# Sociology of Hip-Hop

**Spring 2022**

**MW 15:40-16:55**

**James 2412**

# Professor George Murray

**Office Hours: Mondays, 14:30-15:30**

## [Required Texts](http://brooklyn.textbookx.com/institutional/index.php?action=browse#books/2772463/)

*There is no required text*. We will, however, use a number of PDFs from the following reader:

* Forman, Murray, and Mark Anthony Neal. 2012. *That’s the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, 2nd Ed. New York: Routledge.

*Everything is available online or will be posted on the course website.* The schedule below is subject to change at my discretion; I will hand out material occasionally if we need to make a last-minute change in the syllabus, or as the situation otherwise calls for it. The syllabus will also be available online; but you’ll need to be in class on a very regular basis in order to catch the latest announcements (note that the syllabus also contain links to selected readings).

**Major Assignments**

* Class Participation Self-Evaluation = 25%
* Story Maps Proposal Outline = 25%
* Story Maps Final Project = 30%
* ~~Story Maps Overview Pecha Kucha~~

***Note:*** *A major component of the class participation you’ll be self-evaluating will be your contributions to our online, asynchronous discussions (primarily on Slack). Also, the remaining 20% of your overall grade will come from homework assignments.*

## Syllabus[[1]](#footnote-1)

*Note: I’m constantly experimenting to try to find the best narrative framework and sequencing to present this material; sometimes things don’t work and have to be changed. Consult your syllabus for our general marching direction, but be advised once again that I make announcements in class, typically at the beginning of the period, when changes have to be made.*

### **Week 1 – Step in the Arena; Hip-Hop History: Street Art**

### M 1/31

* Benedict Carey, ['In Music, Others' Tastes May Help Shape Your Own'](https://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/14/health/in-music-others-tastes-may-help-shape-your-own.html), New York Times (14 February 2006)
* **Audio:** ['How to Listen to Music in 4 Easy Steps'](https://switchedonpop.com/episodes/50-how-to-listen-to-music-in-4-easy-steps), *Switched on Pop* 50

###### W 2/2

###### Craig Castleman, ‘The Politics of Graffiti’, in Forman and Neal (2012); also available in Forman and Neal ([2004](http://sites.psu.edu/comm292/wp-content/uploads/sites/5180/2014/10/FormanNeal-Thats_the_Joint_The_Hip_Hop_Studies_Readerbook.pdf))

###### **Video:** [*Style Wars*](https://www.vudu.com/content/movies/details/Style-Wars/32832) (Henry Chalfant and Tony Silver, 1983). The seminal documentary of graffiti and b-boying’, writes Jeff Chang in one of our upcoming texts (‘Zulus on a Time Bomb’). *You should be able to view this film for free on vudu.com, but if there’s a problem,* [*here’s a link that’s currently working on YouTube*](https://youtu.be/KpWxHTNYx6k)*. We’ll screen this together in class, but make sure you review it later at home, too.*

###### **Week 2 – Hip-Hop History: DJing and MCing**

###### M 2/7

* Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, [‘Hip-Hop Roots: Adventures on the Wheels of Steel’](https://turnthebeataround.commons.gc.cuny.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/11558/files/2021/02/Adventures-on-the-Wheels-of-Steel.pdf), in *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey* (Grove Press, 2006)
* **Audio:** Rich Nice, [Merry Go Round Mix](https://mixtapemuseum.org/2020/08/11/merry-go-round-mix/) (11 August 2020)

W 2/9

* Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, [‘Hip-Hop: Planet Rock’](https://turnthebeataround.commons.gc.cuny.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/11558/files/2021/02/Planet-Rock.pdf), in *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey* (Grove Press, 2006)

**Week 3 – Hip-Hop History: Dance**

M 2/14

* Michael Holman, ‘Breaking: The History’, in Forman and Neal ([2004](https://via.hypothes.is/http:/sites.psu.edu/comm292/wp-content/uploads/sites/5180/2014/10/FormanNeal-Thats_the_Joint_The_Hip_Hop_Studies_Readerbook.pdf))

