

ENG 274: POETICS OF HIP HOP (H) (D)

Hip-hop is poetry for the people. That is the central premise of this class, which will use rap lyrics, music, and culture to teach the fundamentals of poetics. While hip-hop's popularity and subject matter has led some to dismiss its literary value, more recent scholarship has recognized rap's deep engagement with both Western and African literary traditions. Indeed, as we'll discover, hip-hop's poetics link artists like Jay-Z and Biggie to The Odyssey and Beowulf. By carefully analyzing the lyrics of influential rappers ranging from Afrika Bambaataa to Wu-Tang Clan, we will learn both the formal structures that rap tracks are built upon and poetic principles that govern the western canon of verse. Further, by situating hip-hop in its historical, cultural, and political contexts, we will explore the ways in which hip-hop grew from Bronx street parties into one of the most popular and influential forms of global art. Additionally, we will apply our newfound understanding of poetry to selected Western poets. Course work will include written analysis of lyrics, short video responses on Flipgrid, and a collaborative multi-media research project.

Credits: 3

Prerequisites:

ENG 102

Department: [English](#)