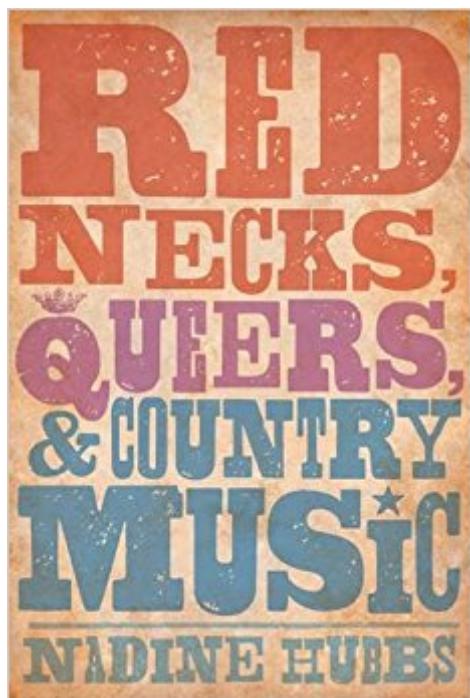


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# Rednecks, Queers, And Country Music



## Synopsis

In her provocative new book *Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music*, Nadine Hubbs looks at how class and gender identity play out in one of America's most culturally and politically charged forms of popular music. Skillfully weaving historical inquiry with an examination of classed cultural repertoires and close listening to country songs, Hubbs confronts the shifting and deeply entangled workings of taste, sexuality, and class politics. In Hubbs's view, the popular phrase "I'll listen to anything but country" allows middle-class Americans to declare inclusive "omnivore" musical tastes with one crucial exclusion: country, a music linked to low-status whites. Throughout *Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music*, Hubbs dissects this gesture, examining how provincial white working people have emerged since the 1970s as the face of American bigotry, particularly homophobia, with country music their audible emblem. Bringing together the redneck and the queer, Hubbs challenges the conventional wisdom and historical amnesia that frame white working folk as a perpetual bigot class. With a powerful combination of music criticism, cultural critique, and sociological analysis of contemporary class formation, Nadine Hubbs zeroes in on flawed assumptions about how country music models and mirrors white working-class identities. She particularly shows how dismissive, politically loaded middle-class discourses devalue country's manifestations of working-class culture, politics, and values, and render working-class acceptance of queerness invisible. Lucid, important, and thought-provoking, this book is essential reading for students and scholars of American music, gender and sexuality, class, and pop culture.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"One of the most important scholarly discourses on country music of this decade." *Jewly Hight, Wondering Sound* "The implications of Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music go far beyond the social and sexual politics of a popular music form. . . . With a light and confident hand and an eye on historical context . . . [Hubbs] makes a strong plea for the redneck and the queer—not necessarily always different people—as significant and positive actors in American life."

&#151;Brian Morton, *Times Literary Supplement* "Academics don't pay enough attention to class. . . . Nadine Hubbs . . . makes the case for paying more attention . . . , suggesting the potential for real political collaboration between the working and the middle classes." &#151;Kreg Abshire, *New Books in Pop Culture* "Opens up a conversation about class that's long overdue." &#151;Heather Seggel, *The Progressive Populist* "An important book that is . . . as much about moral questions as it is about political, social, and cultural concerns. Our challenge is now to act upon the kind of fortitude and consciousness of resistance the author finds at the heart of working-class culture." &#151;Ian Peddie, *Popular Music and Society* &#147;No book in 2014 made me think more than Nadine Hubbs's *Rednecks, Queers And Country Music*, a vigorously

