

Experiencing Music (MUSC 100): Syllabus

Prof. Cashner (Fall 2021)

Links

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Course Details

Instructor

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Pronouns: he, him, his; please call me “Professor Cashner”

Meeting Times

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 to 1:45 p.m., Dewey Hall room 1-305

Office hours: Tuesdays, 2 to 3 p.m.; or by appointment

Resources and Materials

- The class website will always have the current schedule and course information.
- You'll find assignments and turn them in on Blackboard.
- Course materials will either be freely available online or on course reserve in the Art/Music Library.
- YouTube playlists:
 1. Unit 1
 2. Unit 2
 3. Unit 3

Course Description

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

Music teaching in North American universities 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. Develop skills in active listening, verbal communication, and collaborative critical thinking.

Assessments

1. Journal: Keep a journal of your listening and learning experiences throughout the course; turn in new entries every two weeks (goals 3–4).
2. Performance essay: Attend a live performance of music at least thirty minutes long. Write an essay in which you describe the event ethnographically and discuss one part of the performance in detail (goal 1, 2).
3. Values essay: Write an essay analyzing the value systems of a body of writing about music, such as music reviews, textbooks, or academic articles (goal 3).
4. Group presentation: Together with a group of other students, create a multimedia presentation in which you compare two different musical traditions, as exemplified by particular works or practices, in which the sonic elements differ but there are significant commonalities in social elements. In other words, find two examples of music that sound different but function similarly in their social setting (goal 1, 4, 5). Lead a class discussion on the issues you raise.
 - Turn in a proposal first in which you outline your goals, list sources you will use, and describe the contribution of each group member.
5. Participate actively in class discussions (goal 5).

More detailed assignment prompts for the essays will be posted on this site or on Blackboard.

Grading

Assignment	Percent of Grade
Weekly journal (7 entries)	30%
Performance essay	15%
Values essay	15%
Group presentation	20%
Attendance and participation	20% (for each class session, 1 pt. attendance, 1 pt. participation)

Please note: There will be no final exam in this course.

Grade Scale

Percent	Letter
93–100	A
90–92	A-

Percent	Letter
87–89	B+
83–86	B
80–82	B-
77–79	C+
73–46	C
70–72	C-
67–69	D+
63–66	D
60–62	D-
0–59	E

Policies

Attendance and Participation

This is an in-person, discussion-based class, so every student must participate actively in order to accomplish the course goals, and that means every student must be present. I define active participation to mean that a student was present, responded to questions, and contributed to discussions with both speaking and engaged listening.

- For each class session I will give one point for attendance (were you there?) and one point for participation (were you involved?).
- If you must miss a class, you may still earn the participation point by doing an additional writing assignment, and you may earn the attendance point by meeting with me in office hours.

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.
- Without an extension, I will accept late assignments for 50% credit at any time up until the beginning of the final class session.

Academic Honesty

- You must adhere to the university's policies for academic honesty. In short this means doing your own work, and not giving or receiving unfair or non-permitted help on your work.
- 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.

Disability Accommodations

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.

Creating a Supportive Classroom Community

I need your help in creative a supportive community in our classroom. I want to build a space in which students feel safe enough to take the risks necessary to engage with new ideas and develop new skills. We

must be careful to avoid any kind of bullying or harrassment; and we must cultivate respect, humility, and kindness. No point of view is out of bounds for discussion, as long as we can find a respectful and sensitive way to talk about it.

I will give you opportunities for feedback throughout the course and I would ask, please let me know if there is anything I can do (or anything I need to change) in order to accomplish these goals. Please be reflective about your own contributions to the classroom environment as well.