Want to Rock Now”
- New Orleans – “Lil Wayne and Young Money” – “New Orleans”
- Memphis – Three 6 Mafia “Memphis”

#### **Written Assignment Due: HIP-HOP ELEMENTS AND REGIONAL HIP-HOP SOUNDS**

### WEEK 2 –

**Monday 8/31-**

#### **Read:**

- Boyd, Todd. “Check Yo Self Before You Wreck Yo Self: The Death of Politics in Rap Music and Popular Culture.” pp.325-340 (Forman and Neal)
- Dyson, Michael Eric “The Culture of Hip-hop.” pp.61-68 (Forman and Neal)

**Wednesday 9/2**

**Class Discussion:**

**Supplementary Audio References:**

- Public Enemy – “Fight the Power”
- Eminem – “We Made You”
- Black Star – “Astronomy”
- Tupac Shakur – “Old School”
- Lauryn Hill – “I Used to Love Him”
- Digable Planets – “Re-Birth of Slick”

**Written Assignment Due: BLACKNESS and HIP-HOP**

**Week 3**

**Monday 9/7 – Labor Day – class canceled**

**Wednesday 9/9**

**Read:**

- “B-Beat Bombarding the Bronx: Mobile DJ Starts Something with Oldie R&B Discs
- Karimi, Robert. “How I found My Inner DJ.” pp.219-221 (Chang)
- George, Nelson. “Sample This” pp. 504-509 (Forman and Neal)

**Watch:**

- *Scratch* (on reserve at Watson Library)

**Week 4**

**Monday 9/14**

**Read:**

- Samuels, David “The Rap on Rap: The ‘Black’ Music that Isn’t Either.” (Forman and Neal) pp. 147-153
- Greg Tate, Vijay Prashad, Mark Anthony Neal, Brian Cross “Got Next: A Roundtable on Identity and Aesthetics after Multiculturalism Roundtable” pp. 33-52 (Chang)
- Kelley, Robin D.G. “The People in Me” *Colorlines* (Blackboard)

**Wednesday 9/16**

**Class Discussion:** Crew Work

**Supplementary Audio References:**

- NAS – “Hip-hop is Dead”
- Lauryn Hill – “I Get Out”
- A Tribe Called Quest – “Low End Theory”
- De la Soul – “Me, Myself and I”
- Beastie Boys – “Hold it Now, Hit it”

**Written Assignment Due**

<b>Week 5</b>
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**Monday 9/14**

**Read:**

- Castleman, Craig “The Politics of Graffiti” p.21-27 (Forman and Neal)
- Adams, Cey, Rollins, Brent and Jenkins, Sacha “Words and Images: A Roundtable on Hip-hop Design.” pp.117-132. (Chang)

**Watch:**

- *Wild Style* (on reserve Watson Library)
- *\*Style Wars* (\*optional – on reserve Watson Library)

**Wednesday 9/16**

**Class Discussion:** Crew Work

**Supplementary Audio References:**

- KRS – One “Out for Fame”
- Aesop Rock – “Train Buffer”
- Pack FM – “Click Clack Spray”
- Looptroop – “Ambush in the Night”

<b>Week 6</b>
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**Monday 9/21**

**Read:**

- Banes, Sally. “Breaking” pp. 34-45 (Forman and Neal)
- Hazzard-Donald, Katrina. “Dance in Hip-hop Culture” pp. 584-597 (Forman and Neal)
- Chang, Jeff. “The Pure Movement and the Crooked Line: An Interview with Rennie Harris” pp.59-69 (Chang)

**Watch (one film and two “You Tubes” from below):**

- *Beat Street* (on reserve at Watson Library)
- *Krump* (on reserve at Watson Library)
- *Chris Brown MTV Awards 2007* (You Tube)
- *Rennie Harris Pure Movement* (You Tube)
- *Rock Steady Crew* (You Tube)
- *Michael Jackson: Beat It* (You Tube)
- *MC Hammer: “Can’t Touch This”* (You Tube)

### Wednesday 9/23

**Class Discussion:** Crew Work

**Supplementary Audio References:**

- Timbaland – “Bounce”(Clean Version)
- Flow Rida – “In the Ayer”
- Afrika Bambaataa – “Planet Rock”
- Busta Rhymes – “Don’t Touch Me”
- Fat Joe – “We Thuggin”
- Mos Def – “Universal Magnetic”

**Written Assignment Due:**

<b>Week 7</b>
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### Monday 9/28

