

CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Division of Humanities & Social Sciences

Mu 139 – Music History from 1850 to the present

SYLLABUS

Spring 2020 – M/W 2:00pm (contact Prof. Neenan if you are challenged by your geographic location)
Prof. Tom Neenan
E-mail: neenan@hss.caltech.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 9am – 10am (Zoom link on Moodle) or by appointment
Course website on Moodle (entry key: neenan)

Welcome to Mu139! I hope that Mu139 will be a respite from the anxiety-filled times in which we live. As we inhabit the online environment of Mu139 together during the coming weeks, I hope we can all take advantage of the opportunity to relax and enjoy some wonderful music and sharing of ideas about the music.

I am passionate about classical music and hope to share that passion with you. I have been a professional conductor and keyboard player for more than 36 years and have been a fan of classical music since I was in junior high. I vividly remember my parents giving me an enormous collection of LPs containing recordings of most of Beethoven's instrumental music when I was about 17 years old. I attend classical concerts whenever and wherever I can and love continuing to learn about classical music of all eras. I'm also a big fan of jazz, film music, and some pop and folk music.

Tom Neenan

COURSE DESCRIPTION

By any measure, the years between 1848 and 1915 were a tumultuous and invigorating period in music. In the late 19th century musical style fractured into multiple competing trends, one of which led to the shattering of nearly every principle that had governed the art for more than three hundred years. After WWI the music world seemed to settle into a sort of détente between competing factions but World War II, brought about near-complete chaos which led many to question the nature of music itself. The result was a turning away by many from classical music but in the last twenty-five years, as classical music has again become more accessible to general audiences, consumption of live and recorded classical music has rebounded and now embraces a wide variety of musical styles. We in Los Angeles are lucky to have what has been called “the most vital orchestra” in the world (Alex Ross, *New Yorker*).

In this course we will delve into the history of music in Europe and America from 1850 to the present. Some of the questions we'll consider include:

- Who were the major composers of the period?
- What kinds of music did they write?
- What were the social, political, economic and cultural forces that gave rise to the creation – and in some cases repression – of musical works of the period?
- How did the most important composers advance the art form and what was the public's reaction to their music?
- How did new technologies intersect with musical composition and performance?

- How did we get to where we are today in the world of so-called “classical” music?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this course, we will:

- Develop critical listening skills and a means to express in words what we hear and feel in music
- Enhance our ability to perceive and evaluate different musical styles and approaches to performance
- Expand and deepen our understanding of music of the period and those who composed and performed it as well as those who supported and listened to it
- Deepen our understanding of how the music of the period was influenced by external forces
- Develop skills in communicating effectively in writing

PREREQUISITES

It is important for you to note that no prior musical experience or knowledge of classical music is required. Students come to the music history courses with a broad range of musical backgrounds. As a result, some students will naturally be more conversant in music notation and technical terminology than others. However, those with little musical knowledge or prior experience are at no disadvantage as the course focus is on historical and cultural developments, not music theory or lofty musical concepts. If you have little or no background in music, there is nothing to prevent you from earning an A in the class. From time to time musical scores will be used in the lectures. These are primarily for my reference in teaching the material. If you do not read music, you should not feel intimidated or excluded. If a video clip with a scrolling score is presented, feel free to close your eyes and just listen to the music. You won't miss a thing.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

We will use several modes of evaluation and assessment. The course is designed so that you have some flexibility in attending scheduled online meetings and completing weekly assignments (see “Developing a Game Plan”); however, assignments directly related to the specific writing requirements of an advanced humanities course and completing two listening evaluations are mandatory.

Synchronous and Asynchronous learning

Like any other course, part of your learning will be done synchronously and part asynchronously. It is important that you be present and attentive during synchronous class meetings as a good deal of time is spent listening to and discussing the music we are studying.

In order for you to participate in guided listening and viewing activities and for you to learn by sharing your thoughts with others, you need to be present, whether online or in a classroom. For that reason, attendance is taken very seriously. Join the online sessions on time, prepared and ready to learn and be an active participant. You will get more out of the course if you do. **If you have or anticipate having difficulty connecting with the online sessions for any reason, communicate with Prof. Neenan in advance.**

During each online session you will respond to a Daily Question where you post the name of a piece of music you listened to since the previous meeting and comment on how the piece relates to the lecture or reading of that week or the week just past. You receive 15 points for responding to the Daily Question, which will prompt discussion for the day and also serves as an attendance record.

