



**Course title:** Life in the Key of Em: Learning about life from American Blues Music

**Instructor:** Tom Buckmiller, PhD & guitar player for Jimmy the Weasel

**Office phone:** 515-271-4989

**Office:** CS 203

**Cell phone:** 605-661-4327

**Required text (instrument):** Uke

**Class time:** Tues/Thurs 12:30-1:45

**Office Hours:** one hour before and after class and by appointment (9am-3pm)

**Padlet resource page:** [https://padlet.com/tbuck\\_shs/BuckBlues](https://padlet.com/tbuck_shs/BuckBlues)

\*The most current syllabus will be the google doc version and is subject to change

**Syllabus:**

**Instructor website (blues):** [www.tombuckmillerblues.com](http://www.tombuckmillerblues.com) & [www.jimmytheweasel.com](http://www.jimmytheweasel.com)

**Assessment document:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fmbv7Y-SWu7hftKBYx87PXoLOUogaWSg\\_hhPIEZUkyk/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1fmbv7Y-SWu7hftKBYx87PXoLOUogaWSg_hhPIEZUkyk/edit?usp=sharing)

\*\*Bring laptops to class....every session.

\*\*\*Full attendance is expected for this class.

\*\*\*\*non-confidential reporter for sexual harassment/assault

**Course description:** This writing and critical thinking course will cover the development of the blues in the US throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This course examines the historic, geographic, social, and cultural concepts associated with American Blues music. Additionally, this class will explore the various musical styles and the disseminations and marketing of the genre. Finally, students in the class will grapple with how the blues is relevant today and think about lessons we can learn from this form of music. The class will feature various guest speakers/musicians to share why Blues music is important to them and you will think and write deeply in a way to make sense of the blues....for you.

**The SKILLS required to pass this class...will help you COMPLETE your program at Drake.**

We are going to write in this class. Your writing has to make a *contribution* to the class and our project. I am going to assess your critical thinking via your writing. Write to learn....learn to write.

**Learning to write:** the game we play for publication (formal writing)

**Writing to learn:** a process to guide thinking/learning process in small steps

Many students start college, not all will finish their college plan. The four most important skills you will need to develop *with a growth-mindset* are: critical thinking, writing, information literacy, and professional habits.

**Project Based Learning is real world activity.**

As opposed to classes where your final product will only be seen by the professor, I've designed this class so that your final product (chapter/book) will have value outside the classroom via a public audience. *The Authentic Intellectual Work (AIW) model: 1. student construction of knowledge, 2. through in-depth inquiry 3. to create a product that has value outside the classroom will guide this class.*

Recursive writing and thinking is real life.

**Learn by doing.**

I don't think it is possible to learn, I mean really learn, about the blues by reading a book. That's why I've designed this course in a way that allows us to *experience the blues*. We are going to hear the blues, in a live music venue, so we can understand the nuances, style, and subtleties. We will have critical conversations with blues players (in class and for the class project). And we will think deeply about the blues by writing recursively, so we can cultivate our ideas into complex and thoughtful ideas.

\*\*\*\*\*The learning is the most important. Take time to think about your **development/learning** as opposed to your **grade** in the class.\*\*\*\*\*

## **Standards based assessment.**

There is no “point chasing” in this class. Twenty percent of your grade will *not* be based on participation. In the end, you will be assessed on how well you demonstrate proficiency in four/five standards that are relevant to your success here at Drake. Straight-forward and simple.

Grades should not be the motivation for success in this class. *Learning and developing your skills should be the motivation for success in this class.*

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## **Standards Based Grading Procedure**

**Standards based grading** is a philosophy that uses the gradebook to communicate students’ strengths and weakness relative to the learning standards, or big ideas, or the course. The instructor will use various formative assessment techniques prior to using a summative assessment for each standard. *Practice assignments, homework, attendance, good behavior, brown-nosing or class participation will not directly be included in the final grade.*

Generally, a component of SBG is multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency. These will be offered at the student’s request and with a plan for learning and if student has shown proficiency in the Professional Habits standard/matrix.

An important part of SBG is formative feedback/assessment. The more time and effort you put into a formative project, the more time and effort I will give providing formative feedback. The instructor is not a proof-reader/editor. That is your responsibility.