**Watch:** *Freestyle: The Art of Rhyme* (on reserve at Watson Library)

**Read:**

- “Baldwin, Davarian L. “Black Empire, White Desires: The Spatial Politics of Identity in the Age of Hip-hop” pp. 61-68 (Forman and Neal)
- Kelley, Robin D.G. “Looking for the ‘Real’ Nigga: Social Scientists Construct the Ghetto” pp. 135-156 (Forman and Neal)

### Wednesday 9/30

**Class Discussion:** Crew Work

**View:**

- “Best of Jin’s Rap Battles” – BET 106 and Park (You Tube)
- *8 Mile* (Watson Library)

<b>Week 8</b>
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### Monday 10/5

**Read:**

- Morgan, Marcyliena “Shredding the Veil: Race and Class in Popular Feminist Identity” pp. 425-444 (Blackboard)
- Gilroy, Paul “It’s a Family Affair” pp.98-106 (Forman and Neal)
- Supplemental Reading: Rose, Tricia. “Never Trust a Big Butt and a Smile” pp.335-352 (Forman and Neal)

**Watch:**

- *Say My Name: Women in Hip-hop* (on reserve Watson Library- we will have a campus screening of this documentary)
- *Hip-hop” Beyond Beats and Rhyme* (on reserve Watson Library)
- Optional Film: *American Pimp* (on reserve Watson Library)

**Wednesday 10/7**

**Supplementary Audio References:**

- Queen Latifah – “U.N.I.T.Y
- Kanye West – “Golddigger”
- Eve – “Who’s That Girl”
- Salt-N-Pepa – “Push It”
- Roxanne Shante – “Roxanne's Revenge”
- Ol' Dirty Bastard – “Shimmy Shimmy Ya”
- 50 Cent – “In Da Club”
- Sir Mix-A-Lot – “Baby Got Back”
- Missy Elliott – “Get Ur Freak On”

**Written Assignment Due: GENDER and SEXUALITY**

<b>Week 9</b>
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**Monday 10/12**

**Lecture:** *From Kung Fu to Spike Lee: Hip-hop’s Influence on American Film*

**Read:**

- Arnold, Eric.K, “Put Your Camera Where My Eyes Can See: Hip-hop Video, Film and Documentary.” pp.306-320
- Forman, Murray. “Represent: Race, Space and Place in Rap Music.” Pp.231-255

**Watch (2 of the following films):**

- *Do the Right Thing* (on reserve Watson Library)
- *Hustle and Flow* (on reserve Watson Library)
- *8 Mile* (on reserve Watson Library)

**Wednesday 10/14**

**Class Discussion:** Crew Work

**Week 10**

**Monday 10/19**

**Read:**

- Wang, Oliver. "Trapped in Between the Lines: The Aesthetics of Hip-hop Journalism." pp. 161-165 (Chang)
- Adams, Chey, Rolling, Brent and Jones, Sacha, "Words and Images: A Roundtable on Hip-hop Design" pp.117-132 (Chang)

**Watch:**

- KFC Commercial with MC Hammer (You Tube)
- *Entourage*- "Kanye West Cameo" (You Tube)
- The Original Sugar Hill Gang on the DL Hughley Show on CNN (You Tube)

**Wednesday 10/21**

**Class Discussion:** Crew Work

**Supplementary Audio References:**

- Kanye West – "Crack Music"
- Sugar Hill Gang – "Rapper's Delight"
- Nas – "Hip-hop is Dead"
- Jay-Z – "H.O.V.A."
- MC Hammer – "Can't Touch This"
- Jay Z – "Death of Autotune"

**WEEK 11**

**Monday 10/26**

- **MIDTERM – TAKE HOME-POSTED ON BLACKBOARD**
- **Return in GTA box no later than 12 noon on TUESDAY, 10/27. NO EXCEPTIONS.**

**Wednesday 10/28 –**

**Read:**

- Yee, Lydia. "Between the Studio and The Streets: Hip-hop in the Postmillennial Visual Arts" pp.133-148.
- Miller, Paul, AKA DJ Spooky. "The City in Public Versus Private: In a Scanner Darkly" pp.149-160.
- Murray, Derek Conrad. "Hip-Hop vs. High Art: Notes on Race as Spectacle" pp.4-19 (Blackboard)

**View on Blackboard:**

- **Images of art work by:** Iona Rozeal Brown (D.C.) Kehinde Wiley (LA), Sanford Biggers (NY), Nikki S. Lee (NY), Kanye West (Chicago), Shepard Fairley (LA), Swoon (NY), Gaia (Brooklyn), Oliver Vernon (Brooklyn), and James Marshall (Dalek) (NY and Raleigh, NC).

