

CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Division of Humanities & Social Sciences

Mu 51 – Understanding Music – The Listening Experience
SYLLABUS

Fall 2020 – M/W 11 -12:25

Prof. Tom Neenan

Office Hours will be held via Zoom (see below for more info)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

From the Introduction (Listen, 9th edition): Music matters to us...[We are all] surrounded by music of one type or another – usually, these days, of many types. Most...have counted musical experiences among the important formative moments of their lives...Music saturates human societies – all of them, without exception. Perhaps you have wondered just *why* music matters so much...Philosophers, psychologists...and many others have been asking the same question [for] 2,500 years.

In this course we will survey the history of what is commonly referred to as western *classical* music, from its roots in the Middle Ages to the present day. A tall order. More importantly, we will *listen* to music and try to understand what makes the music from different eras, different countries, and different composers *sound different* from one another. As we go along, we'll ask ourselves:

- Who were the major composers from each musical era?
- 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 new pieces of music?
- How did new technologies intersect with new music?
- How and when did concert life as we now know it originate?
- How did we get to where we are today in the world of so-called "classical" music and what, exactly, is the state of classical music today?

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 musical style and approaches to musical performance
- Expand our understanding of music in different eras, those who composed and performed it, and those who supported and listened to it
- Deepen our understanding of how music has been influenced by external forces and how it, in turn, has shaped society

RE: M/W SYNCHRONOUS SESSIONS

If you are unable to attend the live Zoom sessions regularly for geographical, technical or other reasons, you must speak with Professor Neenan during the first week of class in order to develop a plan which will allow you to take the course. **Accommodations will be made but it is imperative that you address this issue personally with Prof. Neenan immediately.**

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 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 musicological 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 to allow a degree of flexibility in completing many of the assignments but some assignments are mandatory. It is your responsibility to decide which assignments you want to do and to make sure the assignments are completed on time.

Class attendance and Daily Question

A good deal of class time is spent listening to music or watching performances on video. 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 and alert. For that reason, attendance is taken very seriously. Come to our meetings prepared – you'll get a great deal more out of the class if you do. You are allowed two unexcused absences. If you have three or more you will fail the class.

Class discussion is primed by your completing a **Daily Question** at the beginning of class where you write down the name of a piece of music and its composer (if known) you listened to in the previous week and comment on what you liked or disliked about it. **Music should be related (at least tangentially) to the reading or discussion for the given week or the week just gone by but should be something other than music that is assigned or covered in a "Listen" playlist, Listening Exercise or Response Question. In other words, you should find a piece of music on your own and relate it to what we are talking about in class.** You receive 15 points for completing the Daily Question, which also serves as an attendance record.

Weekly take-away question (Mondays, during Zoom session)

Each Monday, at the beginning of our Zoom session, I will ask you to submit a **take-away from the previous week's lecture, reading, and/or listening assignments.** You are expected to submit a thoughtful response that reflects your having been engaged in learning the material. You will receive up to 10 points for responses that reflect serious thought and consideration. Take-aways should be 50 – 75 words and you should compose your response prior to the beginning of the Zoom session and

submit it when requested. Take-away responses are not writing assignments; they are your informal response to things that you found interesting, surprising or illuminating during the week gone by. **A useful strategy will be to compose your take-away while you are doing the reading or listening assignment and save it to submit at the beginning of the Monday session.**

Response Questions and Listening Exercises

Response questions are intended to motivate you to think about the music we are studying and listening to beyond the confines of the text, lectures, and listening assignments. **You may use whatever resources you like in answering response questions and you are encouraged to discuss the question with classmates or Prof. Neenan before you submit your answer.** However, answers you submit must be entirely your own. Be sure to review the Hixon Writing Center's webpage on "Avoiding Plagiarism: Guidelines and Expectations for Writing in the Humanities at Caltech:"

<http://www.hss.caltech.edu/academics/avoiding-plagiarism>

Response questions typically require a response of ~150-200 words. You are not required to cite sources **unless you paraphrase or quote a source**, in which case you should include an in-line citation. We will discuss this issue during the first week of class. Follow MLA guidelines for in-line citations and works cited. For more information on MLA guidelines, visit the Purdue Online Writing Lab website.

Your response will be evaluated on how thoroughly you address the questions and how your response reflects serious thought given to the questions. You will receive 20 points for a thorough answer reflecting serious thought; 10 - 15 points for an answer that is somewhat incomplete or superficial; 0 points for a response that is woefully incomplete or reflects very cursory consideration.

The purpose of the **listening exercises** is for you to hone the listening skills you are acquiring in class and for you to evaluate your own progress as a critical listener. Listening exercises typically require you to listen to a piece of music a couple of times and to answer questions about the musical style, form, texture etc. We will do some listening exercises in class during the first couple of weeks, so you know what to expect before you take the first one for credit. Grading is similar to response questions: 20 points for complete, thoughtful responses; 10 – 15 points for partially incomplete responses; 0 points for woefully inadequate or no response.

Response questions and listening exercises must be completed before they close at 11am Mondays or you will not receive credit – no exceptions. Weekly take-aways must be submitted at the beginning of class on Monday (or prior, if you know you will miss a Monday) or you will not receive credit.

