

## **MUSC 363/PHIL 306: Sound Thinking: Music, Beauty, and Philosophy**

**(preliminary syllabus)**

**T, Th 11-12:20**

**Ewell 260**

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**Office hours: \_\_\_\_\_**

This course examines questions of what music is and why humans create it. Texts from diverse sources are explored such as those of ancient Greece and sacred Hindu scripture to Continental philosophers and modern theorists. Topics include musical aesthetics, perception, metaphysics, mysticism, temporality, social dimensions, and post-phenomenological concepts of difference and repetition. Various formats for interactive learning are incorporated, such as student presentations and structured discussion. The course culminates with a significant research paper.

### **Required Texts**

Hanslick, Eduard *On the Musically Beautiful*, Hackett Publishing Company, 1986

Khan, Hazrat Inayat *The Mysticism of Sound and Music*, Shambala Publications, 1991

Nancy, Jean-Luc *Listening*, Fordham University Press, 2007

### **Texts on Reserve**

Babbitt, Milton *The Collected Essays of Milton Babbitt*, Princeton University Press, 2003

Beck, Guy *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound*, University of South Carolina Press, 1993

Blecha, Peter *Taboo Tunes: A History of Banned & Censored Songs*, Backbeat Books, 2004

Cage, John *Silence*, Wesleyan University Press, 1960

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, 1987

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Gurney, Edmund *The Power of Sound*, Smith, Elder, & Co, 1880

Hasty, Christopher *Meter as Rhythm*, Oxford University Press, 1997

Kearney, Richard and Rasmussen, David (ed.) *Continental Aesthetics: Romanticism to Postmodernism*, Blackwell Publishers, 2001

Lamarque, Peter and Olsen, Stein Haugom (ed.) *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition*, Blackwell Publishing, 2004

Levinson, Jerrold *Music in the Moment*, Cornell University Press, 1997

London, Justin *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter*, Oxford University Press, 2004

Meyer, Leonard *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, University of Chicago Press, 1956

Plato *Timaeus*, The Library of Liberal Arts, 1959

Rahn, John *Music Inside Out: Going Too Far in Musical Essays*, G+B Arts International, 2001

Rahn, John (ed.) *Perspectives on Musical Aesthetics*, W. W. Norton & Company, 1994

Rudhyar, D. *Rebirth of Hindu Music*, Theosophical Publishing House (Adyar, Madras, India), 1928

Schenker, Heinrich *Free Composition (Der freie Satz)*, Longman, 1979

Sessions, Roger *Roger Sessions on Music: Collected Essays*, Princeton University Press, 1979

Subotnik, Rose *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society*, University of Minnesota Press, 1996

## **Schedule:**

### **What Is Music?**

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**Jan 17:** Levinson, "What a Musical Work Is," from *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition* (pg. 78-88)

**Jan 22:** Scruton, "Understanding Music Aesthetics," from *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition* (pg. 448-461); Rahn, "What is Valuable in Art, and Can Music Still Achieve It?" from *Perspectives on Musical Aesthetics* (pg. 54-64)

**Jan 24:** Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, chapter 1-3 (pg. 1-39)

**Jan 29:** Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, chapter 4-7 (pg. 40-83)

## **Modernism and Structuralism**

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**Jan 31:** Babbitt, *Collected Essays*, "The Composer as Specialist" (pg. 48-54); Sessions, *Roger Sessions on Music: Collected Essays*, "The Composer and His Message" (pg. 3-26)

**Feb 5:** Babbitt, *Collected Essays*, "The Structure and Function of Music Theory" (pg. 191-200), Sessions, *Roger Sessions on Music: Collected Essays*, "The Function of Theory" (pg. 263-268)

**Feb 7:** Cage, *Silence*, "The Future of Music: Credo," "Experimental Music," "Experimental Music: Doctrine," and "II. Indeterminacy" (pg. 3-17 & 35-40)

**Feb 12:** Subotnik, *Deconstructive Variations*, chapter 3 "Toward a Deconstruction of Structural Listening: A Critique of Schoenberg, Adorno, and Stravinsky" (pg. 148-176)

## **Musical Time and Motion**

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**Feb 14:** Levinson, *Music in the Moment*, chapter 1-3 (pg. 1-42)

**Feb 19:** London, *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter*, introduction-chapter 1 "Meter as a Kind of Attentional Behavior" (pg. 3-26); Hasty, *Meter as Rhythm*, chapter 1 "General Character of the Opposition" (pg. 3-10)

**Feb 21:** London, *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter*, chapter 2 "Research on Temporal Perception and its Relevance for Theories of Musical Meter" (pg. 27-47); Hasty, *Meter as Rhythm*, chapter 1 "General Character of the Opposition" (pg. 10-21)

**Feb 26:** London, *Hearing in Time: Psychological Aspects of Musical Meter*, chapter 3 "Meter-Rhythm Interactions I: Ground Rules" (pg. 48-59); Hasty, *Meter as Rhythm*, chapter 6 "Preliminary Definitions" (pg. 66-83)

## **Music as Social Phenomenon**

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**Feb. 28:** Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” from *Continental Aesthetics: Romanticism to Postmodernism* (pg. 166-177); Baudrillard, “Simulations,” from *Continental Aesthetics: Romanticism to Postmodernism* (pg. 411-428)

