

**SST 598: Special Topics, Dr. Adam Gussow:** Where do the blues come from, and where are they going? That is the theme of this interdisciplinary exploration, one that will focus on origins, outcomes, and the vagaries of popular mythologies, especially those set in the South. One conventional narrative, heavily subsidized in our contemporary moment by Mississippi state tax revenues, is that "the blues were born in the Mississippi Delta" and that the last of the "real-deal bluesmen," men who knew the cottonfields, are about to die off. A second contemporary narrative, undergirded by the t-shirt meme "No black. No white. Just the blues," celebrates the blues' triumphant emergence as a world music, a scene of pleasurable self-realization and transracial fraternity typified by the International Blues Challenge staged annually by the Memphis-based Blues Foundation. Both narratives are critically pressured not just by revisionist scholarship focusing on women's blues, early black southern vaudeville, and Native American contributions to the music, but by various sorts of African American insurgency in the musical and ideological sphere, typified by guitarist Corey Harris's "Blues is Black Music!" blog. This course will give you the tools needed to think and talk in an informed way about the music, its evolving history, and its twenty-first century contexts.