

The Art of Active Listening
MUSIC 100
Fall 2025

Instructor: Prof. Mary Margaret Zrull
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Office: Schambach 209
Office hours: Tuesday, 10:30-11:30am; Wednesday, 1:00-2:00pm; or by appointment

Meeting Time: MWF, 10:00-10:50am
Meeting Location: List 106

Text: Morgan-Ellis, Esther, ed. *Resonances: Engaging Music in Its Cultural Context*. Dahlonega, GA: University of Georgia Press. PDF available on Blackboard, or web version available here: <https://sites.google.com/mc.edu/copy-resonances/home?authuser=0>. (I recommend using the web version).

Course objectives: The goal of this class is to help you make the most of listening to a variety of different music, including art or “classical” music, popular music, and folk/traditional music. This class does not include the study of notation or the rudiments of music theory. Instead, we will focus on enhancing your experience of listening to music by developing the skills to recognize important characteristics of the music, learning the vocabulary to describe what you hear, and discussing the context of music creation and performance across different time periods, geographical areas, and cultures. The course addresses several of the College’s educational goals: aesthetic discernment, creativity, communication and expression, and understanding of cultural diversity. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Listen to a given piece of music and identify the melody, rhythm, texture, timbre, and form of the work.
2. Use music vocabulary and descriptive language to communicate what you hear in the music in written and oral form.
3. Understand the historical and cultural context of selected musical examples from “classical,” popular, and folk music traditions.
4. Draw connections between the musical characteristics and examples we discuss in class and music you encounter outside of class this semester and in the future.

Class engagement/preparation: In order to have the best learning experience possible, you need to be present and engaged in class activities. Half of your grade in this category will come from attending class and being engaged while you are there; you will receive credit each day you are present and engaged in class. You don’t necessarily have to speak in every class to get these points—rather, “being engaged” means participating in small group discussion or other verbal and/or written in-class activities, demonstrating that you have done the requisite readings before class, paying attention in lectures, etc.

In addition to participating in regular in-class and small group activities, you will also be expected to prepare for four (1 per unit) full class discussions throughout the semester. For these four classes, we will spend the majority of class talking about ideas and examples you bring with you to class. Prior to the discussion, I will provide you with a prompt. The day of, I will check that you have notes (written, or on a phone, tablet, computer, etc) that indicate you have spent time outside of class preparing for the discussion topic at hand and award points accordingly. *Together, preparation and engagement make up 30% of your final grade.*

Excused Absences: You are expected to attend every class. You are allowed two absences for the semester, but starting with the third, all absences must be excused with proper documentation. You cannot be engaged and prepared as outlined above if you are not present in class, so after two absences, I will deduct 10 points from your engagement/preparation grade for each unexcused absence.

Examples of acceptable excused absences include, but are not limited to, significant mental or physical health concerns (with a note from a healthcare professional; please do not send me pictures of illness or injury as “proof”), religious observances, College-sponsored travel (for sports or other activities), family emergencies, and job/graduate school interviews. I understand that unexpected things happen and aren’t always easy to document, so please come talk to me if life circumstances are preventing you from coming to class or getting your work done.

Assignments: For units 1-3, you will complete one creative- or research-based assignment based on a related topic per unit (3 assignments total). Guidelines for each assignment are posted on Blackboard. *Assignments make up 30% of your final grade (10% for each assignment).*

Quizzes: In-class quizzes will take place at the end of each unit (4 quizzes total). Quizzes may include listening identification, multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions, and they cover content only from the corresponding unit (not cumulative). Contact me to make up quizzes for excused absences, ideally before the day of the quiz if possible. I do not offer make up quizzes for unexcused absences. *Quizzes make up 20% of your final grade (5% for each quiz).*

Final project: For your final project, you (or you and a partner) will choose a musical work **that has not already been discussed in class** that you think matches the theme of one of units 2-4 well and reflect on the most important musical characteristics of and contextual information about the song (see Blackboard for more details). I can help you come up with a topic if needed, but I encourage you to think outside the box and choose something that interests you! You can present this information in any medium of your choice, except for a traditional written essay. Time slots for in-person presentations or performances will be available during the final exam period and assigned on a first come, first served basis. *The final project is worth 20% of your final grade.*

Late work: I generally do not accept or grade late work unless we have made prior arrangements. I am sometimes willing to offer extensions, depending on the reason for needing the extension, how proactive you are about asking for the extension (it is better to ask before the

assignment is due, if possible!), previous class performance, etc. If something is preventing you from getting your work done on time, please don't hesitate to come talk to me!

