

**Course: Understanding Music**

**Sections: MUSI 1150-80, Winter 2014-2015**

**Instructor: Michael Gribbroek**

**Time &Place: Online Beginning on Dec. 22nd and Ending on Jan. 11th**

## **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 understanding of the basic elements of musical languages.

## (II. Course Goals)

### 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, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. The ISBN is 978-1-4652-1382-2. Bought new, it comes with an access code that gets you into the text web site. It also includes a free 4-month subscription to the online music service Rhapsody. You will need the text web site for the exams and for the playlists provided for each chapter. You need Rhapsody to listen to the music in those playlists. There are also some video links so you can the performance as well as hear it.

**PLEASE NOTE: If you purchase a used copy you will have to purchase your own access code and Rhapsody subscription. That can be more expensive than new and take time, which we don't have a lot of. So I would recommend getting it new.** The WPU Bookstore has it and that would be the easiest place to get it. Besides that, all you need is a copy of MSWord 2007 or later to format your papers.

**NOTE; IT IS BEST TO GET THIS TEXT AND GET SET UP IN THE CHIEGO WEB SITE AND RHAPSODY BEFORE CLASS STARTS! IT IS A SHORT CLASS SO IT IS BEST TO BE READY ON DAY ONE IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.**

## IV. COURSE PARTICULARS

### a. Web Sites

There are two web sites used for this course: **BlackBoard (bb.wpunj.edu)** and **The Musical Experience (grtep.com)**

#### 1. BlackBoard (BB)

This will be the home site for the course. On it you will find weekly announcements, my introductory comments, assignment postings, discussions and papers.

#### 2, “The Musical Experience” web site (also known as the Chiego site)

This site is where you will listen to the actual music, take tests and access all the self-study aids. There is a guide to using this site under the “Musical Experience” tab on BB.

### b. Assignments

All assignments will be made available weekly on Monday mornings at 8 am. It is your responsibility to check in each week and see what needs to be done. All reading/listening assignments are due one week from the day they are assigned. An assignment includes my introductory comments, the readings in the text and listening to all musical examples presented.

#### **1. Discussions:**

Discussions will be found under the Discussion Board tab on the BB home page (There is also a Discussion Board on the Chiego site. We will **not** be using that one.). There will be one each week. They will also be available on Monday mornings

and 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 discussing 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 2 exams. Each exam will have two parts. Part 1 will consist of a series of concept and vocabulary questions made up of the usual multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, etc. type questions. Part 2 will be a listening test based on the music heard in the assignments.

There is a time limit of 9) minutes for each part of the exam. Two attempts allowed for each exam, with the higher score being the one that counts.

### **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: 2 @ 150 pts.  
Discussions: 3 @ 100 pts.  
**Attendance and Participation: 100 pts.**  
TOTAL = 700 pts.

The last item 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.

Note: There is a separate grade book for Chiego site. It will only contain the grades for the exams, which are done on that site. I will enter all those grades into the BB GradeCenter so you can see your total score for the course there.

## **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 you don't 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 know what it is.

For this course, you will be asked to write about music. At that point you may start feeling like our canine friend staring at the tree and thinking: "You want me to do what...!?"

But as I said, you already know what music is. Your ears are in fact very well educated even if your mind is not. This class is not about trying to teach you musical theory. We're just trying to enhance what you already know by giving you a broader look at music and its 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](mailto: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

1. All new announcements, assignments and discussions are available at 8 am on Monday mornings at 8 am beginning on Dec. 22nd. They need to be completed **one week** from the day they were assigned.

2. Exams are scheduled as follows. Only the parts of each chapter that we read and listening examples that were studied will be covered.

a. Exam 1, Friday, Jan. 2nd

b. Exam 2: Friday, Jan. 9th

All work must be completed by the end of the day on Jan. 11<sup>th</sup>, the last day of the session.