Democracies thrive when ideas and values clash. These clashes are the surest sign of the system's healthy operation. Americans have clashed on the role of music in society, argued their hopes and ideals through songs, expressed their struggles and confidences in music since before the Revolution.

This course looks at a few of the many clashes that have occurred in America over music and at how music played a role in the development of the nation. Topics include the debates over the proper use of music in American churches, the relationship American music should foster with European models, the contributions of oppressed groups including African-Americans and Native Americans, debates on the impact of certain music on the moral fiber of the nation ranging from minstrelsy to jazz to rap, the role music played in signal struggles ranging from the Revolution to ongoing cause of Civil Rights, how commerce and art comingle, and the role of music in American education.

Each of these topics includes listening to the music that shaped these debates, reading the ideas of the central players in these debates, and examining the important and distinct role music plays in a democratic society.

The class meets during the Spring 2016 semester on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12-1:15 in 170 Nielson Hall