Because of the situation in which we find ourselves, we will not spend 3 hours per week together in a synchronous environment. **At our 2pm Zoom meetings on Monday and Wednesday** we will complete several tasks including Daily Question collection, check-in re logistics and technology and Q & A on the weekly assignments. You will do much of the course work on your own but are encouraged to work with others in the class via the **weekly forums**, email, phone, or social media and collaborate on assignments. **Please review the Collaboration Policy on Moodle which applies primarily to the Academic Report on Copland.**

Academic Report

Writing an academic report, "Aaron Copland and the Establishment of an American Sound in Classical Music" (approximately 2,500 words) will help you develop skills in writing and research while learning about interesting topics related to American composer Aaron Copland, the development of a distinctively American sound in classical music, and competing social and economic forces at work in the musical world in this country during the 1930s – 1950s. The paper requires you to gather information about the topic, organize it in a coherent fashion, and report on it clearly and concisely – all components of good writing that we will work on together throughout the class. Since the paper is an academic *report* and not an expository *essay*, you are not being asked to do original research, evaluate resources or defend a proposition, all of which require a degree of expertise in music theory and analysis that is outside our purview. Refer to the **Academic Report Guidelines** in the **Writing Projects Folder** on Moodle for more information. **There is a dedicated forum for exchanging resources and ideas on the Academic Report. See "Developing a Game Plan" for important information on the academic report and taking the class P/F.**

Letter from Paris to Moscow

Assuming the persona of a cultured Russian ex-pat writing a letter (approximately 1,000 words) from Paris back home to a friend in Moscow in the spring of 1913, you will inhabit one of the most exciting times and places in the history of music. Your letter will report on cultural events including the premiere of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* but will also relay information on topics of your choice ranging from fashion, *haute cuisine*, transportation, architecture or painting. Refer to the **Letter from Paris Guidelines** in the **Writing Projects Folder** on Moodle for more information. **There is a dedicated forum for exchanging resources and ideas on the Letter from Paris to Moscow.**

Weekly Response Question

Writing responses to questions related to the readings, lectures, and listening activities will give you the opportunity to think critically about issues covered in the course and to hone your skills as a listener. Responses are done on Moodle and must be completed by **1 pm each Monday, beginning Week 2. Open the response question in advance of doing the reading for the week so you know what will be asked of you. Do not "attempt quiz" until you are ready to submit your response. Each response question is worth 30 points and you will receive full credit for making a tangible effort.** Feedback will be given the first few weeks but not thereafter, unless requested. **The course grading scheme is based on the assumption that you will complete 7 of 9 responses. You are not required to complete a specific number. If you choose to complete more than 7, you will receive credit for any you do.**

Listening Assignments and Evaluations

Listening Assignments are done on Moodle and are intended to relate concepts from the readings, lecture, and class discussion to the music itself. Listen to the assigned selections as you are doing the reading in advance of the first class meeting of the week and again at the end of the week or over the weekend while preparing to complete the weekly response question. **You are not required to verify the amount of time you have spent with the listening assignment or answer any questions while doing assigned listening.**

There will be **two required listening evaluations** (done on Moodle) intended to help you evaluate your ability to perceive elements of musical style and identify the music of important composers. Listening Evaluations are to be done **NON-COLLABORATIVELY AND ARE CLOSED-BOOK**. Listening Evaluations ask you to identify important works which have been covered in the lecture and which appear in the listening assignments or to identify elements of certain musical styles. Listening evaluations have no time limit and **you get three chances** to take each one. However, you will be locked out of the evaluation for 24 hours after each attempt. If an evaluation is taken more than once, the highest score will be recorded. You may review reading material, lecture material and listening assignments between attempts. **You must receive a minimum score of 70% on each listening evaluation in order to pass the class.**

COURSE TEXTS

Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise*, Picador, 2008

Ross is the music critic for the *New Yorker* magazine and *The Rest is Noise* reads more like a series of essays than a textbook. It is the winner of the 2007 National Book Critics Circle Award for Criticism, a *New York Times Book Review* "Top Ten Book of the Year" and one of *Newsweek's* Top Ten Nonfictions of 2007. It is available as an inexpensive e-book and you are strongly encouraged to have your own copy.

