

Addiction, Obesity, Pollution, Thievery, and Other Music-related Topics (Music 7)

Spring 2013 @ 10 (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:00-11:05 a.m.; x-period Thursdays, 12:00-12:50 p.m.)

Reed 106

Prof. Steve Swayne

General information

Most music in our lives is ubiquitous and invisible: it surrounds us in nearly every environment in which we find ourselves (provided, of course, we unplug ourselves from our iPods), but we rarely talk about the musical saturation we experience. In this seminar, we will explore how music operates in our everyday lives and ask questions about the consequences of its ubiquity and invisibility.

We will begin by looking at how technology fills and drives our lives in ways we are quick to dismiss or deny. We'll look at what neuroscience is discovering about our musical lives — why we listen to music in the first place, how we develop our likes and dislikes, what physical effects music has on our bodies. We'll travel back in time to consider some of the controversies that swirled around the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers as they debated whether music should be regulated and how music affects the way we live our lives. Then we will return to the present day and explore the questions that a neurobiological understanding of music naturally presents. (Ex.: Can music become an addictive substance? Is it possible to “consume” too much music? Can we choose how music alters our bodies and our environments?)

We will also explore review recent Supreme Court rulings that attempt to limit music downloading and file sharing and compare them to the controversies from two millennia ago. Are great leaders and thinkers always out of sync with the aesthetic times? Is there such a thing as “free music”? Given what we know about neuroscience, how objective and dispassionate can we be when it comes to discussing music?

Readings and videos will include Plato and Quintilian, current researchers on music and neuroscience, newspaper stories, legal decisions, and other texts. Students will write of their own experiences with music as well as interact with the various readings.

Texts and materials

Materials will be on reserve in Paddock Library or will be available online. Please check the course website for access to these items.

Grades for the work in this course

Your grade is made up of your writing, your class presentation, and your attendance and participation in class.

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| Autobiographical essay | 100 pts. |
| Reflection on the Moderns and response letter | 300 pts. |
| Reflection on the Ancients and response letter | 300 pts. |
| “A Week without Music” log | 300 pts. |

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| First draft of paper and response letter | 500 pts. |
| Second draft of paper | 800 pts. |
| Class presentation | 400 pts. |
| Class attendance and participation | 300 pts. |

Explanation of these various assignments will be given with adequate time for students to complete the assignments.

Two unexcused absences are allowed. A third unexcused absence will reduce the attendance/participation total to a maximum of 150 pts. possible. A fourth unexcused absence will reduce the attendance/participation total to a maximum of 75 pts. possible. After five or more unexcused absences, no points will be given for attendance and participation. I consider an excused absence: 1) personal illness; 2) family emergency; or 3) college-related responsibilities (e.g., team sports), of which I am informed at least two class sessions prior to the responsibility in question.

At various times throughout the course, I will inform the entire class about the point distribution and the anticipated grades based on that distribution. Final grades, however, are not determined until I convert point *totals* into letter grades at the end of the course. I do not assign letter grades until the day I submit grades to the registrar. What I do is to look at the point distribution for the entire class, look for natural break points in that distribution, and assign grades accordingly. As the class progresses, I will hand out point distributions at various times, so that students can gauge their performance relative to their peers and see where the break points appear at that particular time. Students should keep in mind that the points set aside for class attendance and participation are not added until the day I submit grades to the registrar, and thus students who choose not to attend or participate in class may need to do better on all other assignments to compensate for their choice.

There is no correlation between the percentage of points a student earns and a student's final grade (e.g., 2,550 points = 85% of the 3,000 points possible, but 2,550 points does not correlate to a B). To repeat all of the above in a different way: grades in this course are determined by a student's rank in the course. Students with above average point totals will earn higher grades than students with below average point totals. If students wish to discuss grades with me, I am happy to do so in person; I do not discuss grades via email or over the phone.

The course website

Nearly all of the documents that you will need for the course can be found at Dartmouth's Blackboard website (accessible through Dartmouth's main webpage). Once you have logged in successfully, you will find a link to the website for Music 7 13S.

All students should access the website before the second meeting of the course to insure that they can in fact gain access to the website. I recommend you check at the Student Computer Help Desk if you have difficulties logging into Blackboard. Anyone who has difficulty in accessing the website should contact me to be sure that they have been enrolled as a valid student in this course. If you still have difficulty accessing the website after I verify that you are enrolled in the course, you should contact <Blackboard.Support@Dartmouth.edu> and copy me.

Some personal words

The single most difficult aspect of studying music is that music is fundamentally an aural art. One cannot “speed up” hearing a piece; such an activity would distort both the piece and one’s understanding of the piece. Neither can studious listening be treated as a background activity that accompanies other tasks. Many, if not all, of these pieces may require more than one hearing for you to be able to remember them or to talk knowledgeably about them. The serious student will allocate both the necessary time and concentration not only to the reading but also to the listening.

Fundamental to this emphasis on listening is a *commitment* to remain attentive. Music in our society functions as a background activity; we are socialized to talk when we hear music. I have discovered that students often have a difficult time remaining attentive to listening, especially when examples are played in class. Because of this, I have adopted the following guidelines for in-class listening:

1. When music is played in class, it is expected that there will be no talking.
2. If there is talking while music is playing (or while a video is being viewed), I will stop the music and wait for the talking to cease.
3. If, when the music begins again, there continues to be talking, I will ask the parties who are talking to leave the room.
4. If any student is asked more than once to leave the room, I will meet with that student and counsel him/her to consider withdrawing from the class.

