

Course: Understanding Music

Sections: MUSI 1150-80, Winter 2015-16

Instructor: Michael Gribbroek

Time & Place: Online Beginning on Dec. 2^{6th}, 2015 and Ending on Jan. 14th, 2016

I. 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.

II. COURSE GOALS

The basic goals of this course 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 an understanding of the basic elements of music.
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.

III. TEXT & OTHER MATERIALS

The text we will be using is "The Musical Experience" by John Chiego, 3rd edition. The ISBN is 978-1-4652-1382-2. For this short Winter session, used texts are permissible.

You will also need to have MSWord 2008 or later or some compatible word processing program. Also you need to be able to access to You Tube on the Internet. I assume everyone can do that!

IV. COURSE PARTICULARS

This is a short course so you will be busy, but not unreasonably so. Most of it will involve listening to a lot of interesting music, so it won't be painful! Here is an overview of how it works:

a. Web Sites

The only web site used for this course is: **BlackBoard (bb.wpunj.edu)**. On it you will find weekly announcements, my introductory comments, reading/listening assignments, playlists, discussions, and exams. The only things that are not there are the listening files. They will be on YouTube. The links to them will be in the weekly Playlists, which are included in every assignment.

b. Assignments

All assignments will be made available weekly on Saturday mornings at 8 am starting on Dec. 26th. It is your responsibility to check in each week and see what needs to be done. **All assignments are must be completed one week from the day they are assigned.** An assignment includes my introductory comments in BB, the readings in the text and listening to all musical examples presented as well as a Discussion and an Exam.

1. Discussions:

Discussions will be found under the Discussion Board tab on the BB home page. There will be one each week. They will also be available on Saturday mornings at 8AM. Participation is required. These will be mini essays on topics that I think are interesting and relate to what we are studying. You may engage you're your fellow students in a conversation on the topic if you wish, but it is not required. What you do have to do is write a response to the questions asked of at least 300-500 words, including proper citations for quotes and reference material.

c. Exams

There will be 3 exams, one for each weekly Assignment. The Exams will be taken in BlackBoard and are located under the Assignment tab. Each exam will consist of a series of concept and vocabulary questions on that week's lesson. They include multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, true/false type questions.

d. Grades

Grades will be scored as percentages according to the following scale:

600-700 A

500-599 B

400-499 C

300-399 D

299 and below F

Based on the following scores:

Exams: 3 @ 100 pts.

Discussions: 3 @ 100 pts.

Attendance and Participation: 100 pts.

The last one is important. What it measures is your ability to get the work done in a timely fashion, that is, reasonably close to the due dates I assign. For example, if you try and do all the work in the last week of the course I will know and you will lose these points, which will have a bad effect on your grades.

Total = 700 pts.

e. Announcements

Each week I will update you on any changes, problems or any other information you should know regarding the course. The Announcements will appear on the BlackBoard home page and will also be e-mailed to you.

V. A Word About Writing About Music For Non Musicians

Trying to get non-musicians to write about and analyze music is like trying to teach your dog to climb a tree. On the face of it, it makes no sense. Keep this in mind though: unlike the dog and the tree, you do know something about music even though you may not think that you do. Have you

ever danced? Sang (even badly) in the shower? Cried at a wedding as the happy couple dances their first dance? ...or anything else like that? If so, music has had an effect on you. You have experienced it. You already know what it is. Your ears are in fact very well educated even if your mind is not.

This class is not about trying to change your musical tastes or teach you musical theory. We're just trying to enhance what you already know by giving you a broader look at music and it's role in human life with maybe just a bit of technical talk. Hopefully that will result in a deeper understanding and appreciation of this beautiful art form. When you write, try to describe your experience of the music as *you* hear it. Use the concepts and terms we are studying them as best you can to describe *your* experience. Being absolutely technically correct is not as important as giving an honest effort. The effort is what I will be judging, more so than the accuracy.

VI. Academic Integrity

I will not tolerate any form of cheating. The most common form of it these days is plagiarism, that is, using other people's work as your own. This includes buying a paper, copying and pasting from the Internet, rewording a book or other source and other similar things. Doing it will have serious consequences. You will get an F for the assignment and that is not good in such a short, basic course like this. If it happens twice you will automatically fail and get reported to the powers that be. So don't do it.

Do your own work. It isn't that hard.

VII. Contacting Me

There are several ways of contacting me:

1) THE STUDENT FORUM

This site is under its own tab on the BB course home page. You can use it to ask questions that relate to the course materials or procedures --

questions the answers to which will be of interest to the whole class. Or you can use it to just generally chat with your classmates (Keep it clean and polite, please). .

2) E-MAIL

My e-mail is GribbroekM@wpunj.edu. If you would rather not go public with your questions you can reach me here. NOTE: As per University Policy, all communications must be done via your University e-mail, not your personal e-mail.

3) SKYPE

This is a free on-line system that allows us to have "live" chat on-line with the bonus of being able to actually see and hear each other. These chats are available on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon by appointment. If you want to schedule one, e-mail me and set up a time and I will then give you my SKYPE contact number.

4) OTHER

If all else fails, contact Lois Green in the School of Music at 973-720-3128. She will relay your message to me.

5) IN PERSON

In my experience, there has never been a need for a face to face meeting, but if something happens that warrants it, I will make arrangements to meet with you at school only.

VIII. Course Schedule

The course begins on Saturday, Dec. 26th and ends on Jan. 14th. All announcements, assignments, exams and discussions will be available at 8 am on Saturday mornings. They need to be completed **one week** from the day they were assigned.