written study . . . whose argument is as tight as a groundhog trap in Tennessee.â•¬â• Books of the Year 2014, The Herald Scotland "It has been a long time since a scholarly book gave me this much sheer pleasure. Hubbs's dazzling discussions of songs and music history are like candy, and I consumed them eagerly. The focus on class is long overdue and entirely welcome. This book exemplifies a revitalized and analytically potent resurrection of class studies, and one that is rich, embodied, and granular. The bibliography and literature reviews are themselves a breathtaking contribution, but that pales before the bookâ•¬â•'s own innovative claims and arguments. Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music vaporizes a whole collection of received assumptions about the relationships among class, musical cultures, and politics; most specifically, the pervasive characterizations of the middle class as queer tolerant and the working class as homophobic. A theoretical tour de force."â•¬â• Gayle Rubin, author of *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* "In lucid, economical prose and in eloquent detail, Nadine Hubbs describes the cultural poetics of working-class subjectivity. She treats country music and the communities of taste (and distaste) to which it gives rise as rich sources of information about the symbolic language of social inequality in the United States. One of her brilliant insights is that toleration of homosexuality has gone from being a symptom of working-class pathology in the early twentieth century to being a manifestation of middle-class enlightenment by that centuryâ•¬â•'s end, while homophobia has been transformed from an ostensibly reasonable and justified middle-class attitude to an allegedly bigoted working-class one. The result of this analysis of changing social attitudes is a major reconceptualization of the history and politics of sexuality in the U.S." â•¬â• David Halperin, author of *How to be Gay* "Stunning! With this serious and sophisticated examination of musical culture among working class people, Hubbs gives us another myth-busting book about American musicality's entanglement with American gender and sexuality." â•¬â• Suzanne G Cusick, Professor of Music, New York University "Rednecks, Queers and Country Music is a persuasive call to hear country music in totally new ways.â•¬â• Hubbs boldly and baldly identifies what is really at stake when we imagine country as the sound of bigotry, whether racist, sexist, or homophobic. She compels us to listen anew for the genreâ•¬â•'s unexpected echoes of distinctively white working-class gender and sexual identities and for its persistent reminders that all sorts of marginalization resonate on related frequencies. Her arguments will upend contemporary orthodoxy about the politics of country music." â•¬â• Diane Pecknold, author of *The Selling Sound: Country Music, Commercialism, and the Politics of Popular Culture*

Extremely well researched, with many valuable insights. Very dense in style, almost but not quite

crossing the line into sociological jargon.

"Rednecks" is musical history that tells the story of the cultural creation of the powerful American middle class (the "narrating" class) using the concept of taste, detailing how although the middle class has become musically omnivorous of late, distaste for country music in particular defines this cultural group against its nemesis-reflection-- the white working class. Hubbs describes how the latter group, lacking the power of narration, has been characterized in the dominant image as a bigoted, ignorant mass dumbly voting against its own economic interests due to an unhealthy obsession with conservative social exclusionary causes including racism, sexism and homophobia. She explores country music lyrics, presenting a great deal of evidence suggesting that working class America is not inherently homophobic, but that as middle class cultural taste has changed to include formal acceptance of homosexuality, this process has included pinning homophobic ideas on the working class. This insight may be shocking to middle class readers who with the best of intentions have likely absorbed many of these social constructions as truths, thinking of mobs of ignorant working-class Americans as the "problem" with America, the ones voting Republican, the group maintaining all types of blind bigotry, while enlightened and educated middle class members appreciate all the world's cultural forms except country music, of course, and the lead good fight against bigotry in any form. Hubbs destroys this image of the heroic middle class, not only by pointing out how mythological the stereotypes are, but also showing just how the narrating class maintains systemic bigotry while scapegoating voiceless groups. As if that weren't enough rich history and hegemony-busting insight, Hubbs also takes the reader through a fascinating class-based and musical history of being queer in America. If you are interested (and how could you not be?) in music history, the formation of the social classes in the U.S., the way dominant cultural narratives are formed and maintained, and/or the histor(ies) of queer America, told through class- and race-based lenses, you will find this book a fascinating read. Although it is an academic book, non-academic readers will find its broad insights and dense knowledge presented in an accessible, enjoyable manner.

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