

Course: Understanding Music, Musi 1150  
Semester: Winter 2012-13  
Instructor: Michael Gribbroek  
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## **COURSE GOALS**

There are some specific goals for this course. They are as follows:

1. Broaden your knowledge of different styles of music; it's history and importance in society.
2. Develop your listening skills and understanding of the basic elements of musical languages.
3. Develop critical thinking skills:
  - a. Be able to formulate and argument or point of view.
  - b. Justify your thoughts with reasoned arguments.
  - c. Research and analyze relevant information both for and against your point of view.
  - d. Document your sources. (See Academic Integrity.)
4. Learn to communicate your ideas effectively in writing.
5. Develop an understanding of aesthetics and the creative process.
6. Become aware of music in other cultures and how it is similar to ours and how it is unique.

### **Why Are You Taking This Course?**

In our society it is easy to take music for granted. Music everywhere, even in airports, elevators and department stores. Recordings have made it possible to have music anywhere and any time you want it. And the variety of styles and genres available makes it possible for each person to create a musical

universe of their own and store it in their I-pod. Given all this, it might seem that music is well appreciated in our world.

So why, then, do you need to take a course about appreciating it? Well, for one thing I would argue that music is not that well appreciated in our society. We immerse ourselves in it, but to what end? We use it to pass the time when commuting, doing chores, to generate some energy at the gym or to "rev" up the crowd at sporting events and other such things. Sometimes it is good for a night's entertainment or to help us get to sleep after a stressful day. There is nothing wrong with this, I guess, but music, as an antidote to boredom, titillation, a simple amusement or a soporific, is not music at its best. And besides, how much do you really listen to music in these situations as opposed just hearing it.

There is a lot more that music can be and that is what we will be trying to discover this semester. Hopefully it will be an enjoyable as well as educational experience.

## **COURSE PROCEDURES**

**Assignments:** There are three complete weeks for this course. Each week will have a new assignment consisting of two parts:

- 1) a reading/listening assignment,
- 2) an exam on that material (see "Exams" below)

These will all be found under the Assignments tab on your Black Board homepage. These will mainly be from the text but there will be some other items that I will provide in attachments. All readings from the text include listening to the examples provided therein. (See "Homework" below) Since we will be covering a lot of material in our three weeks, you should have the text materials (see below) by the first day of class –which is Dec. 27th.

**Exams:** There will also be an exam every week. These will be in Connect and consist of a series of multiple-choice questions taken directly from the text. You will be able to use your book for the exam, BUT you will only be allowed one attempt at the test and there will be a time limit on it. So read the assigned material carefully and take thorough notes before you attempt the exam. The exams will be available on Friday of each week. You will have one week to complete them.

**Homework:** Homework consists of listening to the interactive Listening Outlines in Connect. You will be graded on this and to get the full score you must listen to the audio files from beginning to end without pausing. Most of them are short but some are not. So you will have to arrange some undistracted time to listen to them.

**Essays:** These will be one research paper that will be assigned on the first day of class. This will be a serious effort complete with footnotes and a bibliography. The topic will involve two distinct musical cultures and their melding into one unique musical language. It will require some work but will also be interesting and maybe even enjoyable.

## **GRADES**

The total points for the course will be 1000: each test will be worth 150 point, each essay will also be 150 points. A further 100 points will be for “attendance” which in the on-line context is measured by how well you keep up, -- that is complete the reading/listening homework, exams, essay reasonably on time. The grading scale will be as follows:

A 925-1000

B 800- 924

C 700-799

D 600-699

F 599 and below.

**Please Note: You must complete all the work. There will be a penalty for uncompleted work equal to half of the total score for that assignment! Grades can be accessed under the Tools tab where you will see the "My Grades" link.**

## **TEXT AND MATERIALS**

There is no actual text you need to buy for this course. All material can be found on-line. To access it, all you need to buy is the Connect Plus Music Access Card. The ISBN number for this card is 9780077377717 and you can find it at this address:

mhhe.com

Once at the site just search using the above ISBN number and it should take you right to it.

The price is \$61.25 if you get it from McGraw-Hill. Other sources might be a bit more. Wherever you get it be sure to specify you need the PLUS card not just the basic access card. The PLUS is important. Also, be sure you just get the card alone. There are sets of hard copy text with CDs and the card. You don't need that. (These sets will be a lot more expensive too.)

It is best to get this done before class starts since the card will have to be sent to you in the mail. You'll want to have it so you can get started right away. Time is short and we have a lot of things to cover.

You also need to have MSWord 2007 or later on your computer. This is needed for formatting and submitting papers.

## **CONTACTING ME**

There are four ways to get in touch with me:

- 1) My school e-mail is [gribbroekm@wpunj.edu](mailto:gribbroekm@wpunj.edu). Use this for problems of a personal nature (relating to the course, that is--no advice to the lovelorn will be given).
- 2) Under the Discussion tab on the Course homepage you will find the Student Forum, a blog type discussion page where you can ask questions about the course that relate to the topic at hand, and see what pearls of wisdom I might have to add to the information in the readings.
- 3) In case of emergency, contact Lois Green in the Music Department at 973-720-3128 and she will relay your message to me.
- 4) SKYPE: This is an on-line telephone service which includes a video camera so you can actually see the person you are talking to (in my case that may not be such a good thing). You can use the basic service for free. Video conferences are available on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon and you must e-mail me to set up an appointment. No cold calls, please.
- 5) In person meetings can be arranged. They are usually not necessary, but if the situation warrants it, it can be done.