

American Folk Music: The Golden Age, 1950–75

Thursdays, August 6 – September 24, 2020

On Zoom with Rhythmix Cultural Works

Instructor: Peter Elman

"Folk music--a bellwether for us in these days of reckoning."

The folk music that emerged in the 1950's has lasted 70 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 which ushered in a new age of enlightenment. This course will examine the soundtrack of that period and how folk music became associated with, aligned with and

drove social protest movements while being integrated into the larger world of popular music. Starring: *Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Odetta, Harry Belafonte, Kingston Trio, Barbara Dane, Bob Dylan, Fred Neil, Tim Hardin, Tim Buckley, Judy Collins, Joan Baez, Peter, Paul and Mary, Tom Rush, Phil Ochs, Dave Van Ronk, Ian and Sylvia, Gordon Lightfoot, Leonard Cohen, Neil Young, John Stewart and others.*

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This course could not be more relevant or timely. Our country is at a crossroads. The devastation of the pandemic and the accompanying economic meltdown have only served to highlight a much deeper problem; namely, the issue of race and inequality in our society. Somehow we have yet to come to terms with our 400-year-old twin original sins: the displacement of native peoples and the enslavement and disenfranchisement of African-Americans. Folk music has been there all along to play a role in the consciousness of Americans.

As great as it is to be entertained and enriched by music, sometimes it must serve as more. Folk music has always been and will continue to be that bellwether for us in these days of reckoning.

Week one: the early days: sowing the seeds of political protest in a tuneful way: John Lomax, Leadbelly, Carter Family, Paul Robeson, Woody Guthrie, Almanac singers, Pete Seeger, Josh White, Weavers, Harry Belafonte, Leon Bibb

Week two: first ladies of folk: Odetta, Barbara Dane, Carolyn Hester, Mimi Farina, Judy Collins, Sandy Denny, Joan Baez, Elizabeth Cotton.

Week three: the Bard arrives from the North Country Bob Dylan 1961-65

Week four: 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, Eric Andersen, Tom Rush, Richard and Mimi Farina, Cisco Houston, Doc Watson.

Week five: Folk groups who made the music accessible: Highwaymen, Limelickers, Brothers Four, Kingston Trio, Peter Paul and Mary, New Lost City Ramblers, Rooftop Singers, Serendipity singers, New Christy Minstrels and others.

Week six: Gone but not forgotten; Late singers from the '60's who pushed the boundaries of folk music: Richie Havens, Fred Neil, Tim Buckley, Tim Hardin, John Stewart, Jesse Winchester, Steve Goodman.

Week seven: The Canadian connection: Buffy St. Marie, Ian and Sylvia, Gordon Lightfoot, Neil Young, Leonard Cohen.

Week eight: The second wave; Americana: Kris Kristofferson, Townes Van Zandt, Jerry Jeff Walker, Guy Clark, Lucinda Williams, Nancy Griffith, Gillian Welch, John Prine, Rhiannon Giddens.

Suggested listening, Audio CDs

1. *Folk Years: Blowin' In the Wind*: two-disc set featuring various artists, Peter, Paul and Mary, Harry Belafonte, Kingston Trio, Joan Baez, Johnny Cash, Glenn Yarbrough, Pete Seeger, Tom Paxton, 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 Seekers, Joan Baez, 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.
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.
10. *Tom Rush, The Circle Game, 1968*, Elektra. One of the greats of the folk era.
11. *Woody Guthrie – Dust Bowl Ballads 1940*, Sony Legacy. America's conscience.
12. *Tim Hardin, Tim Hardin 1, 1966*, Verve forecast. An incredible debut.
13. *Gordon Lightfoot - Complete Greatest Hits—2002*, Rhino records.

Suggested viewing: DVD/PBS documentaries, you tube clips, etc...

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, 5. *Inside Llewlyn 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, by Martin Scorsese; Bob Dylan 1961-1966

Suggested reading: Books!

1. *Bob Dylan Chronicles: Volume One* 2005
2. *Bound for Glory, Woody Guthrie*. First published in 1943, the autobiography.
3. *Folk City: New York and the American Folk Music Revival* by Stephen Petrus,
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
6. *Which Side Are You On? Inside History of Folk Music Revival* Dick Weissman
7. *Gone to the country: New Lost City Ramblers; the folk music revival*, Ray Allen