I. Description

Activist. Poet. Seer. Judas. Prophet. Singer. Messiah. Bob Dylan has been called all of these and more, but when asked to describe himself in 1965, he replied, “I think of myself more as a song-and-dance man.”

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the recording of his first album, members of the faculty are collaborating to present an IP seminar devoted to Bob Dylan. Annually nominated and seriously considered for the Nobel Prize in Literature, often compared to such artists as Mozart, Picasso, and Whitman, and always the master of self-deprecation and obfuscation, Dylan is ripe for study despite his protestations that he is not.

Throughout the term, we will try to balance the hyperbolic vision of Dylan as artistic genius descended from Valhalla with the story of a man from Minnesota who has had a profound influence, at the least, on music today: rock, folk, R&B, country, punk, rap, and hip-hop. We will approach Dylan through myriad lenses, give his music close scrutiny, read what others have to say, and try to figure out what all the fuss is about.

II. Structure

This IP Seminar will meet on Wednesdays from 7:00-9:00 PM throughout the fall term.

Preparing for Seminar Meetings

A. Recordings. Throughout the term, you will listen to much of Dylan’s œuvre: studio recordings, live performances, and bootlegs. In addition, you will listen to other singers performing Dylan songs. When you listen to assigned recordings, please do so carefully and diligently. This is a crucial component of the seminar and should be treated as seriously as reading; please do not simply listen to the recordings as you “multi-task” for your other classes, or go for a run, or drive in the car.

All recordings are available via streaming through our course page on PAnet. To ensure the seminar is consistent with current copyright law, you will have access to all the posted recordings throughout the term, but please do not download them. Of course, you are welcome to purchase the recordings on your own.

B. Screenings. All assigned videos—Pennebaker’s Don’t Look Back, Scorsese’s No Direction Home, Haynes’s I’m Not There, and likely others—will be available via streaming through our course page on PAnet. To adhere to copyright law, these videos will be available only during the week in which they are assigned.

C. Readings. The assigned readings vary in length, style, type, and difficulty: biography, poetics, sociology, philosophy, and history. Although your interest may ebb and flow, you must read actively—take notes, highlight key passages, pose questions, note confusion—and must prepare to guide our discussion of each reading.
Seminar Meetings

With different seminar leaders each week, the format and style of the seminar meetings will vary significantly. Regardless of the format and style, please be prepared to fully engage for the entire 120 minutes each Wednesday evening.

In addition, without explicit permission otherwise, you may not use any electronic devices during seminar time, i.e. using a smart phone, typing notes into a laptop, recording lectures or discussions.

Responding to Seminar Meetings

Following most, if not all, seminar meetings, you will be expected to create a response, and the type and format of each response will be at the discretion of the weekly seminar leaders.

Final Essay

The term will conclude with a final analytical and reflective essay of approximately 3000 words. You will submit a brief proposal on 11 November, and you will then be assigned a teacher with whom to work. The final essay will be due 2 December. Additional details will be provided in October.

III. Expectations

You are expected to attend all seminar meetings and complete all work on time. Failure to meet these expectations may lead to your removal from the seminar.

Writing Guidelines

Unless explicitly informed otherwise, you may not use ANY secondary (re)sources—except dictionaries—for any of your work in this course. This includes on-line (Wikipedia, Spark Notes, termpapers.com, for example) and print (re)sources.

Even though you are not to use secondary (re)sources, please review the Academy’s statement concerning academic honesty:

Honesty is the basic value on which this community rests. Academic honesty is demanded by the very nature of a school community. Honesty in the academic area means claiming as one’s own only that work which is one’s own. All scholarship builds upon the ideas and information of others; the honest person makes clear in written work exactly what the source of any borrowed information or idea is, whether it be library materials, the Internet, classmates, or family members. Since words are the bearers of both information and the unique style of the writer, the words of others, if borrowed, must be properly acknowledged. In addition, work done for one course may not be used to secure credit in another. It is not acceptable to submit one piece of work (e.g. notes, computer programs, lab reports, papers, etc.) to more than one course without prior consultation with and written permission from all instructors involved. – *The Blue Book*

Should you receive ANY assistance in your written work for this seminar, please indicate your collaborator(s) and the nature of your collaboration at the conclusion of the work.

