Course description outline and syllabus 
Instructor: Peter Elman

# <u>Title</u>: "A Round-Trip Road Trip of Country Music, 1950-1975: From Nashville to California to Texas--and back."

<u>Week one: The rise of "honky-tonk" music, 1940-60:</u> Up from bluegrass—the roots of country music. Roy Acuff, Ernest Tubb, Hank Williams, Kitty Wells, Lefty Frizzell, Porter Wagoner, Jim Reeves, Webb Pierce, Ray Price, Hank Lochlin, Hank Snow, and the Grand Old Opry.

#### Reading:

<u>The Nashville sound: bright lights and country music</u> Paul Hemphill, 1970-- the definitive portrait of the roots of country music.

### Listening:

20 of Hank Williams Greatest Hits, Mercury, 1997

30 #1 Country Hits of the 1950s, 3-disc set, Direct Source, 1997

## Viewing:

O Brother Where Art Thou, 2000, by the Coen brothers

America's Music: The Roots of Country 1996, three-part, six episode documentary.

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## Week two: Country goes uptown: The Golden Years of the Nashville Sound 1960-1975;

Eddy Arnold, Chet Atkins, Conway Twitty, Faron Young, Sonny James, Roger Miller, George Jones, Charlie Pride, Charlie Rich, Mel Tillis.

## **Reading:**

*Country music, U.S.A., by Bill C. Malone and Jocelyn R. Neal*, the third revised edition, 2010—all about country music, with a special section on the Nashville Sound.

## Listening:

Billboard #1's: Classic Country, 1950-1980, mainly 1960's--30 song CD.

George Jones: 16 Biggest Hits, Epic, 1998

#### Viewing:

Nashville, by Robert Altman, 1975

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<u>Week three: Let's Go To Luckenbach, Texas: Outlaw Country 1965-present:</u> Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Johnny Paycheck, Kris Kristofferson, Billy Joe Shaver, Guy Clark, Townes van Zandt, Jerry Jeff Walker, Gary Stewart, Delbert McLinton, Rodney Crowell: fields and farms, dancehalls and dives, Austin, Texas.

#### Reading:

Outlaw: Waylon, Willie, Kris, and the renegades of Nashville, by Michael Streissguth. 2013 Listening:

Johnny Cash, At Folsom Prison, 1968

Honky-Tonk Heroes, Waylon Jennings, 1973

Red-Headed Stranger, Willie Nelson, 1975

Gary Stewart, Out of Hand, 1975

#### Viewing:

I Walk the Line. Joaquin Phoenix, Reese Witherspoon 2005

Payday, Rip Torn, 1973

Heartworn Highways, documentary, 1981

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<u>Week four: California cotton fields: Bakersfield Country 1950-present:</u> the sons of Tom Joad: Buck Owens, Wynn Stewart, Red Simpson, Merle Haggard and Dwight Yoakam. Plus a tribute to Marty Robbins.

## **Reading:**

Merle Haggard: the running kind, by David Cantwell, 2013 The Birth of the Bakersfield Sound, by Lawton Jiles, 2013

**Listening:** 

Marty Robbins: Gunfighter ballads and trail songs, 1962

Buck Owens: All-Time Greatest Hits, Vol.1

Merle Haggard: 20 greatest hits

Viewing:

Billy Mize and the Bakersfield Sound, Billy Mize 2014

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Week five: The women of country: 1955-1975; roll call at the hall of fame: Kitty Wells, Patsy Cline, Wanda Jackson, Brenda Lee, Skeeter Davis, Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, Tammy Wynette, Emmylou Harris.

## **Reading:**

Tammy Wynette: tragic country queen, Jimmy McDonough 2010

**Dolly: the biography,** Alanna Nash, 2002

# Listening:

Patsy Cline's 12 greatest hits, 1957-63, (this record is an absolute must!!)

Loretta Lynn's Greatest Hits, Volume 1, 1968

Tammy Wynette, Your Good Girl's Gonna Go Bad, 1967

Pieces of the Sky, Emmylou Harris 1974

#### Viewing:

Coal Miner's Daughter, Sissy Spacek, Levon Helm, 1980

Sweet Dreams, Jessica Lange, 1985

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<u>Week six: The country song and the country record:</u> How the great songsmiths can make your day—or break your heart; an in-depth look at five of the greats. A look at the "A team" and other studio musicians who created the Nashville Sound.

#### Reading:

He Stopped Loving Her Today: George Jones, Billy Sherrill, and the Pretty-Much Totally True Story of the Making of the Greatest Country Record of All Time, by Jack Isenhour, 2011 Listening:

I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry, Hank Williams

I Fall to Pieces, Patsy Cline

Funny How Time Slips Away, Willie Nelson

Pancho and Lefty, Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard

He Stopped Loving Her Today: George Jones

#### Viewing:

Tender mercies, Robert Duvall

I Saw the light, by Marc Abraham, 2015