### ***Grades are communication, not compensation***

Simply “doing the work” of the class, does not ensure an A (compensation model). Your job is to demonstrate that you are proficient in the content of the course. The grade you receive will communicate where you stand in relation to the standards of the course.

There will be various standards assessments in this class, this will be your opportunity to show the instruction what you learned or know relative to the standard. On each final assessment, the student will be assigned one of the following marks:

4=advanced

**3=proficient (meets the standard)**

2=emerging (doesn't meet the standard yet)

1=not there

0=no effort

The professor will evaluate students on the 4/5 standards to come up with the final grade.

- A (PROFICIENT) high quality, university-level work (must be proficient in all 4 standards)
  - B (EMERGING) high quality university-level work (proficient in 3 standards)
  - C (Not there yet) good quality university-level work (proficient in 2 standards)
  - D (Not there yet) acceptable university-level student work (proficient in 1 standards)
  - F (No effort) incomplete or missing work
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**The Course Standards**

**Standard 1: Students will demonstrate writing proficiency**

**Summative assessment:** Students will write a chapter for the class project (book) using the criteria set forth by the instructor. The chapter will be assessed via the writing rubric provided in appendix of syllabus. Chapters that are assessed as *Proficient* (meets the standard) will be included in the final book.

The topic of this book: Blues venues of Des Moines. We will write about these places: Leftys Live Music, the Greenwood, Hoyt-Sherman, the Gas Lamp, Carls, Whiskey House and Noche. There will be 4 parts to each chapter: history of the place, current/future plans, musicians' perceptions of the venue, and fans' perception of the venue.

As a class, we will generate a list of questions to ask.

**Writing Workshop**---Required--All students will participant in two 30 minute writing workshop sessions. You are able sign up at: <http://library.drake.edu/writing>.

**NO-No shows.** Please bring a copy of the assignment along with your draft when you visit your writing coach.

\*\*\*\*\*Do NOT skip your session...I will hear about it.....and I don't want to hear about it!!!\*\*\*\*\* This is a professional habit and responsibility of yours.

*Sign up for writing workshop sessions during the weeks mentioned below.*

**Arrange for interviews to take place (via phone call): Sept 13- Sept 20**

**Interviews will take place: Sept 25 – Oct 4**

**\*Schedule first Session with Writing Center: Oct 9-18**

You are able sign up at: <http://library.drake.edu/writing>.

**Draft #1 due: Oct 23rd**

**\*Schedule second Session with Writing Center: Oct 30 – Nov 8**

You are able sign up at: <http://library.drake.edu/writing>.

**Draft #2: Nov 8**

**Final Chapter Due: TBD (???)**

Formative work: Guest blues players, readings, videos, class discussions, informal writing.

**NO-No shows.** Please bring a copy of the assignment along with your draft when you visit your writing coach.

\*\*\*\*\*Do NOT skip your session...I will hear about it.....and I don't want to hear about it!!!\*\*\*\*\* This is a professional habit.

You will do 60 minutes worth of qualitative data collection (face-to-face interview)  
Questions brainstormed in class to meet standards.

Member check with (send those you interviewed your final chapter) triad writing teams. You must have their written approval of your final chapter before you can hand in the final draft and receive credit.

Semi-structured interview format.

*All chapters that are assessed as PROFICIENT will be included in the book.*

**Project Leadership Team (optional): Elected by the class....**All will receive special credit in the book as this will be a potential resume item. Team will be elected by the class.

1. **Book Leadership Team (3):** Leaders of the Leaders. Your name will be on the cover of the book. This is the team through which most of the major decisions will go. These people will be responsible for writing the introduction, preface and wrap-up. Must have leadership, management, motivational/support and organizational skills. Will do some peer-review and editing along with the rest of the cohort. Will bring ideas forward about what parts of a book should be included, how it will look (pages, chapters, cover, layouts). Will also provide input on how will the book be marketed and priced on Amazon.com

2. **Quality Assurance Team (3):** This is the team who will oversee the peer-review process and do some review and editing also. Who are the best technical writers in the class? This is your committee. Will receive special recognition on the author page.

## **Standard 2: Students will demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking**

Summative Assessments:

1. Summative Final paper: Due: ????????
2. Various writing prompts and 3 learning logs (google doc, 2-3 pp) as formative assessment. **Three** checkpoints in the semester which will guide your final paper.

