

Blues & Philosophy

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Abstracts are sought for a new title in the Wiley-Blackwell series *Philosophy for Everyone*, under the general editorship of Fritz Allhoff. Blues & Philosophy will integrate the insights of philosophers, interdisciplinary academics (including musicologists and sociologists), and blues musicians. The abstracts and resulting selected papers should be written for an educated, but non-specialized audience who love blues music. For examples of this type of work, see *The Daily Show & Philosophy*, *Wine & Philosophy*, and *The Simpsons & Philosophy*.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

Psychology and The Blues: How do general connections between emotion and music play out with the blues genre in particular? What in human nature/psychology makes blues nearly universal in appeal? Why does blues music sound so good?! How does empathy work in blues music when so many of the listeners of the music have little or no direct connection to the experiences described in the music?

Social Justice and The Blues: How does the blues depict or characterize forms of social injustice? What forms of social/political critique do we find in the blues? Does the blues offer any potential remedies? Did blues musicians receive fair compensation for their work?

Metaphysics of The blues: What are “the blues”? What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for being a blues song? Are there clear differences between blues and jazz? What is musically unique about the blues (e.g., pentatonic scales)? What contemporary musical genres can be linked to the blues vis-a-vis the “ancestral” relation?

Drinks, Drugs and the Blues: Why do so many prominent blues musicians engage in substance abuse? How central is this to the music and message?

Piracy and the Blues: White culture co-opting blues music and culture. Did rock 'n roll rip off the blues?

Gender and The Blues: How are gender roles depicted in the blues? How, if at all, have these depictions changed over the years? Why are so many blues songs about women?

Race and The Blues: Is there anything to a claim like, “White people can't play the blues”? Why does the blues seem to be (at least historically) an African American musical genre? Are there other oppressed races that have something like a blues musical tradition? How did blues affect the dominant white culture in the U.S.?

Religion and The Blues: What role does religion play in the blues, or the blues in religion? Son House is the classic fallen preacher epitomizing the uneasy bedfellows of the blues and religion. Do religious principles shape themes of guilt and uneasy conscience for the music?

Mythology and The Blues: the crossroads, selling soul to devil, legendary stories of the musicians and recurring characters (KC Jones, Stagolee, John Henry)

Storytelling and The Blues: Is there a unique form of narrative and storytelling present in the blues? Are the similarities between the kind of stories and storytelling in blues music and what we see in other areas of culture such as literature and theater?

Regional and Socio-economic issues and The Blues: Delta, Chicago, and Texas blues each have their own distinct sound, style, and lyrical themes. What accounts for these differences and why might this be philosophically relevant?

Psychoanalysis and the Blues: What psychoanalytic themes and concepts are embodied in blues music and lyrics? How do these shed light on universal aspects of the human condition?