W 2/16

* Jeff Chang, ‘Zulus on a Time Bomb: Hip-Hop Meets the Rockers Downtown’, in Forman and Neal (2012)

**Week 4 – Hip-Hop Historiography**

M 2/21 **NO CLASS**

W 2/23

* Nelson George, ‘Hip-Hop’s Founding Fathers Speak the Truth’, in Forman and Neal (2012); also available in Forman and Neal ([2004](http://sites.psu.edu/comm292/wp-content/uploads/sites/5180/2014/10/FormanNeal-Thats_the_Joint_The_Hip_Hop_Studies_Readerbook.pdf))
* Jennifer Lynn Stoever, ['Crate Digging Begins at Home: Black and Latinx Women Collecting and Selecting Records in the 1960s and 1970s Bronx'](https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190281090.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780190281090-e-1), in Justin D. Burton and Jason Lee Oakes, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Hip-Hop Music* (2018)
* Andrew Nosnitsky, ['Classic Material'](https://pitchfork.com/features/hall-of-game/8997-classic-material/), *Pitchfork* (19 November 2012)

**Week 5 – Writing and the Rhetoric of Hip-Hop/Authenticity**

###### M 2/28

* Murray S. Davis, [‘That’s Interesting! Towards a Phenomenology of Sociology and a Sociology of Phenomenology’](http://kieranhealy.org/files/misc/davis-thatsinteresting-1971.pdf), *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (1971)
* H. Samy Alim, ‘“Bring It to the Cypher”: Hip-Hop Nation Language’, in Forman and Neal (2012)
* Joan Morgan, ‘Hip-Hop Feminist’, in Forman and Neal (2012)

W 3/2

* Kembrew McLeod, ‘Authenticity Within Hip-Hop and Other Cultures Threatened With Assimilation’, in Forman and Neal (2012)

**Week 6 – Authenticity (cont’d); Globalisation vs. the Hip-Hop International**

M 3/7

* Paul Gilroy, ‘It’s a Family Affair’, in Neal and Forman (2012)

W 3/9

* Gilbert B. Rodman, [‘Race … and Other Four-Letter Words: Eminem and the Cultural Politics of Authenticity’](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15405710pc0402_3), in Forman and Neal (2012

**Week 7 – Hip-Hop’s Urban Geography I: ATLANTA**

###### M 3/14

* Murray Forman, ‘Represent: Race, Space, and Place in Rap Music’, in Forman and Neal (2012)
* Davarian Baldwin, ‘Black Empires, White Desires: The Spatial Politics of Identity in the Age of Hip-Hop’, in Forman and Neal (2012)

W 3/16

* Matt Miller, ‘Rap’s Dirty South: From Subculture to Pop Culture’, in Forman and Neal (2012)
* Jesse McCarthy, [‘Notes on Trap’](https://nplusonemag.com/issue-32/essays/notes-on-trap/), *n+1* (Fall 2018)

**Week 8 – Hip-Hop’s Urban Geography II: HOUSTON**

###### M 3/21

* Andrew Nosnitsky, [‘Gray Matters’](https://pitchfork.com/features/hall-of-game/9069-dj-screw/), *Pitchfork* (4 March 2013). *On the legacy of Houston's DJ Screw-- possibly the most influential hip-hop DJ of this century-- and how his impact goes way beyond simply slowing things down.*

W 3/23

* Charles Holmes, [‘“He Shook the World”: George Floyd’s Legendary Houston Legacy’](https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/houston-big-floyd-bun-b-paul-wall-trae-the-truth-1009055/), *Rolling Stone* (2 June 2020)

# Week 9 –Hip-Hop’s Urban Geography III: CHICAGO

M 3/28

* Meaghan Garvey, [‘From Teklife to the Next Life’](https://pitchfork.com/features/article/9642-from-teklife-to-the-next-life/), *Pitchfork Review* 6 (Spring 2015)

W 3/30

* John Calvert, ['“We are in the club, dancing, with no intention to stop”: The Secret World Of Japanese Footwork'](https://thump.vice.com/en_us/article/ez8ebp/the-secret-world-of-japanese-footwork), *Noisey* (14 October 2014)