Potential topics for paper and learning logs:

~Students will demonstrate an understanding how the blues, as a musical expression, reflects the African American experience

~Students will be able to discuss the issues around why blues music appeals to non-black audiences and musicians

~Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historic, social, and cultural implications of American Blues music

~How have the blues political and social issues involved in African Americans' struggle for equality in the United States?

~How does the blues genre reinforce patriarchal norms?

**For the learning logs:** a *little* less formal writing, writing to learn, answer the questions above. Demonstrate that you are learning something. 3-4 paragraphs. (APA lite). Deadlines on calendar.

**For the final paper:** (APA lite) double space, new times roman, 12pt font, indent first line of a paragraph, title page, 2-4 pp., cite your sources, formal writing paper. Pick one of the topics above.

Standard 3: **Students will demonstrate proficiency in information literacy**

**Summative Assessment:** Using several (3-5) library sources (books, articles) students will attempt to answer the question: **What is the blues?** This will be a 5 paragraph essay (intro, big idea #1, big idea #2, big idea #3, conclusion).

Library session:

This is not a paper detailing what you think is the blues...but rather how the literature defines the genre.

A proficient paper will correctly cite the sources in the text and in the reference page and provide sufficient support to your assertions.

The topic sentences should be your words gleaned from big ideas in the literature. The body of the paragraph should be 3-4 sentences that come directly from the

literature.

Final paper due Sept 27

**Standard 4: Students will demonstrate an understanding of basic blues knowledge**

Summative assessment: 1 oral and 1 written test

Dec 10-14 (Finals)

Formative activities: in class, learning logs

Need to know: 12 bar blues, various chords on uke, AAB pattern, turnaround, I-IV-V progression, major blues players, identify instruments, genres

REQUIRED FIELD TRIP: to Lefty's Live Music for an "all ages" blues show (\$5 at the door). *Students may not drink alcohol at this event.* The band is the Buttercow Blues Band and features three Iowa Blues Hall-of-Famers: Bob Pace (guitars), Dwight Dario (Drums). Also Matt Woods (guitar). This band specializes in Chicago (post-war) style blues.

Must attend at least two\* of these events on either:

Wed, Sept 12th

Wed, Oct 10<sup>th</sup>

Wed, Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>

\*or one of these and another blues event on your own and with approval of the instructor.

**Standard 5 (graded separately): Professional habits**



Assessment: 3 times during the semester

See Rubric

### **Class Schedule:**

#### **Aug 28 (T)**

What is the blues?

Introduction to the blues: "sold yer soul to the devil" - Story of Robert Johnson

In-class writing - google doc- Without listing artists of the genre, how would you describe your favorite genre of music? (write-to-learn activity)

HOMEWORK for next class:

1. set up your assessment google doc and share link (with editing rights) to:
2. practice--tune your uke" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xKTKjwGCVg>

#### **Aug 30 (Th)**

Syllabus

BB King at Cook County Jail (Learning to Write)

I do/we do: Development of a paragraph

You do: What makes BB King a great Lead bluesman? (focus: paragraph development)

UKE - E major - shuffle vs straight time

\*\*\*Jimmy the Weasel at Valley Junction (West Des Moines) 6-9pm FREE

#### **Sept 4 (T)**

Library Session- meet in [Cowles 45](#) with Dan Chibnall.

Elect Book General Editors

Homework for next class: Blues and the Slavery Period

#### **Sept 6 (Th)**

Blues Period 1 Slavery

Topic Sentences

**Sept 11 (T)** Iowa R&R and blues Hall-of-Famer Bob Pace, guest

**\*\*Sept 12 (Wed) Buttercow Blues Band 6pm**

**Sept 13 (Th)**

Bring 2 hard copies of your Informational Literacy paper (What is the blues) to class for in class review

Write questions for interviews (book project)

UKES

**Sept 18 (T)**

Blues Period 1: Slavery  
Professional Habits Assessment #1  
Paragraph development

**Sept 20 (Th)**

Blues Period 2: The Delta

**Sept 25 (T)**

Blues Period 2: The Delta (then and now)

**Sept 27 (Th)**

**Standard 3 (Information Literacy) final paper due**

**Oct 2 (T)**

**Guest: Iowa Blues Hall of Famer Rob Lumbard**

**Oct 4 (Th)**

Chicago (post war) Period 3  
Sidemen

**Oct 10 (T)**

**\*\*Oct 11 (Wed) Buttercow Blues Band 6pm**

**Oct 11 (Th)**

Sidemen (con't)