Note: The reading material for Week 1 is from a general history of music and includes some musical scores and some technical musical terminology. Read at your own level and make note of terminology or concepts you don't understand. Do not be intimidated – ask questions during our synchronous learning time.

OTHER MATTERS

Special Needs

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with Caltech Accessibility Services for Students (CASS). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact CASS as soon as possible, since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. <http://cass.caltech.edu/>. Undergraduate students should contact Dr. Lesley Nye, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Students (administrative contact: Beth Larranaga) and graduate students should contact Dr. Kate McNulty, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies (administrative contact: Angelica Medina-Cuevas).

Honor Code

"No member of the Caltech community shall take unfair advantage of any other member of the Caltech community." The honor code is an important aspect of life on the Caltech campus. I honor it and

expect you to do the same.

Collaboration Policy

You are encouraged to collaborate with others in the class in completing course assignments and activities. However, it is imperative that you review the **Collaboration Policy** found on Moodle.

Attendance

As previously stated, attendance is taken seriously. Students will be excused because of illness, family emergency or reasons having to do with other **occasional** academic requirements but you must contact Prof. Neenan in advance.

Please carefully review rules regarding writing assignments:

1. In order to receive credit for an assignment, at least 50% of the total points for that assignment must be earned; otherwise, *no points* will be recorded for the assignment.
2. In the academic report, you must turn in a satisfactory outline, first page draft, first draft and final draft – **in that order** – or you will forfeit all points and fail the course.
3. Writing assignments turned in after the due date are subject to a penalty equivalent to 15% of the points possible on the assignment. Penalties increase by an additional 10% each week thereafter.

Moodle Profile and Syllabus Quiz

Join Mu139 on Moodle and complete your personal profile. Please add a few details about yourself in the description including any prior musical experience. **Take the Syllabus Quiz (required) before class on Monday, Week 2.** You get 3 chances on the quiz. The Syllabus Quiz verifies that that you understand and acknowledge the requirements and grading procedures of this course.

Developing a Game Plan and Course Grading Scheme

Keep in mind that this is an advanced humanities credit course and requires 4,000 words of composition. In order to fulfill the writing requirement, you **must** satisfactorily complete the academic report and the “Letter from Paris.” Be realistic. It is highly unlikely that you will get all the points possible for the assignments. The course is designed so that if you need to skip one or two weekly responses or you need to be absent once or twice, you may do so without doing serious damage to your grade. Stay abreast of your points total on Moodle and the points needed for each grade.

	<u>Max Points ea. component</u>	<u>Max. Total Points</u>
Syllabus Quiz (complete by 1pm Monday, Week 2)		25
Academic report (~ 2,500 words)		500
<i>Outline</i>	<i>150</i>	
<i>First Page Draft¹</i>	<i>50</i>	
<i>First Draft² (not required if taking Mu139 P/F)</i>	<i>200</i>	
<i>Final Draft</i>	<i>100</i>	
Letter from Paris to Moscow (~1,000 words)		200

¹ **The First Page Draft is, in essence, the first two pages of your academic report plus a Works Cited page.** It allows me to see a sample of your writing and offer feedback so that if a “course correction” is required you are aware of it early on and with little impact on your overall grade.

² If you take the course P/F you are not required to file a First Draft

Listening evaluations (2 required)	75	150
Weekly reading responses (points based on completing 7 of 9)	30	210
Attendance/Daily Question – (18)	15	<u>270</u>
Total		1,355 (1,155 P/F)

Grade scale and rationale

Grades will be based on a Grading Point of 1,287 points (1,097 P/F) or 95% of the total points possible.

Grade Scale (based on 1,287 Grading Point)

A	95% or more of Grading Point
A-	90% - 94% of Grading Point
B	80% - 89% of Grading Point (B- = 80% - 83%; B = 84% - 86%; B+ = 87% - 89%)
C	70% - 79% of Grading Point
D	below 70% of Grading Point
F	below 60% of Grading Point

Taking this course Pass/Fail

Students may take the course P/F. Due to the special circumstances of the term, students taking the course P/F will earn advance humanities credit.

If you choose to take the course P/F you are not required to file a First Draft. Points total and Grading Point will be adjusted accordingly. If you P/F the course you will not receive extensive feedback on your writing.

