Gainesville was a Big Town: Exploring the Music Roots of Gainesville, Florida

1 credit | UF Honors UnCommon Arts

Spring 2026 | IDH2952, Class #26411

Basic Course Information

Instructor

- **Hannah Whitaker**, Women's and Gender Studies Librarian
- **Email**: hwhitaker@ufl.edu
- **Phone**: (352) 273-0144
- **Office**: Library West 503
- **Office hours**: Wednesdays 1-3 or by appointment

Meetings

- Mondays Period 4 (10:40-11:30am)
- Location: Little 119

Course description

Maybe you've sung "I Won't Back Down" at the Swamp, been to Heartwood for a show, or attended The Fest, but do you really know the music history of Gainesville, Florida? Through this course, students will be introduced to the artists who've at some point called Gainesville - or a surrounding town – "home," such as Bo Diddley, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, Stephen Stills, Minnie Riperton, Sister Hazel, and Driveaway. A range of genres, from folk to rock to indie pop will be explored. Students will assume the role of music journalists, reviewing one to two albums by local musicians each week, posting their reviews to a discussion board. As a class we'll discuss themes found within the lyrics and how they relate to the social and political times in which they were produced, analyzing the complex history of Gainesville. Through this course, students will be introduced to library and archival research, exploring the collections of the George A. Smathers Libraries for artifacts and ephemera documenting the rich music history of this southern town. Students will be encouraged to explore Gainesville, visiting historical sites and venues, comparing how the city looks now to photographs taken at the time in which the musicians were performing.

Course Materials

Each week, students will be expected to listen to 2-3 albums before class. In addition to the albums, students may be assigned supplementary reading materials (such as newspaper articles or interviews) publicly available online or through the library.

While no textbooks are required, I highly recommend reading the following books:

- ***Music Everywhere: The Rock and Roll Roots of a Southern Town***, Marty Jourard

- o   Available to read in [Smathers Library](#)
- o   Available to check out from the [Alachua County Library District](#)
- o   Available for purchase at [University Press of Florida](#)
- ***Heartbreaker: A Memoir***, Mike Campbell with Ari Surdoval
  - o   Available to check out from the [Alachua County Library District](#)
  - o   Available for purchase at [The Lynx](#)
- ***Gainesville Punk: A History of Bands and Music***, Matt Walker
  - o   Available to check out from the [Architecture and Fine Arts Library](#)
  - o   Available to read in [Smathers Library](#)
  - o   Available to check out from the [Alachua County Library District](#)
  - o   Available for purchase at [The Lynx](#)

Materials Fee

Students must have access to a music streaming platform - such as Spotify or Apple Music - to listen to the albums assigned each week. Depending on which streaming service plan students choose, the materials fee may range from $0.00 to approximately $23.96.

- [Spotify Premium cost](#)
  - o   A four-month individual trial of Spotify is free, and costs $11.99/month afterwards.
  - o   A student Spotify plan costs $5.99/month, with the first month free.
- [Apple Music cost](#)
  - o   An individual Apple Music plan costs $0.99 for the first three months and $10.99/each month after.
  - o   Student Apple Music plans cost $5.99/month.

Course Objectives

Course Goals

Throughout the duration of the course "Gainesville was a Big Town: Exploring the Music Roots of Gainesville, Florida,"

- Students will be introduced to artists who at one point called Gainesville "home," recognizing their contributions to the music industry.
- Students will acquire the skills necessary for conducting academic research and will locate archival sources relevant to the history of Gainesville music.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- **Identify** local musicians and their discographies and **analyze** the themes found within the albums of local musicians and how they relate to the social and political times in which they were produced.
- **Explore** the collections of the George A. Smathers Libraries, searching the catalog and digital collections for resources pertaining to the local music history, as well as Gainesville history in general.
- **Create** a concert poster, album cover, or zine inspired by ephemera from the library collections, with a corresponding playlist of works from local musicians we've discussed in class.

Grading and Class Policies

A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards Honors Completion Requirements. Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Requirements module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

Your grade for this course is dependent on the following factors:

- Attendance: 20%
- Class participation: 30%
- Discussion board reviews: 35%
- Final project: 15%

Assignments

Class participation

Students are expected to actively participate in class by contributing to class discussions by sharing insights and asking questions.

Discussion board reviews

Each week before class, you will be assigned to listen to 2-3 albums or a playlist relevant to the genre, era, or band being discussed that week. You will then review the albums/songs you listened to, analyzing the music, lyrics, or theme. Please post your reviews by each Thursday before class and comment on at least one classmate's review. Check out Rolling Stone to get an idea for music reviews. Some questions/ideas to consider when writing your reviews:

- What stood out to you? Were there any notable themes or lyrics?
- What do you think of the album overall? What did you like/dislike?
- How did this album make you feel? What did it make you think of?

- Would you recommend this album? Why or why not?

You do not need to explicitly address each of the above questions. Have fun with it!

Final presentation

At the end of the course, students will have the opportunity to design either a concert poster, album cover, or zine based on what they have learned in class. The poster, album, or zine can be virtual or physical; feel free to use software such as Word, Canva, or Photoshop, or collage, draw, paint, etc. Be creative! Use posters or album covers from the UF Digital Collections as reference. For example, students may take inspiration from the [Giants of Rock'n'Roll Concert Italian Tour Poster](#) or the [Poster Advertising a Concert, Music by Mudcrutch](#). Bonus points for using (and citing!) images from the Digital Collections.

