

## LP<sup>2</sup> STUDY GROUP PROPOSAL FOR SPRING 2023

### **I WRITE THE SONGS: THE GREAT SINGER/SONGWRITERS 1965 - 1979**

Extraordinary singer-songwriters like Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, James Taylor, Stevie Wonder, Loretta Lynn and Harry Chapin populated the music charts of the 1960s and 1970s. These artists composed and wrote their own original songs, and usually accompanied themselves on piano or guitar. They fortified a long-standing musical tradition that focused on lyrics—a tradition that’s strong and vibrant today. Each week, we will look at a pair of iconic artists who share a common bond of musical style, genre, personal history, politics, and musical influences. Through weekly music listening assignments, readings and shorts videos, Study Group participants will become familiar with each artist’s songwriting style and engage in lively discussion and analysis of the songs and lyrics.

**Randy Ross** has coordinated several study groups on the topics of word play, podcasting, sports literature, and the music of Paul Simon and The Beatles.

**Susan Smahl** often used music and song as a teaching tool with special education students. She has co-coordinated several study groups including Reel Rock and Roll, Flash Fiction, and The New Yorker Profiles.

**Type of Study Group:** Listening, reading, and discussion

#### **Readings and other Materials/Online Services:**

Each week participants will be sent a listening, viewing and/or reading assignment related to the artists (not to exceed two hours)

**\*\*\*\*\* SYLLABUS - A WORK IN PROGRESS \*\*\*\*\***

#### **WEEK 1**

**TOPIC:** Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs—protest and poetry

#### **LISTENING/READING:**

Excerpts from: Dylan’s *Highway 61 Revisited*, *Blonde on Blonde*, and *Bringing it All Back Home*; Ochs’ *Pleasures of the Harbor* and *I Ain’t Marchin’ Anymore*;

Read: “The 60s and Protest Music”

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/essays/sixties-and-protest->

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music

### **QUESTIONS:**

What were the musical influences on Dylan and Ochs? What was different about Dylan and Ochs? What impact did Dylan have on the music of the 60s and beyond? What role did the singer/songwriter play in the antiwar movement of the 60s?

### **WEEK 2**

**TOPIC:** Joni Mitchell and Neil Young—two Canadians shake up Laurel Canyon

### **LISTENING/READING:**

Excerpts from: Mitchell's *Ladies of the Canyon* and *Blue*; Young's *After the Gold Rush* and *Harvest*;

Read: excerpts from *Girls Like Us* by Sheila Weller, 2008; *Shakey: Neil Young's Biography* by Jimmy McDonough, 2002, plus articles from selected periodicals.

### **QUESTIONS:**

How do the records reflect the specific years they were produced (1970–1972)? Does Mitchell and Young's Canadian background make them outsiders or keener observers? How does Mitchell's eclectic chord structure and strumming style enhance her lyrics? Is Young's musical style more direct than Mitchell's? Is it more conventional?

### **WEEK 3**

**TOPIC:** Harry Chapin and Don McClean—storytellers

### **LISTENING/READING:**

Excerpts from: Chapin's *Greatest Stories Live* and McClean's *American Pie* and *Vincent*;

Read: Chapin bio—

<https://musicianguide.com/biographies/1608000630/Harry-Chapin.html>

### **QUESTIONS:**

What was Chapin's common theme in the songs "Taxi," "Mr. Tanner" and "Cats in the Cradle?" What has been the allure and mystery of "American Pie"? What makes both Chapin and McClean such effective musical storytellers?

**WEEK 4:** James Taylor and Carly Simon—songs we sing along with

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**WEEK 5:** Janis Ian and Laura Nyro—songs about girls and women

**WEEK 6:** Leonard Cohen and Randy Newman—pathos and humor

**WEEK 7:** Carole King and Neil Diamond—Brooklyn to Tin Pan Alley to stardom

**WEEK 8:** Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye—the Detroit sound of Motown

**WEEK 9:** Paul Simon and Sting—eclectic songwriting

**WEEK 10:** Loretta Lynn and Willie Nelson—country songwriting

**WEEK 11:** John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison—on their own

**WEEK 12:** Billy Joel and Bruce Springsteen—songs for the working man

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### INSTRUCTIONS

**Text settings:** Begin each response at the left margin below the section title.

**Coordinator Names:** Listed in alphabetical order. (#Primary contact, \*First time coordinator).

**Study Group Description:** Preferably 150 words or less.

**Coordinator Biographies:** 30 words or less per coordinator. Coordinators are listed in alphabetical order.

**Type of Study Group:** List all that apply: •Presentation followed by discussion; •Mostly discussion; •Seminar, Workshop, •Reports by participants, •Other (specify)

**Readings and other Materials/Online Services:**  
Include approximate cost of required materials.

**Books:** Full title in *italics* followed by author. Add editor/translator/publisher if a specific edition is required.

**Coordinator Supplied Materials:** *e.g.*, email attachments or study group website, or links to online materials. Provide up to three examples of the sources for articles and excerpts here and/or in the Syllabus.

**Films, videos, DVDs:** Specify if a video subscription is required.

#### **Syllabus:**

Weeks 1-3: Provide Topics, Readings and at least 3 Questions/week  
Weeks 4-12: Provide Topics for each week. Readings and Questions may be added but are not required.

#### **NEW: GUEST SPEAKER HONORARIUM POLICY**

Each 12-week study group is allowed two (2) paid guest speakers @ \$200. If you plan to have an outside guest speaker who requires an honorarium:

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- Discuss with your Curriculum Committee contact
- Read the attached [Honorary Policy](#)
- Submit [Honorary Request Form](#) to your contact
- After the guest has finished your session, notify the IER Treasurer

**N.B. This does not apply to outside guest speakers who are not paid**