**Oct 16 (T)** Fall Break- no class

**Oct 18 (Th)**

Professional Habits Assessment #2  
Learning Log #2

**Oct 19 (Friday) Mid-term celebration at Dr. Buckmiller's house.**

**Oct 23 (T)**

**Oct 25 (Th)**

**Oct 30 (T)**

**Nov 1 (Th)**

**Nov 6 (T)**

**\*\*Nov 7 (Wed) Buttercow Blues Band 6pm**

**Nov 8 (Th)**

**Nov 13 (T)**

Professional Habits Assessment #3

**Nov 15 (Th)**

**Nov 20 (T)**

**Nov 22 (Th) No class Thanksgiving**

**Nov 27 (T)**

LEARNING LOG #3

**Nov 29 (Th)**

**Dec 4 (T)**

**Dec 6th (Th) Final paper (Based on Learning Logs)**

**Dec 10-14 Finals week**

**By the way:** Attendance and participation is expected.

**Community Building Event:** TBD

**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty encompasses any activity that seeks to gain credit for work one has not done, provide assistance to others seeking to gain such credit,

or deliberately damage or destroy the work of others. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, (1) Plagiarism: misrepresenting another's ideas, phrases, discourse, or work as one's own; (2) Cheating: the act, or attempted act, of giving or obtaining aid or information by illicit means in meeting any academic requirements, including examinations.

The penalty for plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty will vary from incident to incident, depending upon the scope and magnitude of the offense and the circumstances in which it occurred. Possible penalties include any of the following: reprimand, dismissal from the course with a failing grade, probation, suspension, and/or dismissal from the University.

	<b>Standard 1 Writing (book chapter)</b>	<b>Standard 2 Critical thinking (Learning logs: Blues culture)</b>	<b>Standard 3 Information Literacy (compare/contrast)</b>	<b>Standard 4 Blues knowledge (Uke)</b>
Aug 28				
30				
Sept 4			Library Session	
6				
11				
12				
13	Arrange interviews		Draft due	
18				
20				
25	Conduct interview	Learning Log #1 due		
27			Final paper due	
Oct 2				
4				
9	1 <sup>st</sup> session with Writing Center			
11				
16				
18	First draft due	Learning Log #2		
23				
25				
30	2 <sup>nd</sup> session with Writing Center			
Nov 1				
6				
8	Second draft due			
13				
15				
20	Final chapter due			
22 no class				
27		Learning Log #3		
29				
Dec 4				
6		Final Paper due		
Finals week				UKE and conversation

**Course Evaluation/Assessment Content:**

Students will be provided the opportunity to evaluate the course and the instructor via the School of Education evaluation format.

**Technology Required:**

Students must have access to and be able to use a personal computer with Microsoft Word, have access to the Web and have a Drake e-mail account.

**Expectations of Technology:** Laptops are an important tool for learning in this class. However, surfing the web for topics unrelated to the class content (Facebook, check email, twitter, scores, shopping) during class time is a barrier to learning and participation and is disrespectful to the instructor and the class. This includes texting. Developing your professional focus (and discipline) on the task at hand (not being tempted to check your social media every 3 minutes) will benefit you and give you credibility as an employee.

*Be present in class. Please turn off your phone.*

**Expectation of Attendance:** You are expected to attend class.

**Special Needs Considerations:** Students who require accommodations for special needs should contact the instructor before classes start.

## **Appendix A**

### **AIW (Authentic Intellectual Work)**

A lesson guided by AIW has several key components including: (1) student construction of knowledge, (2) disciplined inquiry, and (3) value beyond school (Newmann, et al., 2007). Authentic Intellectual Work helps to move a lesson forward by moving away from the rote memorization and passive reception of information to a much more engaging lesson for learners involving deeper contextual issues (Scheuerell, 2011). Rather than just routine application of facts and procedures, AIW involves original application of knowledge and skills. It also entails careful study of a particular topic or problem and results in a product or presentation that has meaning beyond success in school (Carmichael & Martens, 2012). Students begin to make meaning by constructing their own knowledge around an idea or question and then explore solutions in the same way that professionals and experts in the field do (Carmichael & Martens, 2012).