If students opt to design a concert poster, they should create a hypothetical lineup of Gainesville musicians. Think of this as your dream Gator Growl. Who do you wish you could see?

Alternatively, if you choose to design an album cover, create a playlist of Gainesville musicians to accompany it. You can base the playlist off one artist, a vibe/genre, or choose songs from a range of Gainesville musicians.

Want to do a zine? Feel free to base it off a genre, decade, or musician/band from the Gainesville music scene. For example, you could make a zine about the punk music in Gainesville, highlighting bands, venues, and festivals prominent in the punk scene. You could also make a zine focused on the bands from a particular era, such as the 60s-70s or 90s.

On the last day of class, each student will present their project to the class, highlighting what they learned throughout the semester.

Attendance

- This class adheres to the [attendance policies](#) as outlined by the University of Florida.
- Students are expected to attend all twelve class sessions. If you know that you will need to miss a class, please let me know as soon as possible. Each unexcused absence will result in the lowering of an entire letter grade.
- Class will not be held on January 19th (MLK, Jr. Day), January 26th, and March 16th (spring break).

Generative AI Use Policy

I want to hear your own thoughts, ideas, questions, and album reviews! Please do not use Generative AI when completing your discussion posts or final presentations.

Course Schedule

Week	Module	Date	Topic	To do before class
1	1	1/12/26	**Intro!**	
2		1/19/26	**NO CLASS – MLK, Jr. Day**	
3		1/26/26	**NO CLASS – Conference**	
4	2	2/2/26	**Who do you love? Bo Diddley!**	• Listen to *Bo Diddley* (1957) and at least one other Diddley album of your choosing • Discussion board review
5	3	2/9/26	**Minnie Riperton is lovin' Gainesville**	• Listen to *Perfect Angel* (1973) and at least one other Riperton album of your choosing • Discussion board review
6	4	2/16/26	**Smathers Library Visit**	We will be meeting in Smathers Library to view archival materials
7	5	2/23/26	**Music Everywhere: Marty Jourard Visits**	Author Marty Jourard will visit our class via Zoom to discuss Gville music scene in the 60s-70s. • Listen to *All Four One* (1982) • Prepare 2-3 questions for Mr. Jourard and post to discussion board
8	6	3/2/26	**Gainesville was a Big Town: Tom, Stephen, Mike, and more!**	• Select at least two albums from the list on Canvas to listen to before class • Listen to assigned playlist (TBA) • Discussion board review
9	7	3/9/26	**Heartbreaker: Ari Surdoval Visits**	• Listen to Mike Campbell's

Week	Module	Date	Topic	To do before class
				Vagabonds, Virgins, and Misfits (2024) • Listen to assigned playlist (TBA) • Post 2-3 questions for Mr. Surdoval to discussion board
10		3/16/26	**NO CLASS – Spring break**	
11	8	3/23/26	**Living in the 352: Punk and Ska Scene**	• Listen to *GNV FLA* (2008) by Less Than Jake • Select at least two albums from the list on Canvas to listen to before class • Discussion board review
12	9	3/30/26	**All for You: Ken and Drew of Sister Hazel Visit**	• Listen to assigned playlist (TBA) • Post 2-3 questions for Mr. Block and Mr. Copeland to discussion board
13	10	4/6/26	**Modern Americana/Folk/Soul**	• Select at least two albums from the list on Canvas to listen to before class • Discussion board review
14	11	4/13/26	**Modern Indie Rock**	• Select at least two albums from the list on Canvas to listen to before class • Discussion board review
15	12	4/20/26	**Final Presentations**	• Submit final presentation on Canvas • In-class presentations

UF Resources

Academic Policies & Resources

- Please see the [Academic Policies and Resources](#) webpage for information.

Honors Program Resources

- Honors Program, Honors Village Complex #4, 352-392-1519
- Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email advisor@honors.ufl.edu
- Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via [Microsoft Bookings](#)
- [Honors Program Event Calendar](#)

Wellness Resources

- [Whole Gator](#): this online platform provides an overview of physical, mental, and emotional wellness resources on campus.
- [CARE: Campus Assistance and Resources for Empowerment](#): CARE is a branch within the Dean of Students Office designed to support students through situations that may arise during their time at UF. Services include Case Management Services, the Medical Petition and Withdrawal program, the Collegiate Veterans Success Center, and the Hitchcock Field and Fork Pantry.
- [Counseling and Wellness Center](#): The CWC offers mental health services including individual and group counseling sessions, couples counseling, substance abuse services, and crisis support.
- [Disability Resource Center](#): The Disability Resource Center provides services and accommodations for students with disabilities.
- [Gatorwell Health Promotion Services](#): Gatorwell promotes healthy lifestyles through wellness coaching, substance abuse services, HIV testing, and educational consultations on topics ranging from time management to sexual health best practices.
- [Student Health Care Center](#): The Student Health Care Center provides medical appointments for UF students.
- [U Matter, We Care](#): The U Matter, We Care initiative on campus aims to connect students to the necessary resources to help them flourish during their time at the University of Florida.