Grading details:

Class engagement/preparation: 30%

Assignments: 30%

Quizzes: 20%

Final project: 20%

Email/Blackboard Etiquette: Please check Blackboard and your Hamilton.edu email address regularly; this is how I will communicate with you if I need to tell you something or send out a reminder between class meetings. Email is also the easiest way to reach me between classes; I will check my email regularly during the day Monday-Friday.

For my mental health, I try to avoid checking email in the evenings (after about 6pm) and on the weekends. You are welcome to email me whenever you need to, but please be aware that I probably will not respond as quickly during those times. Likewise, I may sometimes need to send emails or post on Blackboard on the weekends or during school breaks; in these cases, please do not feel obligated to read or respond to my communications until the next school day.

Accommodations Due to Disability: Hamilton College will make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation(s) and would like to make a formal request for this course, please discuss it with me as soon as possible. You will need to provide Allen Harrison, Assistant Dean for Accessibility Resources (aharriso@hamilton.edu) with appropriate documentation of your disability.

Honor Code: The Honor Code will be upheld in this class. The work you submit for a grade in this class is expected to be your own. Submitting work that has been copied without attribution from some published or unpublished source, including the Internet, or that has been written or created by someone (person or AI) other than you, or that in any way misrepresents somebody else's work as your own, is considered plagiarism and will be reported to the Honor Court.

You may use a mechanical spell- and grammar-check for written assignments, and you are welcome to discuss ideas with and/or get proofreading help from your peers (and the Writing Center). However, the majority of the writing and ideas in any assignment you submit should be your own original work. (The final project is an exception; if you are working with a partner, you should both submit the same thing for your final project, but it should clearly demonstrate equal work). If you have any doubt about whether or not something is an example of academic dishonesty, it is always best to ask!

You can review Hamilton College's Honor Code at the link below:

<https://www.hamilton.edu/student-handbook/studentconduct/honor-code#>.

Student Support: There are times that each of us may feel overwhelmed, anxious, or depressed. There are many resources available on campus to help and support you, including:

- Counseling Center (www.hamilton.edu/offices/counselingcenter; 315-859-4340) offers individual and group therapy, peer counselors, psychiatric treatment, and a 24-hour hotline. If you need immediate assistance, phone the Counseling Center and select option 2 to connect with a counselor 24/7. Campus Safety is available 24/7 for urgent concerns at 315-859-4000.
- Associate Dean of Students for Student Support: Sarah Solomon (315-859-4600; ssolomon@hamilton.edu)
- Associate Dean of Students for Academics: Adam Van Wynsberghe (315-859-4600; avanwyns@hamilton.edu)
- Your faculty advisor, RA or Area Director, me

Course Schedule

This schedule includes daily work and due dates for assignments, quizzes, etc. I reserve the right to alter the schedule as needed. If I need to make any changes to daily class work/topics or due dates, I will announce the changes in class and on Blackboard in advance. Please consult Blackboard for more detailed daily assignments, including questions to consider as you read and listen, as well as links to assigned listening examples.