I recognize that this is a strong stance, but I know of no other way to stress the importance of *active attentive listening*, and I invite all students to engage in active, attentive listening with me.

My office is in the Hop down the narrow hallway near the entrance to Paddock Library; my regular office hours are Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 3-4:30 p.m. While I hope to be in my office during these times, it is best to contact me via BlitzMail before you drop by. If you are not available at any of these times, we can schedule an appointment that is mutually convenient. I will answer your BlitzMail in as timely a fashion as I can. And I encourage you to seek me out if you are having difficulty, if you encounter any physical, medical or psychiatric impediments to your learning, if you are having success, or if you just want to talk.

I am looking forward to learning with you.

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| Dates | Topic | Reading assignment | Writing assignment | Other assignments |
|---|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Week 1: Deep Listening; Lyre Hero (beginning) | | | | |
| 3/25 | course introduction | | | Pandora's Box: The Effects of Easy Listening |
| 3/27 | the challenges of technology | Carr, "Is Google Making Us Stupid?"; Hypermultitasking | autobiographical essay (500-750 wds.) | "Digital Nation" |
| 3/28 (x-hour) | research at the college level: a visit to the library | | | |
| 3/29 | Whose music is it anyway? | White started it; Lowery responded; others responded as well | | in-class discussion of the autobiographies; <i>The Music Instinct</i> (streaming video; on reserve), chs. 1–5 (to 36:15) |
| Week 2: Modern Law and a quick dive into neuroscience | | | | |
| 4/1 | the law today | "Robert Donin materials" (on website) | | guest lecturer: Robert Donin |
| 4/3 | music and the brain; music and education | Schellenberg, "Exposure to Music" | | <i>The Music Instinct</i> , chs. 6–9 (to 1:22:00) |
| 4/4 (x-hour) | Swayne's grammar dos and don'ts | | | The Chicago Manual of Style and other tools (including "Research and Documentation Online") |
| 4/5 | music and healing; the ethics of music therapy | materials in the Moderns folder; What neuroscience can teach us | | <i>The Music Instinct</i> , chs. 10–end; "Henry" http://www.wimp.com/reactionmusic/ ; and http://theweek.com/article/index/226809/how-music-improves-the-memory-of-dementia-patients |

| Dates | Topic | Reading assignment | Writing assignment | Other assignments |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Week 3: Lyre Hero | | | | |
| 4/8 | Plato | <i>Republic</i>, Bk. 3 (386-402); <i>Laws</i>, Bk. 7 (797-802) | reflection on the Moderns (1,000 words) | in-class discussion of the Moderns essays |
| 4/10 | Aristotle | <i>Politics</i>, Bk. 8 | | |
| 4/12 | Quintilian | <i>Institutio oratoria</i>, Bk. 1, preface and chs. 9 & 10 | | Moderns response letter |
| Week 4: A week without music | | | | |
| 4/15 | Is there such a thing as music addition? | Patt Morrison, <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , 8/17/2006; Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi | reflection on the Ancients (science) (1,000 words) Keep a log for the week on "A week without music" | in-class discussion of the Ancients essays |
| 4/17 | Why does music move us so? | Mithen, chs. 6 & 7; Music and endorphins | | |
| 4/19 | music and torture; sound as deterrent | Cloonan and Johnson ; Cusick ; Akiyama | | Ancients response letter |
| Week 5: The sounds of silence | | | | |
| 4/22 | getting used to the noise | Prochnik; DeNora and Belcher ; pipedown.com; Huron on habituation | Turn in logs | in-class discussion of "A week without music" |
| 4/24 | Is there such a thing as too much music? | Sensory Overload ; Levy, "Information, Silence, and Sanctuary"; Waggoner, "The Colonization of Silence" | | |
| 4/26 | How does music change our brains? | Kraus on auditory skills | paper proposals due | |

| Dates | Topic | Reading assignment | Writing assignment | Other assignments |
|--|--|--|--------------------------|--|
| Week 6: | | | | |
| 4/29 | finding a balance (but do we want one?) | A rebuttal to White; Copyright Reform; Illegal downloads | | Information Diet; Headphones at work; The Truth about Dishonesty |
| 5/1 | getting answers to your questions, Round 1 | | | |
| 5/3 | getting answers to your questions, Round 2 | | | |
| Week 7: What's happening in the world | | | | |
| 5/6 | South America | Omnivores and univores; Wakin articles | | |
| 5/8 | Asia | Wakin articles | | Beethoven in Japan |
| 5/10 | Africa | | | <i>60 Minutes</i> |
| Week 8 | | | | |
| 5/13 | CTE and music: a conversation | TBA | first draft of paper due | |
| 5/15 | garbage burrito | TBA | | |
| 5/17 | class presentations | | | |

| Dates | Topic | Reading assignment | Writing assignment | Other assignments |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Week 9 | | | | |
| 5/20 | NO CLASS | | | |
| 5/22 | class presentations | | | |
| 5/23 (x-hour) | class presentations | | | |
| 5/24 | class presentations | | | |
| Week 10: Taking stock | | | | |
| 5/27 | NO CLASS | | | |
| 5/29 | class presentations; taking chances | | second draft of paper due | |