Grading

To determine your term grade, we will simply average your grades throughout the term.
Schedule

14 September

You Who Philosophize: Masks, Pawns, and the Artist
David Fox, Instructor in English and Art History

In this introductory meeting, we will explore Dylan’s early works through the lenses of art theory, ethics, and metaphysics, discuss our summer encounters with Shelton and Scorsese, listen to a few bootlegs and covers, and prepare for our term together.

Listen:

Céline Dion, “God Bless America,” America: Tribute to Heroes (2001)
Bob Dylan, Bob Dylan (1962)
Bob Dylan, The Brandeis Concert (2011)
Bob Dylan, “Only A Pawn In Their Game,” The Times They Are A-Changin’ (1964)
Bob Dylan, “With God On Our Side,” The Times They Are A-Changin’ (1964)

Read:


Watch:

Martin Scorsese, No Direction Home (2005)

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21 September

Dylan’s Chimes of Freedom
Vuyelwa Maqubela, Instructor in English

Focusing on some of Dylan’s early songs we will explore how Dylan is both reacting to racial oppression in America and fueling anti-Apartheid music in South Africa.

Listen:

Bob Dylan, “Don’t Think Twice, Its All Right,” Bob Dylan at Budokan (1979)
Bob Dylan, The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan (1963)
Bob Dylan, The Times They Are A-Changin’ (1964)
Bob Dylan, “The Times They Are A-Changin’,” Bob Dylan at Budokan (1979)
Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel, “The Times They Are A-Changin’,” *Wednesday Morning 3AM* (1964)


Watch: Johnny Clegg, "Asimbonanga"
Hugh Masekela for Miriam Makeba, "Soweto Blues" and "A Luta Continua"
Hugh Masekela, "Bring Back Nelson Mandela"
Mbongeni Ngema, “Lizobuya”
“Senzenina” and “Nantsindodemnyama”
“Thina Sizwe”

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28 September

**Dylan Goes Electric**
Chris Jones, Instructor in History

When Dylan plugged in at the Newport Music Festival, did he kill folk music or revolutionize it? How was his move to rock emblematic of the historical moment in 1965?

Bob Dylan, *Another Side of Bob Dylan* (1964)
Bob Dylan, *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965)
Bob Dylan, “It’s Alright, Ma (I’m Only Bleeding),” 30th Anniversary Concert (1993)
Leon Russell, “It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue,” *Leon Live* (1972)


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5 October

**Blood on the Tracks: The Poetics of Dylan, Part I**
Paul Tortorella, Instructor in English – Introduction to the Poetics
Kevin O’Connor, Instructor in English – “Idiot Wind”
This two week unit will be devoted to a close reading of one of Dylan’s greatest albums, and topics will include Thematic Structure, Allusion, Imagery, Visions of Women, The Road Home and Away. A course pack of the reading, questions, and writing assignments will be provided in your mailbox early in the term.

Listen:  

Read:  
*Blood on the Tracks* lyric sheets  
Charles Chadwick, “The French Symbolists”  
Janet Gezari, “Bob Dylan and the Tone Behind the Language”  
Christopher Ricks, *Dylan’s Visions of Sin*, pp. 11-48 and 179-220  
Christian Marc Schmidt, “The Authority of Formlessness”  
“How to Read A Poem”  
Symbolist Poets  
Postmodernism in Poetry  
John 9 – The Bible, NIV  
Poems of Guido Guinizalli

*****

12 October  
*Blood on the Tracks: The Poetics of Dylan, II*  
Lewis Robinson, Writer in Residence – “Home and Away”  
Nina Scott, Instructor in English – “Visions of Women”