In order to pass, students must do **all of** the following:

1. **Complete all components of both writing projects – except the First Draft** - with a minimum score of 70% on each
2. Complete **both listening evaluations** with a minimum score of 70% on each
3. Earn at least 1,003 points in the class (equivalent of a C, or 74% or more of the total points)

COURSE CALENDAR

March 30 – April 5

Week 0

- **Before our meeting on April 6**
 - **Join** Moodle (password: neenan) and complete your profile – tell me a little about yourself
 - **Watch** the video “Welcome to Music History from 1850 to the Present,” linked on Moodle in the Week 0 section
 - **Read** the syllabus, making note of any questions you might want to ask at our April 6 meeting
 - **Do** the Week 1 reading – see comments below re **Taruskin**
 - **Sample** the Week 1 listening assignment, i.e. listen to a bit of each clip. You will be asked to listen more intentionally to all the music at the end of Week 1.
 - **Get** a copy of *The Rest is Noise* by Alex Ross. Kindle and paperback versions are available and inexpensive. The library *may* be able to make a digital scan available but you shouldn’t count on it.

April 6 – April 12

Week 1

Introduction to the Period – The New German School vs. the Conservatives in Late 19th Century Germany; Musical Nationalism

At our 2:00pm Zoom meeting on April 6, we will make contact and learn something about each other, practice some of the features on Zoom and do a quick survey on PollEv.com

- Reading:
 - “**Taruskin** on Musical Politics at Midcentury” (and Liszt) and “**Taruskin** on the Musical Museum” (and Brahms) – both on Moodle. **Note re Taruskin:** because of the compressed term, this week’s reading is longer than usual. If you need to prioritize, focus on the following pages: 647-653, **655-658**, 732-737, **742**. The readings from Taruskin contain musical scores and technical musical terminology that will be unfamiliar to many of you. Do not be intimidated if you don’t read music or are unfamiliar with certain terms or concepts. This material will be covered in the first couple of class meetings and lectures.
- **Before April 13:**
 - **Listen** carefully to Week 1 listening assignment
 - **Complete** Week 1 response question
 - **Complete Syllabus Quiz** by 1pm Monday, Week 2
 - **Read** Ross Chapter 1
 - **Sample** Week 2 listening assignment
 - **Watch** the lectures on Mahler and Strauss

April 13 – April 19

Week 2

Mahler and Strauss

At our 2:00pm Zoom meeting on April 13 we will meet Gustav Mahler who wrote some of the most gigantic symphonies ever, including the “Symphony of a Thousand.” Richard Strauss, the topic of discussion on April 15, wrote tone poems that depict everything from a hike in the Alps to the adventures of Don Quixote but is also remembered for his operas such as “Salome” – considered so obscene that it was banned in some countries after its Austrian premiere.

- Reading:
 - Ross, Chapter 1 (access listening files to accompany text at <http://therestisnoise.com>)
- **Before April 20:**
 - **Listen** carefully to Week 2 listening assignment
 - **Complete** Asynchronous Learning Activity “**Strauss’ Salome**” (Moodle)
 - **Complete** Week 2 response question
 - **Read** Ross Chapter 2
 - **Sample** Week 3 listening assignment

April 20 – April 26

Week 3

Impressionism and the Second Viennese School

At our 2:00 Zoom meetings on April 20 and 22 we will explore the irony of the fact that some of the most beloved and some of the most reviled 20th century music was composed at almost exactly the same moment and in close geographic proximity. While Debussy was writing his sensuous collection of “Preludes” for piano, Arnold Schoenberg was jumping off the proverbial cliff with his first wholly atonal works, the Three Piano Pieces, op. 11. We will discover how these two composers tried to solve the same problem by very different means.

- Reading:
 - Ross, Chapter 2
- **Before April 27:**
 - **Listen** carefully to Week 3 listening assignment
 - **Complete** Asynchronous Learning Activity tba
 - **Complete** Week 3 response question
 - **Read** Ross Chapters 3 & 4
 - **Sample** Week 4 listening assignment

April 27 – May 3
Week 4

Stravinsky, Bartok and American music from Ives to Ellington

At our 2:00pm Zoom meeting on April 27 we'll see what all the fuss was about that prompted you to write a Letter from Paris to Moscow regarding Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring." On April 29 we'll look at the eccentric and idiosyncratic Charles Ives and other composers including one of the greatest composers of both classical and jazz, Duke Ellington

- Reading:
 - Ross, Chapters 3 & 4
- **Before May 4:**
 - **Listen** carefully to Week 4 listening assignment
 - **Complete** Asynchronous Learning Activity tba
 - **Complete** Week 4 response question
 - **Read** Ross Chapters 7 & 8
 - **Sample** Week 5 listening assignment

Letter from Paris to Moscow due 11pm Friday, May 1

May 4 – May 10
Week 5

France after Debussy and mid-century music in the U.S. and U.S.S.R.

