

Freshman Seminar 37u
Boylston 203 Thurs. 2–4

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This seminar examines Dylan as an enduring and continuing musical, literary, and general cultural phenomenon, in the context of popular and higher literary culture of the last 55 years, but also in the context of those long-lived literary and musical cultures with which he works, in more recent lyrics going back to Homer, Virgil, and the entire western literary canon. Traces the evolution of his songs and lyrics from their early folk, blues, rock, gospel, and protest roots, through the transition from acoustic to electric, in studio and performative contexts, also through the many evolutions and reinventions that have characterized and continue to characterize his career in music, literature, film and painting.

Sept. 1

Introduction: the phenomenon, sources, approaches, justifications, themes of the seminar, etc. .

Sept. 8

Viewing of movie *I'm Not There*, dir. Todd Haynes, 2007

Sept. 15

1941–62: From Duluth to the Village

Albums: *Bob Dylan; The Bootleg Series, Vol. 1–3 Disc 1* (1991)

Songs: Girl From The North Country; Bob Dylan's Dream; Walls Of Red Wing; House Of The Risin' Sun; Kingsport Town; Song To Woody; Last Thoughts On Woody Guthrie; Cold Irons Bound; Highlands; Man Of Constant Sorrow

Video/Film: No Direction Home Scenes 2–7; *I'm Not There* Scenes 2, 3, 5, 8; *Must Be Santa*

Topics: gospel; Guthrie; poetry; folk music; biography and fiction; carnival

Sept. 22

1962–64: Race, War, Love

Albums: *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan; The Times They Are A-Changin'; The Bootleg Series, Vol. 1–3 Disc 1* (1991)

Songs: Blowin' In The Wind; Masters Of War; A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall; Oxford Town; The Times They Are A-Changin', When The Ship Comes In; The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll; With God On Our Side

Video/Film: No Direction Home Disc 1. Scenes 7–11; *I'm Not There* Scenes 4, 5, 9

Topics: Civil rights and protest ; Cuba; Vietnam; music and social justice; sincerity

Presenters:

Sept. 29

1964–65: Love, Literature, Language

Albums: *Another Side Of Bob Dylan; Bringing It All Back Home; The Bootleg Series, Vol. 1–3* (1991); *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 6: Bob Dylan Live 1964* (2004)

Songs: It Ain't Me Babe; Ballad In Plain D; My Back Pages; To Ramona; Chimes Of Freedom; All I Really Want To Do; Mr. Tambourine Man; It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding); Gates Of Eden, etc.

Video/Film: I'm Not There Scene 12

Chronicles, vol. 1: Ch. 1, 5

Topics: surrealism; imagery; complexity of language; persona change

Presenters:

Oct. 6

1965–66: What is a classic? # 1: Thin Wild Mercury Music

Albums: *Highway 61 Revisited*; *Blonde On Blonde*; *Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits*; *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 1–3* (1991)

Songs: Tombstone Blues; Like A Rolling Stone; Highway 61 Revisited; Ballad Of A Thin Man, Desolation Row, etc.

Video/Film: Dont Look Back; No Direction Home Disc 2; I'm Not There Scenes 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 23, 26, 27, 33

Chronicles, vol. 1: Ch. 2

Topics: Folk to hip; Dylan's women: Joan Baez, Suze Rotolo, Sara Dylan; identity and concealment

Presenters:

Oct. 13

1965–66: (cont.) Baez, Newport, The Band, and "Royal Albert Hall"

Albums: *Highway 61 Revisited*; *Blonde On Blonde*; *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 1–3* (1991); *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 7: No Direction Home* (2005)

Songs: Positively 4th Street; Sad-Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands; Fourth Time Around, Just Like A Woman, Visions Of Johanna, etc.

Video/Film: No Direction Home Disc 2; Festival; I'm Not There Scenes (as for Oct. 3)

Topics: Pennebaker and movies/videos; England 1965, 1966; drugs; The Beatles

Presenters:

Oct. 20

1966–73: Off the road: Americana, Country Rock, the Bible

Albums: *John Wesley Harding*; *Nashville Skyline*; *New Morning*; *Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits Volume II*; *Planet Waves*; *Basement Tapes*

Songs: I Dreamed I Saw St. Augustine; All Along The Watchtower ; Dear Landlord; Bessie Smith; I Threw It All Away; Country Pie; Clothes Line Saga; Tears Of Rage; Day Of The Locusts; Went To See The Gypsy; etc.