**March 11:** Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, “Art, Society, and Aesthetics,” from *Continental Aesthetics: Romanticism to Postmodernism* (pg. 242-252)

**March 13:** Blecha, *Taboo Tunes: A History of Banned & Censored Songs*, chapter 1 “Fear of Music” (pg. 1-14); Davies, “Rock Versus Classical Music,” from *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition* (pg. 505-515)

## **Metaphysics and Mysticism**

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**March 18:** Plato, *Timaeus*, (pg. 25-30); Kivy, *Platonism in Music: A Kind of Defense*, from *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition* (pg. 92-102)

**March 20:** Schenker, *Free Composition*, Volume III, introduction-chapter 1 (pg. xxi-9)

**March 25:** Beck, *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound*, introduction-chapter 1 “Vedic Sound” (pg. 1-49)

**March 27:** Beck, *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound*, chapter 3 “Nada-Yoga: Sacred Sound as Nada-Brahman” (pg. 81-118)

**April 1:** Rudhar, *Rebirth of Hindu Music*, “The Age of Purification” and “Living Tones or Intellectual Notes?” (pg. 1-35)

**April 3:** Khan, *Mysticism of Sound and Music*, chapter 1-7 (pg. 2-46)

**April 8:** Khan, *Mysticism of Sound and Music*, chapter 8-21 (pg. 47-114)

## **Post-Structural Difference and Repetition**

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**April 10:** Rahn, *Music Inside Out: Going Too Far in Musical Essays*, “Repetition” (pg. 7-18); Hulse “Repetition as Difference: Overturning the ‘Minimal’ in Minimalism” (handout)

**April 22:** Nancy, Jean-Luc, *Listening*, “Listening,” “Interlude: Mute Music,” and “Coda” (pg. 1-43)

**April 24:** Nancy, Jean-Luc, *Listening*, “March in the Spirit of Our Ranks” and “How Music Listens to Itself” (pg. 49-67)

**April 29:** Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, “1837: Of The Refrain” (pg. 310-350)

**Important Dates:**

\_\_\_ **Final Paper Topic Due**

\_\_\_ **Final Paper Abstract & Bibliography Due**

\_\_\_ **Final Paper (first draft) Due**

\_\_\_ **Final Paper Due**

**Grading:**

Class Presentations (2x10%) 20%, Presentation Summaries (2x10%) 20%, Abstract/Bibliography (for final paper) 10%, First Draft 20%, Final Draft 30%

**Attendance:**

I expect punctual and consistent attendance from all students. No more than two absences will be allowed except under extreme circumstances (documented). For every absence above two, a full letter will be subtracted from the final grade. In addition, chronic lateness may also result in a lowered final grade. Students are expected to be attentive, to participate in discussions, and respect the views and expressions of others.

**Class Presentation/Discussion:**

Twice during the semester, each student will be expected to summarize a particular reading in class and lead a class discussion. These presentations will be graded for content, clarity, and efficacy of the discussion. Presentations should be approximately 20-30 minutes (10-15 for summary, 10-15 for discussion). Both the summary and the discussion plan/questions should be prepared in paper form and handed in at the beginning of the presentation. I will provide you with a basic format for both the summary and the discussion plan. In general, the summary should be approximately 2-4 pages and cover the most important arguments and issues that arise in the given text. Citations to all relevant passages, as well as brief quotations, are appropriate (it's basically a short paper, except you are not making an argument, but rather abstracting a

sensible overview of a writer's argument and reasoning. Critical analysis will be more the focus of the discussion). A schedule of presentations will be created early in the semester.

**IMPORTANT:** At least 50% of the "efficacy" of a class discussion depends upon the active and knowledgeable participation of the other students. In a sense, you are putting a significant portion of your grade in their hands. If everyone makes an effort to thoroughly engage all readings before class (you should make brief notes of anything you think is important, if only to refer to later when you are writing your paper), all class discussions should be effective, at least in terms of class participation. The rule here is be prepared for the discussions of others, just as you would want them to be prepared for yours.

### **Final Paper:**

The final paper will use one of the texts covered in the course as a point of departure to explore an argument or topic in greater depth. I expect solid background research and a nuanced exposition of the argument/topic in addition to coherent analysis, synthesis, and critique. This means original thinking is involved, and your take on the question or issue should be a part of your thesis. However, it is important to take care in balancing original argument and analysis with adequate exposition and research. Otherwise the paper devolves into an op-ed piece. On the other hand, I am not interested in a robotic presentation of quotations and facts, either. You should locate a problem, such as how two writers agree or disagree on a certain issue, or how a certain writer's ideas contradict themselves or are problematic. You should try to show the *complexity* of the problem. You do not need to "resolve" it, so much as to develop its points and intersections. Not only do I expect to be persuaded by your insights and thoroughness, I expect to learn something *new*.

Some general topics for the final paper: political repression/propaganda/state control of \_\_\_ music; the debate over the value/legitimacy of \_\_\_ music; critical examination of argument/position by \_\_\_ philosopher/critic/composer; comparative study between \_\_\_'s and \_\_\_'s concept of/position on \_\_\_.

Formatting should be double sided, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, with footnotes and bibliography. Though the length is *somewhat* flexible (content is paramount), I expect papers in the range of 20 pages. At each step of the way, I will provide the class with explicit instructions as to how to determine a topic, prepare an outline and bibliography, and the general form of the paper.