

ROCK'N'ROLL'S FIRST DECADE

Suggested General Reading List

There are thousands if not tens of thousands of rock history books, with more on the way all the time. Here's an opinionated, selective guide to some of the best that cover important aspects of rock'n'roll's early years. More specialized books about particular eras, artists, and styles are listed and described in the six syllabuses for each of the course's weekly meetings.

1. *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock & Roll*, by Anthony DeCurtis & James Henke with Holly George-Warren (eds, original editor Jim Miller) (Random House, 1992). With several dozen lengthy essays on major rock performers and genres by top critics, this remains the most comprehensive overview of rock's evolution. Note that the larger-format original 1976 edition has slightly different contents and larger photos with better reproduction quality, though it's not that easy to find.
2. *The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll*, by Charlie Gillett (Da Capo Press, 1996). The final updated edition of a book first published in 1970. Though it only covers rock through the early 1970s, this is the most thorough narrative survey of rock's growth and stylistic shifts in the 1950s and 1960s. It is particularly strong on rock's roots in rhythm and blues, the growth of independent rock labels, and the tension between independent and major labels as rock music became a major industry.
3. *All Music Guide to Rock* (Backbeat, 2002). The largest reference book of rock album reviews and artist biographies, totaling 1400 pages. Includes essays (some by the teacher of this course) on important twentieth-century rock styles, accompanied by music maps and recommended albums.
4. *The Rolling Stone Record Guide*, by Dave Marsh & John Swenson (eds.) (Rolling Stone Press, 1979). Reviews and ratings for nearly 10,000 albums, mostly rock and soul, as well as some country, jazz, blues, and gospel. Written by numerous top early rock critics, the entries often also include general assessments of artists'

significance. There have been updated/revised editions of the guide, but in the opinion of the instructor, the writing in the original edition is superior.