

MUSC 100 Experiencing Music: Syllabus

Prof. Cashner (Fall 2020)

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Course Details

Fall 2020
University of Rochester
Professor: Andrew Cashner, PhD, Assistant professor of music
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(Pronouns: he, him, his; please call me “Professor Cashner”)

Course Links

- Home
- Schedule of Classes and Assignments
- Download PDF of this page

- Blackboard
- YouTube playlists:
 1. Unit 1
 2. Unit 2
 3. Unit 3

Meetings and Format

This class will be completely online and asynchronous.

Each week I will ask you to write a listening/learning journal entry in which you respond to the course materials and discussions from the previous week and discuss the materials assigned for the coming week. I am especially interested to see the questions you have, from basic informational questions to critical and philosophical ones.

Each week I will post two videos. I will respond to what you have been writing in your journals and present new concepts for the coming week.

You will be part of a discussion group of other students. Your group will need to arrange a time that is convenient for you all to meet, whether in person with all necessary precautions or online, keeping in mind that students will be in different time zones. Each week you will meet with your discussion group to talk about the themes of the course and work on your group assignment.

Each week I will meet with one of the small discussion groups via Zoom to check in on your progress and discuss your group project. I will also be available by appointment for office hours via Zoom.

Course Description

According to the course catalog, this is “a ‘music appreciation’ course that celebrates the ‘ears-on’ experience of various aspects of musical performance. Participants develop listening skills through live musical presentations, in-class performances, discussions with the performers and living composers, and guided listening sessions.”

This course introduces you to music as a discipline for understanding human experience. It considers both how people *do* music and how we talk and think about music (in other words the course is introductory both to music and to musicology).

Its goal is to equip you to think critically about the experience of music and to empower you to engage with music in a way that will not only enrich your life in a lasting way but also allow you to make a positive impact in society. We will break down the complex whole of musical experience into different elements of how the music sounds and how the music functions socially, so that you

can understand how those elements interact to make music mean something to people. These elements are as follows:

| SONIC | SOCIAL |
|---------|--------------|
| Rhythm | Performer |
| Melody | Composer |
| Harmony | Audience |
| Texture | Patron |
| Color | Venue/Medium |
| Genre | Canon |

We will learn to identify and analyze these elements in a select body of interesting and useful examples, and in a broader exploration of musical practices and repertoire. We will listen to a wide variety of music from multiple global traditions.

We will focus on three primary themes in the units of the course:

1. **Genre** as an intersection point for the sonic and social elements of music; with nocturnes and piano rags as case studies
2. **Canon**, a socially constructed system of value and power, and a tradition of creativity within historical constraints, that is, “innovation within tradition”; with choral music traditions as case studies
3. **Voices**, the ways we use music to create individual and group identities; with case studies of well-known music creators including Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar, and Yo-Yo Ma.

The course is *not* designed to tell you what value you should place on any particular music. It is a fundamental value of this course, as it should be of our whole department, that all music of the world has equal value because all of the people who make and enjoy music in the world have equal value.

Anti-Racist Goals

The teaching of music in this university, like most others, has traditionally emphasized almost exclusively the work of European and white North American men, cultivated by the upper classes of the most powerful societies at the height of colonialism. It has also traditionally ignored or silenced any discussion of that fact. Doing so has resulted in a false, whitewashed history and the promotion of the value system and ideology of white supremacy. Moreover, this institution and others like it have historically discriminated against women and non-white people, and continues to do so in both overt and hidden or even unconscious ways. We have a moral obligation to work against racist structures, policies, and attitudes in our academic disciplines as researchers, in our classrooms as teachers, and in our university as faculty members.

In my research and teaching I am committed to the work of presenting an accurate history of music as a human activity, that gives due respect and attention to the music-making of people across social stations and in everyday life. We cannot understand, for example, the “art music” of the elite without understanding its intimate relationship with more popular and traditional forms of music-making. We must actively work to give more attention to the music of women, ethnic minorities, historically disadvantaged peoples, people of lower economic status, and people outside Europe and North America—including not just as composers but as performers, patrons, and listeners. Educators like me must work harder to make sure that we give the musical creativity of Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color the central position in our histories and theories of music that it deserves.

My own training was, unfortunately, narrowly Eurocentric, and I have been working over many years to try to expand my horizons and appreciation of a broader world of music, and to sharpen my critical understanding of the power dynamics that created the white-dominated worldview in which I was raised. But I recognize I have a long way to go, and I ask for your help in identifying ways that I and my colleagues can improve our anti-racist efforts.

Learning Goals

1. Understand the connection of sonic and social elements of music.
2. Sharpen your listening skills to identify musical patterns and styles.
3. Learn to think more critically about how we use music, how we evaluate it, and what it means to us.
4. Through exposure to a wide variety of musical traditions and writing about music, develop understanding of and respect for diverse views of music’s functions and meanings in different historical and cultural contexts.
5. Hone your skills in writing, research, collaboration, and presentation.

Assignments

1. Participate in five synchronous meetings with me and other students to discuss course materials and check in on your learning progress.
2. Keep a journal of your listening and learning experiences throughout the course, and develop your own expanding body of musical knowledge. Some weeks there will be special writing prompts or challenges.
3. Together with a group of other students, create a multimedia presentation in which you draw connections among a group of musical selections and use them to raise critical questions.
4. Write a paper analyzing the value systems of a body of writing about music, such as music reviews, textbooks, or academic articles.

5. Write a paper analyzing the sonic structures and social functions of a recorded musical performance.

Grading

| Assignment | Percent of Grade | Grading Method |
|--------------------|------------------|--|
| Meetings | 15% | Full credit (3%) for each you attend |
| Journal | 25% | Entries weekly (2% each, last 3%); by rubric |
| Presentation | 20% | Rubric (5% proposal, 15% final) |
| Values paper | 15% | Rubric (5% draft, 10% final) |
| Sonic/social paper | 25% | Rubric (5% proposal, 10% draft, 10% final) |

Grading by rubric means that I will give you in advance a set of criteria that I will then use to evaluate the assignment.

Policies

Due Dates and Late Assignments

- The assignments are due at on the day and at the time listed on the schedule, via the relevant assignment portal on Blackboard.
- I am happy to grant assignment extensions or modifications as they are needed, but I must to do them in advance of the due date and in writing.
- You may turn in any assignment up to one week late without an extension, for a deduction of one full letter grade from what you would have otherwise received.
- Without an extension, I will give 50% credit (but no more) for any late assignment that you turn in before the final day of classes, as long as it meets minimum requirements.

Academic Honesty

- You must adhere to the university's policies for academic honesty. The university requires me to report every case of academic dishonesty to the Academic Honesty Board, and I will report every case.
- Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, which means using other people's ideas and words with giving them appropriate credit, including verbatim copying and missing, false, or misleading citations.

Disabilities and Hardships

- I am committed to making this course equally accessible for all students. If you need a disability accommodation, please contact the Disability Office and they will let me now how to accommodate you without specifying the nature of your disability.

- If you have some other hardship like illness, including chronic illness, family crisis, or economic insecurity, I will do as much as I can to accommodate you. Please stay closely in touch about your situation (as it pertains to the course) and give me plenty of advance notice when you can.
- I would also ask you to be flexible with me, and be prepared that things may need to change because of COVID-19. Like many of your instructors I will be balancing new challenges in teaching against new and changing situations affecting my family, especially my two children in elementary school.

Required Materials

- Internet access for Blackboard and YouTube (This course should not cost you any money: please let me know if some element of the course poses a financial hardship for you)