Date	Topic	Assignment (to be completed before class unless otherwise stated)
F 8/29	Introduction to the class	n/a
M 9/1	Unit 1 discussion Best practices for listening	Read: Wallace, 5 Techniques for Active Listening Prepare: Unit 1 Discussion (see prompt on Blackboard)
W 9/3	Rhythm & meter	Read: Chapter 2, “Rhythm” section only
F 9/5	More rhythm & meter	No reading; listening assignments posted on Blackboard
M 9/8	Pitch & melody	Read: Chapter 2, “Pitch” section only
W 9/10	More pitch & melody	No reading; listening assignments posted on Blackboard
F 9/12	Dynamics, tempo, articulation	Read: Chapter 2, “Dynamics” and “Articulation” sections
M 9/15	Texture	Read: Chapter 2, “Texture” section
W 9/17	Timbre	Read: Chapter 2, “Timbre” section
F 9/19	Form	Read: Chapter 2, “Form” section
M 9/22	Evaluating music	Reading TBD (check Blackboard)
W 9/24	Words & voices	Work on Unit 1 Assignment
F 9/26	Instruments	Assignment 1 due
M 9/29	Genre & style Review for quiz	Study for Quiz 1
W 10/1	Quiz 1	Study for Quiz 1
F 10/3	Musical theater	Read: Chapter 4, “Lin Manuel Miranda, <i>Hamilton</i> ” section
M 10/6	Unit 2 Discussion Music and characterization	Prepare: Unit 2 Discussion
W 10/8	Opera	Read: Chapter 4, “Tian Han: The Tale of the White Snake”
F 10/10	Danced stories	Read: Chapter 4, “Pytor Ilyich Tchaikovsky, <i>The Nutcracker</i> ”
M 10/13	Program music	Watch: “Symphonie Fantastique by Hector Berlioz” https://youtu.be/RODOzH4Q784
W 10/15	Song cycles	Read: Chapter 4, “Beyoncé, <i>Lemonade</i> ”
M 10/20	Songs & ballads	Read: “Ballad Traditions of Appalachia” https://dsi.appstate.edu/projects/mountain-music/topics/dooley/balladtraditions
W 10/22	Word Painting	Work on Unit 2 Assignment & study for Quiz 2

	Review for quiz	
F 10/24	Quiz 2	Study for Quiz 2
M 10/27	Unit 3 Discussion Music and politics	Prepare: Unit 3 discussion
W 10/29	National anthems, pt. 1	Read: Chapter 9, “United States of America, ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’” Unit 2 Assignment due
F 10/31	National anthems, pt. 2	Read: Chapter 9, “South Africa, ‘National Anthem of South Africa’”
M 11/3	Music as political protest	Explore: First Amendment Museum, virtual exhibition- “Protest Music: Songs and Free Speech” https://firstamendmentmuseum.org/exhibits/virtual-exhibits/history-of-protest-music/ . Listen to two songs of your choice (for Assignment 3) Listen: Billie Holiday, “Strange Fruit” (#15 under “1911-1947” or linked below) https://youtu.be/-DGY9HvChXk?list=RD-DGY9HvChXk
W 11/5	Finish/make up as needed—topic TBD	Work on Unit 3 Assignment
F 11/7	No class today; MMZ at AMS conference	Unit 3 Assignment due
M 11/10	Music under totalitarianism	Read: Chapter 10, “Dmitri Shostakovich, Symphony no. 5”
W 11/12	Music and unity Review for quiz	Watch: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony no. 9 (1824; this recording 1989), movement IV, conducted by Leonard Bernstein, “Ode to Freedom” https://youtu.be/IciKr8NUmKs
F 11/14	Quiz 3	Study for Quiz 3
M 11/17	Unit 4 Discussion Functional music	Prepare: Unit 4 Discussion (prompt on Blackboard)
W 11/19	Marching music	Read: Chapter 12, “Scottish Traditional, ‘Scotland the Brave’”
F 11/21	Dance music in concert settings	Read: Chapter 12, “Dance Music in Concert Settings,” Johann Sebastian Bach section only
M 12/1	Music, sports, and the Olympics	work on final projects
W 12/3	Review/make up topics as needed	Study for Quiz 4
F 12/5	Quiz 4	Study for Quiz 4
M 12/8	Early Christian music	work on final projects
W 12/10	Music in funeral traditions	work on final projects
F 12/12	Wrap up discussion & other topics TBD	work on final projects
T 12/16 7-10pm	Final exam period	All final projects due by 7:00pm on 12/16