## **Appendix B**

### **"Critical thinking..."**

is self-guided, self-disciplined thinking which attempts to reason at the highest level of quality in a fair-minded way. People who think critically consistently attempt to live rationally, reasonably and empathically. They are keenly aware of the inherently flawed nature of human thinking when left unchecked. They strive to diminish the power of their egocentric and sociocentric tendencies. They use the intellectual tools that critical thinking offers – concepts and principles that enable them to analyze, assess, and improve thinking. They work diligently to develop the intellectual virtues of intellectual integrity, intellectual humility, intellectual civility, intellectual empathy, intellectual sense of justice and confidence in reason. They realize that no matter how skilled they are as thinkers, they can always improve their reasoning abilities and they will at times fall prey to mistakes in reasoning, human irrationality, prejudices, biases, distortions, uncritically accepted social rules and taboos, self-interest, and vested interest.

They strive to improve the world in whatever ways they can and contribute to a more rational, civilized society. At the same time, they recognize the complexities often inherent in doing so. They strive never to think simplistically about complicated issues and always to consider the rights and needs of relevant others. They recognize the complexities in developing as thinkers, and commit themselves to life-long practice toward self-improvement. They embody the Socratic

principle: *The unexamined life is not worth living*, because they realize that many unexamined lives together result in an uncritical, unjust, dangerous world."

~ Linda Elder, September, 2007

**Appendix C:**

1. Classic Female Blues/ Tent Shows/Vaudeville Blues
2. Jump Blues
3. Country Blues/Downhome Blues
4. Piano Blues
5. Rhythm and Blues and Soul Blues
6. Chicago Blues
7. Delta Blues
8. Texas Blues
9. Memphis Blues
10. West Coast Blues
11. Louisiana Blues
12. New Orleans Blues
13. Gospel Blues
14. Terms: examples-)
15. Cajun / Zydeco
16. British Blues
17. Modern Electric Blues
18. Modern Acoustic Blues



Appendix D - citizenship rubric

	Academics/critical thinking	Work ethic	Collaboration with peers	Collaboration with Instructor
Advanced Student leader 4	<p>Arrives on time prepared for class EVERY SINGLE DAY</p> <p>Participates—is a learner, curious—EVERY SINGLE DAY</p> <p>Actively seeks the thoughts/inputs of others</p>	<p>Completes work as assigned EVERY SINGLE DAY</p> <p>Tries her/his best EVERY SINGLE DAY</p>	<p>Effectively leads peers in small or large group discussions</p> <p>Consistently listens</p> <p>Consistently communicates clearly, with tact.</p>	<p>Assumes responsibility for learning by seeking help and asking questions in a timely manner.</p> <p>Consistently demonstrates effective communication</p>
Proficient Student Leader 3	<p>Arrives on time prepared for class the great majority of time.</p> <p>Participates—is a learner, curious—a great majority of the time.</p> <p>Consistently seeks the thoughts/inputs of others</p>	<p>Completes work as assigned a great majority of the time</p> <p>Tries her/his best a great majority of the time.</p>	<p>Leads peers in small or large group discussions</p> <p>Consistently listens</p> <p>Communicates clearly, with tact.</p>	<p>Assumes responsibility for learning by seeking help and asking questions in a timely manner.</p> <p>Demonstrates effective communication</p>
Developing Student leader 2	<p>Arrives on time prepared for the most of the time</p> <p>Participates—is a learner, curious—a most of the time.</p> <p>Actively seeks the thoughts of others</p>	<p>Completes work as assigned most of the time</p> <p>Tries her/his best most of the time</p>	<p>Struggles to leads peers in small or large group discussions</p> <p>Listens with inconsistency</p> <p>Communicates with limited clarity and tact.</p>	<p>Doesn't assume responsibility for learning by seeking help and asking questions in a timely manner.</p> <p>demonstrates effective communication</p>

<p>Beginning Student leader</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Inconsistently arrives on time prepared for the most of the time</p> <p>Inconsistently participates—is a learner, curious—a most of the time.</p> <p>Is not interested in the thoughts of others.</p>	<p>Rarely completes work as assigned</p> <p>Rarely tries her/his best EVERY SINGLE DAY</p>	<p>No evidence</p>	<p>Doesn't seek help or asks questions.</p> <p>limited communication</p>
<p>No evidence</p> <p>0</p>				

