Van Morrison: The Music of the Belfast Cowboy: How rhythm and blues and Celtic Mysticism combined to inspire an artist for the ages.

Course Description:
Van Morrison’s amazing career has spanned 55 years, and in that time he has produced 40 albums containing hundreds of his unique original songs. His eclectic career has seen him range from the early blues-influenced days of his Irish band Them, to his acclaimed twin masterpieces, Astral Weeks and Moondance, into the 1970’s where he parlayed R&B-based rock into superstardom. For the past 40 years Morrison has eloquently displayed the ability to go from one genre to another, yet always staying true to the twin themes of jazzy rhythm and blues and the Celtic folk of his ancestors, with healthy doses of rock and roll and country. In this class we will break down that extraordinary volume of work into six periods, chronicling the artists’ evolving development as a man and a musician.

Week One: Early life in Belfast: The misfit becomes a rock star with Them.
Week Two: America beckons; Bert Berns; a Top 40 hit—and a timeless masterpiece, Astral Weeks
Week Three: Personal challenges and another classic album; Moondance
Week Four: The 1970’s: a move to California, fatherhood, success, critical acclaim and confusion
Week Six: 1990-present: compilations, greatest hits, marriage, divorce and trials and tribulations: knighthood, and “It’s Too Late to Stop Now.” 40 albums.

Suggested viewing, reading and listening
Films/videos:
Live at Montreux 1974/80 DVD/Netflix
The Last Waltz, 1978: “Caravan” with The Band
Four-part 1991 documentary: part one
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzVSyoeKkMQ
part two:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPb3Zjhgz0A
part three:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nldepW9Rpbg
part four:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ds4Z6xxzSwU
**Books/articles:**

Can You Feel the Silence? Van Morrison, 2004 by Clinton Heylin

https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-miracle-of-van-morrison-astral-weeks the New Yorker Magazine, March 2018

https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/talking-with-van-morrison Van Morrison Discusses How Music Used to Be More Spontaneous and Communal, the New Yorker Magazine, December 2018

**Albums:**

Them: 1964

Them Again: 1965

Blowin' your mind: 1967

Astral Weeks: 1968

Moondance: 1969

His band and street choir: 1970

Tupelo Honey: 1971

Saint Dominic's Preview: 1972

Hard Nose the Highway: 1973

Into the Music: 1979

A Sense of Wonder: 1985

Poetic Champions Compose: 1987

Irish Heartbeat: 1988
The Healing Game: 1997

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