**Watch 3 of 5 videos:**

**Week 12**

**Monday 11/2**

**Read:**

- Hoch, Danny. "Here We Go Yo': A Hip-hop Arts Manifesto." (Chang)

- Davis, Eisa. "Found in Translation: The Emergence of Hip-hop Theatre." pp.70-77 (Chang)
- Joseph, Marc Bamuthi, Bartlow, Trace and Reyes, Javier, "From the Dope Spot to Broadway: A Roundtable on Hip-hop Theatre, Dance and Performance" pp. 78-91 (Chang)

**Watch:**

- Hoch, Danny. *Jails, Hospitals and Hip-hop* (on reserve at Watson Library)
- Quickley, Jerry. "Washington City Paper: Hip-hop Theater Fest" (You Tube)
- Jones, Sarah. "Your Revolution" (You Tube)

**Wednesday 11/4**

**Class Discussion:** Crew Work

**Written Assignment: HIP-HOP THEATER and PERFORMANCE**

<b>Week 13</b>
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**Monday 11/9**

**Lecture:** *Yes We Can: Hip-hop and the Politics of Identity and Representation*

**Read:**

- Kitwana, Bakari. "The Challenge of Rap Music from Cultural Movement to Political Power" pp. 341-350 (Forman and Neal)
- Ards, Angles. "Organizing the Hip-hop Generation" pp.311-324.(Forman and Neal)

**Watch:**

- Will I.A.M – "Yes We Can" (You Tube)
- Kanye West "Hurricane Katrina" (You Tube)
- CNN Kids "Rap the Vote" (You Tube)
- Hip-hop and Politics: Vote or Die (You Tube)

**Wednesday 11/11**

**Class Discussion:** Crew Work

**Supplementary Audio References:**

- Ice Cube "Check Yo Self Before you Wreck Yo' Self"
- Nas "I Know I Can"
- Dead Prez – "Police State"
- T.I. – "Whatever You Like"

**Written Assignment Due: POLITICS and IDENTITY**

**Week 14**

**Monday 11/16** Office hours canceled Monday.

**Read:**

- Fleetwood, Nicole R. "Hip-hop Fashion, Masculine Anxiety, & the Discourse of Americana" in Elam, Harry and Jackson, Kennell, Eds. *Black Cultural Traffic: Crossroads in Global Performance and Popular Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005. pp. 326-345. (Blackboard)
- Kun, Josh "Two Turntables and a Social Movement: Writing Hip-hop at Century's End" pp. 580-592 (Blackboard)

**Read Lyrics on Blackboard to:**

- Lil Kim "Get Money" (You Tube)
- Biggie Smalls "One More Chance" (You Tube)

**Wednesday 11/18**

**Supplemental Song References:**

- Run DMC – "My Adidas"
- Biggie Smalls – "One More Chance"
- Lil Kim – "Get Money"
- T.I. – "Swing Ya Rag"
- Big Tymers – "Still Fly"

**Written Assignment Due:**

**Week 15**

**Monday 11/23**

**Lecture:** *From the Bronx to the Banlieu: The Conflation of African Americanness with Hip-hop in Global Popular Culture*

**Read:**

- Bartlett, Andrew. "Airshafts, Loudspeakers and the Hip-hop Sample: Contexts and African American Musical Aesthetics" pp.443-469 (Forman and Neal)
- Durand, Alain – Philippe "Selected Reading TBD" from *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in the Francophone World* (Blackboard)

**Watch on You Tube:**

- Kool Savas (Germany)
- Guru and MC Solaar (France)
- Daara J (Senegal)
- Tsotsi ( South Africa)
- Fabri Fibra (Italy)
- F.I.P.G.C (Denmark)
- Shounen Heart- Home Made Kazoku (Japan)
- THP Family (China)

**Wednesday 11/25 – NO CLASS-THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Week 16**

**Monday 11/30 –**

**Lecture:** *Got Next: The Future of Global Hip-hop Culture*

**Read:** Johnson, Marc Bamuthi “(Yet Another) Letter to A Young Poet” pp.11-17 (Chang)

Allen, Harry “Dreams of a Final Theory” pp.7-9 (Chang)

**Watch:**

- *Slingshot Hip-hop* (Watson Library)
- Black Violin (You Tube)
- Miri Ben Ari (You Tube)
- David Roumain (You Tube)
- Breakin’ Convention 2009 (You Tube)
- Juste Debout France2008 (You Tube)
- Ian Mc Kinnon (You Tube)
- Marc Bamuthi Joseph (You Tube)