Video/Film: I'm Not There Scenes 1, 18, 19, 23, 25, 31, 32

Chronicles, vol. 1: Ch. 3

Topics: The bible and JWH; Dylan and Johnny Cash; Woodstock, the Band and Big Pink

Presenters:

Oct. 27

1975: What is a classic? # 2: Songs of Love and Hate

Albums: *Blood On the Tracks*; *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 1–3* (1991) ; *Biograph*

Songs: Shelter From the Storm; If You See Her, Say Hello; Lily, Rosemary And The Jack Of Hearts; Idiot Wind; Simple Twist Of Fate; Tangled Up In Blue; Up To Me

Video/Film: I'm Not There Scenes 13, 20, 24, 29, 30

Topics: Painterly focus; ballads/narrative complexity; aesthetics of pain

Presenters:

Nov. 3

1975–78: Rolling Thunder and the changing of the guards

Albums: *The Bootleg Series, Vol. 5: Bob Dylan Live 1975* (2002); *Desire*

Songs: Sara; One More Cup Of Coffee; Oh, Sister; Isis, etc.

Video/Film: Hard Rain 1976

Topics: The tour; musicians and fellow travelers; alternative lyrics; centrality of *Blood on the Tracks*

Presenters:

Nov. 10

1978–1991: The Christian years and Muse mislaid? Or not?

Albums: *Street Legal*; *Slow Train Coming*; *Saved*; *Shot Of Love*; *Infidels*; *Oh Mercy*

Songs: Señor; Changing Of The Guards; Gotta Serve Somebody; Covenant Woman; Every Grain Of Sand; Jokerman; Caribbean Wind; etc.

Video/Film: I'm Not There Scene 28

Chronicles, vol. 1 Ch. 4

Topics: Dylan and religion; outlaws and jokers; pop in the 80's; gospel and the blues

Presenters:

Nov. 17

1992–2001: What is a Classic #3: Never Ending Tour to “Love and Theft”

Albums: *Good As I Been To You*; *World Gone Wrong*; *Time Out Of Mind*; “Love And Theft”

Songs: Shooting Star; Trying To Get To Heaven; Not Dark Yet; Cold Irons Bound; Highlands; Mississippi; High Water (for Charley Patton); Lonesome Day Blues, Floater; Sugar Baby; etc.

Video/Film: Masked and Anonymous

Topics: Coming back; Folk and blues practice; melancholy; Mississippi; intertextuality

Presenters:

Nov. 24 Thanksgiving break

Dec. 1

2002–2007: What is a Classic? #4 On the Road to Modern Times

Albums: *Modern Times*

Songs: Thunder On The Mountain; Spirit On The Water; When The Deal Goes Down; Workingman's Blues #2; Nettie Moore; Ain't Talkin'; etc.

Topics: More intertextuality; politics; economy; memory, 19th century

Presenters:

Dec. 8

2008–2012

Bringing It All Back Home: Tell Tale Signs to Tempest and beyond

Albums: *Bootleg Series, Vol. 8: Tell Tale Signs; Together Through Life; Christmas In The Heart; Tempest; Shadows In The Night*

Songs: Red River Shore; Tell Ol' Bill; Can't Escape From You; Girl On The Greenbriar Shore; 'Cross The Green Mountain; Beyond Here Lies Nothin'; Forgetful Heart

Topics: Outtakes; civil war; Huck Finn; love lost; aesthetics of memory and regret; in the studio; playing with time; covering Sinatra

Requirements

- Around the third week we will begin brief student presentations on themes and topics to be assigned around the second week. Each student will do two or three such presentations in the course of the semester. We will also read Dylan's *Chronicles* vol. 1, and discuss each of the five chapters in the course of the term.
- Students will produce 2500-word paper, which may be based on one of the reports.

Required text

- Students should purchase Bob Dylan, *Chronicle Volume One*. Simon and Schuster 2004. ISBN: 0-7432-2815-4

Key sites

<http://www.expectingrain.com>

<http://www.bobdylan.com>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Dylan

Discography (Songs and Albums)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Dylan_discography

Set lists

<http://www.boblinks.com/dates.html>

Concerts, etc.

<http://www.notdarkyet.org>

Recording sessions

<http://www.bjorner.com/still.htm>

Interviews

<http://www.saidsearch.com/search/results?utf8=✓&name=bob+dylan&subject=>

Filmography, etc.

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001168/>

Metasite

https://www.dmoz.org/Arts/Music/Bands_and_Artists/D/Dylan%2C_Bob/

Select bibliography

Gray, Michael. 2010. *Song & Dance Man III*. New York: Continuum

Marcus, Greil. 2010. *Bob Dylan by Greil Marcus: writings 1968–2010*. New York: PublicAffairs.

- _____. 2005. *Like A Rolling Stone. Bob Dylan At The Crossroads*. New York: PublicAffairs.
- _____. 2011. *The Old, weird America: the world of Bob Dylan's Basement tapes*. New York: Picador (update of *Invisible Republic. Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes* 1997)
- Ricks, Christopher. 2004. *Dylan's Visions of Sin*. New York: Ecco
- Shelton, Robert. 2011 (revised). *No Direction Home. The Life and Music of Bob Dylan*. Milwaukee: Backbeat.
- Wilentz, Sean. 2010. *Bob Dylan in America*. New York: Doubleday