

## **Title: American Folk Music: The Golden Age: 1950–75**

### **Course description, outline and syllabus      Instructor: Peter Elman**

The folk music that emerged in the 1950's has lasted 60 years and will last a lot longer. Why? Because of the confluence of people, politics, philosophy and social awareness that came out of the post-war era, and which ushered in a new age of enlightenment. This course will examine the soundtrack of that period and how folk music became integrated into the larger world of popular music. **Starring:** Leadbelly, the Carter family, Woody Guthrie, the Almanac singers, the Weavers, Pete Seeger, Josh White, New Lost City Ramblers, Odetta, Harry Belafonte, the Kingston Trio, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Dave Van Ronk, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Tom Paxton, Judy Collins, Phil Ochs, Tom Rush, Richard and Mimi Farina, Cisco Houston, Doc Watson, Kingston Trio, Peter Paul and Mary, Highwaymen, Limeliters, Brothers Four, Rooftop Singers, New Christy Minstrels, Richie Havens, Fred Neil, Tim Hardin, Tim Buckley, John Stewart, Steve Goodman, John Prine, Buffy St. Marie, Ian and Sylvia, Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen, Jesse Winchester, cafes and coffee shops, the Newport Folk Festival, Greenwich Village and North Beach.

### **Course outline by week**

**Week one: the early days: sowing the seeds of protest in a tuneful way:** John Lomax, Leadbelly, Carter Family, Woody Guthrie, Almanac singers, Pete Seeger, Josh White, Weavers, New Lost City Ramblers, Odetta, Harry Belafonte.

**Week two: the Bard arrives from the North Country and takes New York by storm;** the first couple of folk music; Bob Dylan and Joan Baez 1961-65.

**Week three: NYC in the early 1960's:** Greenwich Village, the folk magazines *Broadside* and *Sing Out*, Folkways records, Vanguard records, Jac Holzman and Elektra records, Dave Van Ronk, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Tom Paxton, Phil Ochs, Tom Rush, Richard and Mimi Farina, Cisco Houston, Doc Watson, Judy Collins.

**Week four: Folk groups who made the music accessible:** Kingston Trio, Peter Paul and Mary, Highwaymen, Limeliters, Brothers Four, New Christy Minstrels.

**Week five: Gone but not forgotten;** late singers who pushed the boundaries of folk music: Richie Havens, Fred Neil, Tim Hardin, Tim Buckley, John Stewart, Steve Goodman, and a tribute to John Prine. (Not gone!)

**Week six: The Canadian connection:** Buffy St. Marie, Ian and Sylvia, Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen, Jesse Winchester.

### **suggested (not required) reading, listening and viewing for the course:**

1. *Bob Dylan Chronicles: Volume One* 2005, the first memoir by Dylan
2. *Bound for Glory, Woody Guthrie*. First published in 1943, this autobiography is also a superb portrait of America's Depression years, by the folk singer/activist.
3. *Folk City: New York and the American Folk Music Revival* by Stephen Petrus, 2015: A comprehensive look at the place and the period.
4. *Greenback Dollar: The Incredible Rise of the Kingston Trio* by William Bush
5. *How Can I Keep from Singing? The Ballad of Pete Seeger* by David Dunaway 2008
6. *Which Side Are You On? An Inside History of the Folk Music Revival in America*, by Dick Weissman, 2006
7. *Gone to the country: the New Lost City Ramblers and the folk music revival*, by Ray Allen, 2010

## **Listening: audio CDs, vinyl, cassettes or downloadable on itunes**

1. *Folk Years: Blowin' In the Wind*: two-disc set featuring various artists, Peter, Paul and Mary, Serendipity Singers, Brothers Four, Trini Lopez, Harry Belafonte, New Christy Minstrels, Kingston Trio, Joan Baez, Johnny Cash, Glenn Yarbrough, Pete Seeger, Tom Paxton, Chad Mitchell Trio 2002. Time Life records.
2. *Folk Songs* (that is the title): a ten-disc box set featuring Pete Seeger, Almanac Singers, Woody Guthrie, Paul Robeson, Harry Belafonte, Burl Ives, Weavers, Kingston Trio, Peter Paul and Mary, Glen Campbell, 2007, Documents
3. *The Folk Years: Yesterday's Gone*: Various Artists mainly from the 1960's: The Kingston Trio, The Rooftop Singers, The Seekers, Glen Campbell The Turtles Joan Baez Bobbie Gentry Bob Lind Trini Lopez. 2002. Time Life Records.
4. *The Golden Age of American Popular Music - The Folk Hits from the Hot 100: 1958-1966*: a 28-song CD that captures the big radio hits of the era. A fine snapshot of "what the fuss was all about" that holds up today.
5. *The Very Best of Peter Paul & Mary*: 25 of their greatest songs, released in 2005, by Rhino records. A must have for all fans of the legendary trio.
6. *Bob Dylan (1962), Freewheelin' Bob Dylan (1963), The Times they are a-changin' (1964), Another Side of Bob Dylan (1964)*. Columbia. Enough said.
7. *Pete Seeger, Broadside Ballads, Volume 2, 1963*, Folkways. A legend.
8. *Phil Ochs, I Ain't Marching any more, 1965*, Elektra. The prince of folk music.
9. *Fred Neil, Bleecker and Macdougall, 1965, Elektra*. The brilliant debut album by one of the unsung heroes of folk music.
10. *Tim Buckley, Goodbye and Hello, Elektra, 1967*. Visionary with an angelic voice.
11. *Tom Rush, The Circle Game, 1968, Elektra*. One of the greats of the folk era.
12. *Woody Guthrie – Dust Bowl Ballads 1940, Sony Legacy*. America's conscience.
13. *Tim Hardin, Tim Hardin 1, 1966, Verve forecast*. An incredible debut album by an amazingly gifted—and tortured—singer/songwriter.
14. *Gordon Lightfoot - Complete Greatest Hits—20 songs by the king of all Canadian folk singers. 2002, Rhino records*.

## **Viewing: DVDs/PBS documentaries/you tube clips**

1. *The other side of the mirror*: Dylan live at Newport Folk Festival 1963-1965
2. *American roots music*; documentary, 2001, directed by Jim Brown. PBS
3. *The Carter Family--Will the circle be unbroken*, American Experience, PBS 2005
4. *The American folk blues festival, 1962-1966*, Hip-O Records 2003, Muddy Waters, Sonny Boy Williamson, Buddy Guy, John Lee Hooker,
5. *Inside Llewyn Davis, 2014*, CBS films, directed by the Coen brothers.
6. *A Mighty Wind, 2003*, Warner Brothers, directed by Christopher Guest.
7. *O Brother, Where Art Thou*, Touchstone, 2000, dir. by the Coen brothers
8. *Bound for glory, 1976*, dir. by Hal Ashby, MGM, starring David Carradine
9. *Alice's Restaurant, 1969*, dir. by Arthur Penn, starring Arlo Guthrie
10. *Phil Ochs: There but for Fortune 2010*, dir. by Kenneth Bowser
11. *No direction Home. 2005*, dir. by Martin Scorsese—traces Bob Dylan's career from 1961-1966--208 minutes but worth it.