

MUSC 222 History of Western Music 1600–1800 (Spring 2021)

Andrew A. Cashner, PhD

Course Links

- Schedule
- Blackboard
- YouTube playlist
- Contact Prof. Cashner
- Download PDF of this page

Course Information

MUSC 222
History of Western Music 1600–1800
Spring 2021
4.0 credits
University of Rochester, College Department of Music

Instructors

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Teaching Assistant

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Weekly Meeting Times

- Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00–3:15 p.m.
 - Main sessions with the professor
 - Online, synchronous via Zoom
 - In some cases, teaching videos may substitute for synchronous classes.
- Thursdays, 9–9:50 p.m., or Friday 9–9:50 a.m.
 - Workshop sections with the teaching assistant
 - Note: these times are adjusted from the course schedule to accommodate students in different time zones.

All class sessions will be online via Zoom at the link on the class Blackboard site, unless we announce otherwise. Recordings of all class meetings will be available through Blackboard.

Final Exam Schedule

Friday, May 14, 4:00–7:00 p.m.

Course Overview

Catalog Description

Survey of Western classical music from ca. 1600 to 1800, with emphasis on the stylistic, generic, and performance innovations of the period; opera receives special attention. Workshops investigate specific problems posed by notation, performance, ethics, and so on.

Full Description

This course provides music majors the opportunity to build a conceptual framework for understanding how and why people in Europe and European colonies made music between about 1600 and 1800 and what it meant to them. It equips students to think historically about music (understanding change over time in forms, practices, and concepts of music), and to think musically about history (understanding lived experience in the past through music). The course highlights the interconnection between the sound of music and the social structures that music shapes and is shaped by, with particular emphasis on how European people used music to build a “Western” world, which included developing a canon of musical “classics.” Students will gain detailed knowledge of musical repertoire from this period through close engagement with the sources, including transcription and performance; while developing critical thinking skills through research, writing, and oral presentation.

Learning Goals

1. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the major genres and styles of European music in this period, and of the major creators, performers, and communities of musical practice; with an understanding of how and why these changed over time.
2. Demonstrate the ability to find reliable primary, secondary, and tertiary sources for music history, and the ability to write a persuasive argument based on this evidence and in dialogue with existing scholarship.
3. Demonstrate the ability to read and perform from the major types of music notation in the period.
4. Demonstrate a critical perspective on the ethics of music history writing and its implications for performance and teaching, drawing on an understanding of how and why the canon of “Western classical music” was formed historically, the role music played in constructing “the West.”
5. Demonstrate an understanding of the interactions between notated music and oral traditions; between the music of elite and other classes; between the music of colonizers and the indigenous peoples they colonized.

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.

Assessments and Grading

Overview of Assignments

| Assignment | Percentage of Final Grade |
|--|--|
| Learning journal (due every two weeks) | 20% (about 3% each) |
| Essay | 25% (5% proposal, 5% draft, 15% final) |
| Music edition | 15% |
| Midterm exam | 10% |
| Final exam | 15% |
| Group performance project | 15% |

Assignment Details

Weekly learning journal

Due every two weeks: reflect on your learning: what you found interesting, exciting, or upsetting; what was new or challenging to preconceived notions; what challenges or obstacles you are encountering in the learning process. Sometimes there will be specific writing prompts to respond to; other times it will be open-ended.

Graded “satisfactory” if the writing demonstrates significant engagement with the course materials and learning goals, “unsatisfactory” if it does not, zero if not turned in.

Essay: “Conventions and Communication”

Choose one item from the syllabus and situate it in a historical context. Write an essay in which you present and defend a single central argument regarding how the creators of this music used conventions to communicate with their original community of listeners. To do this you will need to take the single data point of this piece of music and explore along several axes, for example looking at other works in the same genre, or other works by the same composer or from the same institution and time. You will need to research the historical circumstances in which the work was created and what functions it served for the people who made and used it.

There will be three stages to this assignment: first you will write a **proposal** in which you outline your topic, describe research sources that you are using, and discuss the possible arguments you might make. Second, you will write a full **draft** and receive feedback for improvement; and then third, you will write a revised *final version*.

Music Edition Project

Given a musical source in the original notation, you will transcribe it into modern notation useable by performers. Make a modern critical edition including a brief introduction and critical commentary.

Exams

There will be **one midterm exam** and a **final exam**. These will be “take home” exams, and you will be allowed to use your notes. They will include identification and brief analysis of scores, short definitions of terms, and essays that will require you to demonstrate both knowledge of the course content and critical thinking about it, especially about how the different elements of the course relate to each other.

Group Performance Project

In a small group, take any music from this period and arrange and perform it on your instruments or voices in a way that you think would appeal to contemporary audiences. Create a video in which you introduce the work and perform it. Explain how and why you presented it in the way you chose.

The work should be less than five minutes in duration. You may perform just a section of a larger work.

You may modify every aspect of the music but the performance should still be recognizable as a rendition of the historic piece. You may choose a work you edited in the transcription project for this.

Grade Scale

| Percent | Letter |
|---------|--------|
| 93–100 | A |
| 90–92 | A- |
| 87–89 | B+ |
| 83–86 | B |
| 80–82 | B- |
| 77–79 | C+ |
| 73–76 | C |
| 70–72 | C- |
| 67–69 | D+ |
| 63–66 | D |
| 60–62 | D- |
| 0–59 | E |

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.
- The previous two policies do not apply to exams. Exams must be turned in on time unless you arrange otherwise with me, in writing, before the due date.

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 without 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 know 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.