SYLLABUS: CHASING THE BLUES – Travel/Study Course, Spring 5  
HIST 080/MU 012  
Instructor: Mark Greenberg

OVERVIEW:
The blues is arguably America’s seminal musical form – the result of the interaction of African-based and European-based cultural factors and the socio-economic-political history of Black people in the United States. It is the basis of jazz and rock-and-roll and is known and played throughout the world.

Chasing the Blues explores the historical and cultural context of the blues, the Mississippi Delta, and Memphis through travel, meetings with musicians and others, live music events, museums and historic sites, discussion, reading, and media. The course also explores the history of Black-White relations as the group travels through and discusses notable sites of Civil Rights Movement activity, culminating in a visit to the National Civil Rights Museum, in Memphis.

The bulk of this course consists of an 7-day (plus 2 travel days) trip to Memphis and the Mississippi Delta over Spring Break, 2015. This is preceded by 2 3-hour classroom sessions and followed by 2 on-campus, 3-hour sessions. Group meetings/classes are also held during the trip to process observations, view and discuss films and readings, and prepare for the next day. The course has a Blackboard site containing information, links to e-reserve readings, exercises, and media materials. Required exercises and further discussions are conducted through the Blackboard site. Students keep a travel journal and submit one paper and a final project.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
1. to increase awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the blues as a distinctly American musical form and of its role and influence in American music and life;
2. to understand the relationships between the blues, its musical predecessors, and the historical political, social, economic, and geographical context (the Mississippi Delta) in which it developed;
3. to explore the relationships and interactions between “Black” and “White” American cultural forms and between folk-based and popular culture;
4. to increase understanding of American culture and history.

TOPICS:
1. African cultural retentions
2. Roots of the blues: from field hollers to juke joints
3. Why Mississippi?
4. The Delta: from slavery to share cropping
5. What is the blues?
6. The 12-bar and other blues forms
7. The blues migrate: from Mississippi to Memphis
8. Blues at the crossroads: folk and popular culture
9. Mississippi and Memphis blues men and women
10. Black, brown & white: blues and civil rights
9. **Blues People** (Jones/Baraka)

**MATERIALS:**
Readings:
- Jones, Leroi. *Blues People* (all)
- Excerpts (e-readings, on-line) from:
  - Broonzy, William (with Yannick Bruynoghe). *Big Bill’s Blues* (excerpt)
  - Charters, Samuel. *Sweet as the Showers of Rain* (excerpt)
  - Gordon, Robert. *Can’t Be Satisfied.* (excerpt)
  - ____________________________ “African American Sacred Music”
  - Hughes, Langston. “Happy New Year with Memphis Minnie”
  - Lomax, Alan. *The Land Where The Blues Began* (excerpt)
  - Marcus, Griel. “Robert Johnson”
  - O’Brien, Lucy. *She-Bop* (excerpt)
  - O’Neil, Jim and Amy. “Living Blues Interview: Eddie Boyd” (excerpt)
  - Oakley, Giles. *The Devil’s Music* (excerpt)
  - Palmer, Robert. *Deep Blues* (excerpt)
  - ____________________________ (excerpt)
  - Wald, Elijah. *Escaping the Delta* (excerpt)

Media:
- Required CD: *The Alan Lomax Blues Songbook*
- Recommended CDs: *Roots of Robert Johnson, Masters of the Delta Blues*

Via Blackboard site & on trip:
- Video: African antecedents, Bessie Smith, Big Bill Broonzy, Bukka White, Ed and Lonnie Young, Gandy Dancers, Lonnie Pitchford, Miss. John Hurt, Muddy Waters, Sam Chatmon, Skip James, Son House; *Searching for Robt. Johnson, The Land Where the Blues Began*, and others

**EVALUATION:**
1. Participation in daily and on-line discussions: 15%
2. *Blues People* paper: 20%
3. Final project: 50% (student-desigend with instructor approval)
4. Use of course materials (audio, video, readings) 15%
**DAILY SCHEDULE:**
In addition to travel to selected sites, there will be meetings to discuss the students’ observations and ideas, to connect these with the history of the blues and the readings and media materials, to view videos, and to prepare for the next day.

**THE TRIP:**
1. Meet in Memphis – at hotel; stay in Memphis
2. Rock & Soul Museum; explore Memphis
3. Center for Southern Folklore (film, concert), Stax Museum of American Soul Music
4. leave for Delta: Indianola: B. B. King Museum; to Avalon; Miss. John Hurt
   Museum/homestead; stay in Greenwood
5. one of Robert Johnson’s graves; to Clarksdale via Tutwiler (W.C. Handy); Delta Blues Museum; Ground Zero Blues Club; stay in Clarksdale
6. Stovall Plantation (Muddy Waters); Friar’s Point (MS River); Po’ Monkey’s Juke Joint
7. to Memphis via Robinsonville, Tunica Museum; Sun Records, Andy Cohen lecture/demo;
   Beale Stl.; stat in Memphis (through end of trip)
8. Graceland (optional), National Civil Rights Museum, Peabody Hotel
9. leave

**INSTRUCTOR:**
**Mark Greenberg** (BA, MA, ABD University of Chicago/Committee on Social Thought) is an educator, writer, musician, and media producer. He taught American Studies and Humanities at Goddard College from 1991-2003 and has been involved with folk and traditional music since the 1960s. His documentaries for National Public Radio have included *Green Mountains, Black Voices*, and *Children of the Dawn: Abenaki Women Speak*. He is currently conducting field-recording sessions for the Vermont Folklife Center’s Vermont Immigrant and Refugee Music Project, which he initiated. Mark has served as the text editor and a writer for *The JVC Smithsonian Folkways Video Anthologies of Music and Dance of The Americas, Europe, and Africa* and as Record Review Editor of *Sing Out!* magazine. His 1986 video documentary, *The Unbroken Circle—VT Music, Tradition & Change*, was re-released on DVD in 2006 and premiered at the Green Mountain Film Festival. Mark has also produced a Grammy-nominated album for National Medal for the Arts recipient Doc Watson and recordings for Pete Kennedy Center honoree Seeger, Dave Van Ronk, Michael “Beausoleil” Doucet, Jane Sapp, and others. His CD *Vermont—Kitchen Tunks & Parlor Songs*, the first-ever anthology of Vermont old-time music field recordings, was honored by Vermont House Resolution H.R.C. 297 for educating the public about Vermont’s musical heritage. He has taught on-line, classroom, and travel-study courses in American vernacular music at UVM since 2005.