Listen:  

Read:  
Michael Cunningham, “The Sound of Protest”  
Michael Cunningham, “White Angel”  
Barbara O’Dair, “Bob Dylan and Gender Politics”

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19 October  
*The Color of His Skin, or Don’t Forget that You are White*  
Christopher Ricks, Professor of the Humanities at Boston University

Listen:  
Bob Dylan, *Desire* (1976)  
Bob Dylan, *John Wesley Harding* (1967)  
Bob Dylan, “The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll,” *The Times They Are A-Changin’* (1964)  

Read:  
Christopher Ricks, *Dylan’s Visions of Sin* (2003), pp. 320-490

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26 October

**Bob Dylan Wrote Propaganda Songs: Dylan, the Minutemen, and 80’s Protest Songs**

John Bird, Instructor in English

In this meeting, we will explore how Dylan influenced the lyrics and music of the Minutemen, one of the most important, politically engaged bands to emerge from LA’s punk scene.

**Listen:**

**Read:**
- Guy Debord, “Theses on Cultural Revolution” (1958)
- Graffiti from the student uprising in Paris (1968)

**Watch:**

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2 November

**Dylan and His Masks**

Richard Thomas, George Martin Lane Professor of Classics, Harvard University

Listen:


Read:

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9 November

**Decoding Dylan**

Tom Kane, Instructor in English

Using the Jay-Z “autobiography,” *Decoded*, as a model for a method, we’ll look at how Dylan’s self is both changeable—he’s a changeling—and how the kind of instability of identity that he insists upon frees him up to be creative, and frees up his fans to play a vital role in his self-constitution. Does his slippery self annoy you or enable you? Why is it important that we feel we know musicians, and what in the end do we really know?

**Listen:**
- Bob Dylan, *Slow Train Coming* (1979) (Optional)

**Read:**

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Hailed as poet, prophet and all-around literary and musical genius, in this segment we'll use the lenses of neurobiology, human evolution and evolutionary psychology to explore the phenomena that is Bob Dylan. What can science tell us about the person and personality that is Bob Dylan and our collective obsession with his art?

Listen:
The Beatles, "Please Mr. Postman," *The Beatles Second Album* (1964)
The Beatles, "I Call Your Name," *The Beatles Second Album* (1964)
The Beatles, "She Loves You," *The Beatles Second Album* (1964)
The Beatles, "I'm A Loser," *Beatles for Sale* (1964)
The Beatles, "I've Just Seen A Face," *Help!* (1965)
The Beatles, "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away," *Help!* (1965)
The Beatles, "I Am the Walrus," *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967)
The Beatles, "Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown)," *Rubber Soul* (1965)
Bob Dylan, "All Along the Watchtower," *John Wesley Harding* (1967)
Bob Dylan, "Gotta Serve Somebody," *Slow Train Coming* (1979)
Bob Dylan, "If Not For You," *New Morning* (1970)
Bob Dylan, "Knockin' On Heaven's Door," *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973)
Bob Dylan, "Maggie's Farm," *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965)
Bob Dylan, "Mr. Tambourine Man," *Bringing It All Back Home* (1965)
The Byrds, "Mr. Tambourine Man," *Mr. Tambourine Man* (1965)
The Byrds, "Chimes of Freedom," *Mr. Tambourine Man* (1965)
George Harrison, "If Not For You," *All Things Must Pass* (1970)
Jimi Hendrix, "All Along the Watchtower," *Electric Ladyland* (1968)
Bear McCreary, "All Along the Watchtower," *Battlestar Galactica: Season 3 (Original Soundtrack from the TV Series)* (2007)

Read:

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>30 November</td>
<td><strong>Public Presentations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 December</td>
<td><strong>Public Presentations</strong> (3-5PM)</td>
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The reading, listening, and viewing assignments are subject to change.