**Week 10 – Gender Politics**

M 4/4

* Tricia Rose, ‘Never Trust a Big Butt and a Smile’, in Forman and Neal ([2004](http://sites.psu.edu/comm292/wp-content/uploads/sites/5180/2014/10/FormanNeal-Thats_the_Joint_The_Hip_Hop_Studies_Readerbook.pdf))

W 4/6

* Sandi Rankaduwa, [‘Watch the Queen’](https://believermag.com/watch-the-queen/), *The Believer* (1 September 2017)
* **Audio:** ['Saweetie, City Girls, and the Female Rapper Renaissance'](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/29/arts/music/female-rappers.html?campaign_id=2&emc=edit_th_20201130&instance_id=24567&nl=todaysheadlines&regi_id=16944809&segment_id=45653&user_id=0938b5e937aeebf440371c755b5afd20), *Popcast* (29 November 2020)

**Week 11 – The Politics of Sexuality**

###### M 4/11

* Andreana Clay, ‘I Used to Be Scared of the Dick: Queer Women of Color and Hip-Hop Masculinity’, in Forman and Neal (2012)

W 4/13

* Michael Eric Dyson and Byron Hurt, ‘ “Cover Your Eyes As I Describe a Scene So Violent”: Violence, Machismo, Sexism, and Homophobia’, in Forman and Neal (2012)
* Marc Lamont Hill, ‘Scared Straight: Hip-Hop, Outing, and the Pedagogy of Queerness’, in Forman and Neal (2012)

**Week 12 – SPRING BREAK**

M 4/18 **NO CLASS**

W 4/20 **NO CLASS**

**Week 13 – The Technology of Hip-Hop DJing and Music Production I**

###### M 4/25

* Walter Benjamin, ‘Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit [The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility]' (1936)

W 4/27

* Martin Heidegger, ‘Die Frage nach der Technik [The Question Concerning Technology]' (1949?)

**Week 14 – The Technology of Hip-Hop DJing and Music Production II**

###### M 5/2

* Joseph Schloss, ‘Sampling Ethics’, in Forman and Neal (2012)

###### W 5/4

* Michail Exarchos, ‘Boom Bap Ex Machina: Hip-Hop Aesthetics and the Akai MPC’, in Russ Hepworth-Sawyer, Jay Hodgson, and Mark Marrington, eds., *Producing Music* (Routledge, 2019)

**Week 15 – Sampling (cont’d); ‘Don’t ask me if I write rhymes/I write checks’: Hip-Hop, Commodification, and the Culture Industries**

M 5/9

* Thomas Brett, ['Rhythm Technologies, Workflows, and Convergence Culture in Amateur Hip Hop Beat-Making YouTube Videos'](https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190281090.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780190281090-e-23), in Justin D. Burton and Jason Lee Oakes, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Hip-Hop Music* (2018)

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W 5/11

* Amanda Petrovich, ['Against Chill: Apathetic Music to Make Spreadsheets to'](https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/against-chill-apathetic-music-to-make-spreadsheets-to), *New Yorker* (10 April 2019)

**Week 16 – Hip-Hop, Commodification, and the Culture Industries (cont’d)**

M 5/16

* [Interviews: Andrew Nosnitsky’](http://www.lebronjames.co/interviews/andrew-nosnitsky), *lebronjames.co* (August 2018)

**Final Exam Period/Conclusions**

M 5/23 (**note:** 3:30pm-5:30pm)

* Greg Tate, ‘Hip-Hop Turns 30: Whatcha Celebratin’ For?’, in Forman and Neal (2012)

**REFERENCES**

# Forman, Murray, and Mark Anthony Neal. 2012. *That’s the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, 2nd Ed. New York: Routledge.

# Forman, Murray, and Mark Anthony Neal. 2004. [*That’s the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*](http://sites.psu.edu/comm292/wp-content/uploads/sites/5180/2014/10/FormanNeal-Thats_the_Joint_The_Hip_Hop_Studies_Readerbook.pdf), 2nd Ed. New York: Routledge.

1. Go [here](https://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/about/administration/enrollment/registrar/bulletins/fall20/calendar.php) for the official academic calendar. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)