At our 2:00pm meeting on May 4 we'll see how World War I and the Great Depression forever changed the nature of music in Europe and the United States. Lenin's liberal attitudes toward the arts were upended by Stalin and some of the U.S.S.R.'s greatest musicians lived in fear for their lives. On April 6 we'll share research for the academic report and how Aaron Copland sought a form of musical expression that would lift the spirits of the masses suffering in the wake of economic collapse.

- Reading:
 - Ross, Chapters 7 & 8
- **Before May 11:**
 - **Listen** carefully to Week 5 listening assignment
 - **Complete** Asynchronous Learning Activity tba
 - **Complete** Week 5 response question
 - **Read** Ross Chapter 9
 - **Sample** Week 6 listening assignment

Academic Report Outline and First Page Draft due 11pm Friday, May 8

May 11 – May 17

Week 6

Music for film and music under Nazism

The U.S. enjoyed a tremendous influx of talented immigrant composers during the Golden Age of American film, thanks in no small part to the atrocities being visited on the Jews in Hitler's Germany. At our 2:00pm Zoom meeting we will look explore the topic of film music and look ahead to some neo-classical music composed after WWII.

- Reading:
 - Ross, Chapter 9
- **Before May 18:**
 - **Listen** carefully to Week 6 listening assignment
 - **Complete** Asynchronous Learning Activity tba
 - **Complete** Week 6 response question
 - **Read** Ross Chapter 11 & 13
 - **Sample** Week 7 listening assignment

Complete Listening Evaluation I (Weeks 1 – 5) by 11pm Friday, May 15

May 18 – May 24

Week 7

The 50s and 60s

After the catastrophe of WWII many composers questioned the very nature of music, turning to modes of expression that were beyond the capacity of many to appreciate much less understand. The European and American avant-garde had a pronounced and largely negative impact on concert life for most fans of classical music but composers working within more traditional modes of expression found out how to put "old wine into new bottles." At our 2:00pm Zoom meetings on May 18 and May 20 we will look at some examples of the avant-garde before turning our attention to composers such as Bernstein, Britten and Barber whose music remains popular today.

- Reading: Ross,
 - Chapter 11 & 13
- **Before May 25:**
 - **Listen** carefully to Week 7 listening assignment
 - **Complete** Asynchronous Learning Activity tba
 - **Complete** Week 7 response question
 - **Read** Ross Chapter 14, 15, and Epilogue
 - **Sample** Week 8 listening assignment

Academic Report First Draft due 11pm Friday, May 22

May 25 – May 31 (No class May 25; May 29 last Mu139 meeting for seniors)

Week 8

Minimalism and post-modernism in Europe and America

At our 2:00pm meeting on May 29 we will take a look at the state of affairs from around 1970 on. In many ways it has been an exciting time for music with myriad forms of expression being produced by composers from every conceivable background.

- Reading: Ross,
 - Chapters 14, 15 & Epilogue
- **Before June 1:**
 - **Listen** carefully to Week 8 listening assignment
 - **Complete** Asynchronous Learning Activity tba
 - **Complete** Week 8 response question

- **Read** “The Experience of Profundity in Music” – for discussion Week 9

June 1 – June 7 (June 5 last Mu139 meeting for undergrads)

Week 9

Wrapping up

At our 2:00 Zoom meeting we will look at how music affects us (or not) emotionally and sample some of the latest trends in classical music

- No assigned reading, Asynchronous Learning Activity or listening assignment Week 9
- **Before June 5 or 12 as appropriate**
 - **Complete** Week 9 response question

Seniors complete Week 9 response question by 11pm Friday, June 5
Seniors complete and file academic report by 11pm Friday, June 5
Seniors complete Listening Evaluation II (Weeks 5 – 8) by 11pm Friday, June 5

Seniors complete Week 9 response question by 11pm Friday, June 12
Undergrads complete academic report by 11pm Friday, June 12
Undergrads complete Listening Evaluation II by 11pm Friday, June 12