Assignment flexibility

The course grading scheme assumes you will complete **seven out of nine response questions, seven out of nine listening exercises, and seven out of nine weekly take-aways.** You may complete more or fewer than seven, depending on what grade you wish to receive. **If you are taking the class P/F you must complete at least six response questions of each with an average grade of 70% or more – in each category – or you will fail the course.**

You may choose to do a response question and skip the listening or take-away for that week or visa-versa. If you complete all nine, you get credit for all nine added to your course total. Keep track of your total points on Canvas in order to know where you stand in the class.

Response questions and listening exercises close on Mondays at 10am and generally include material covered during the previous week. You must complete the assignment by that time – no exceptions. Likewise, weekly take-aways may not be submitted after the Monday class time unless you have been excused from class in advance.

COURSE TEXT

Kerman and Tomlinson, *Listen*, ninth edition. WW Norton, 2019, available at <https://digital.wwnorton.com/listen9>. You must have access to the online resources of the text in order to complete the listening assignments.

Note: “Listen” contains eight (ungraded) Listening Exercises found in Chapters 1 – 5. They are **mandatory** and should be completed during the first two weeks of class as you are reading Unit 1. These you do on your own using the “Listen” textbook’s online resources. You do not receive a grade on the “Listen” Listening Exercises found in Unit 1 however you are expected to do them. **Do not confuse these with the graded Listening Exercises listed with weekly assignments on Canvas and the syllabus.**

Fundamentals Quiz - Mandatory

It is important that you have a basic understanding of music fundamentals (melody, rhythm, texture, form, etc.). These topics are covered in Chapters 1 – 5 and will be addressed during Week 1. You **must** complete the Chapters 1 – 5 Fundamentals Quiz **found on Canvas. You have until 10am on Monday of Week 3 to complete the Fundamentals Quiz** on Canvas. It is located in the “Chapter 5” section.

Syllabus Quiz - Mandatory

The syllabus quiz is intended to verify that you have read and understand the syllabus. Take the syllabus quiz by 10am on Monday of Week 2. You may take the quiz twice if you wish.

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

You are encouraged to discuss assignments with others in the class but your responses to response questions and listening exercises should be your own. Prof. Neenan stands ready and anxious to help if you have any questions regarding the course or its assignments. Zoom office hours can be arranged most any day and at most any hour. Do not hesitate to get in touch if you have questions or need help.

Plagiarism

Please review the Hixon Writing Center's website "Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism"
<http://writing.caltech.edu/resources/plagiarism>

Attendance

Regular Class attendance is required and taken seriously. Students are excused for justifiable reasons, e.g. you are sick, have a job or college interview, are attending a required out-of-town event. Some verification may be requested. If you are going to be absent, send Prof. Neenan an email **before class**.

Developing a Game Plan and Course Grading Scheme

Be realistic. It is highly unlikely that you will get all the points possible for all the assignments. The course is designed so that if you need to skip some assignments 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 Canvas and the point totals needed for each grade.

	<u>Max Points ea.</u>	<u>Max. Total Points</u>
Syllabus Quiz (required – done on Canvas)		25
Fundamentals Quiz (required – done on Canvas)		20
Response questions (done on Canvas) (points based on assumption of 7 of 9 weekly responses completed)	20	140
Listening exercises (done on Canvas) (points based on assumption of 7 of 9 weekly responses completed)	20	140
Weekly take-away response (done on Mondays) (points based on assumption of 7 of 9 weekly responses completed)	10	70
Attendance/Daily Question – (18)	15	300
Total points possible		695

Grade scale and rationale

Grades will be based on a Grading Point of 660 points, or 95% of 695 points (the total points possible on the Syllabus Quiz, Fundamentals Quiz, Attendance/Daily Question and 7 of 9 response questions, listening exercises and weekly take-aways).

Grade Scale (based on 660 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. However, in order to pass, students must do **all of** the following:

1. Complete at least six response questions, six listening exercises, and six take-away responses with at least a 70% average on each
2. Earn at least a C in the class (74% or more of the Grading Point)
3. Not exceed the maximum number of unexcused absences

COURSE CALENDAR – ASSIGNMENTS AND LECTURE TOPICS

Complete on your own by Monday of Week 3:

- Read Chapters 1 – 5.
- Complete the following from “Listen”: Listening Exercises 1 – 7 (found throughout the first few chapters). You should NOT listen to Britten’s “The Young Person’s Guide” as part of Listening Exercise 1 in Chapter 1 as it will come up again at the end of Chapter 5.
- Listen to Britten’s “The Young Person’s Guide” with the listening guide found at the end of Chapter 5. You are not required to submit any feedback, just listen with the guide, twice if possible.
- Complete Syllabus Quiz and Fundamentals Quiz by 11am Monday, Week 3

Week 1

- Read: Chapters 6 to page 70
- Listen at least twice to all music contained in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 through page 70 (ideally, for all listening assignments listen to the music first without referring to the text; read the section of the text dealing with the music; listen again using the Listening Guide). If you have time, read again, listen again.
- Complete:
 - **Complete Weekly take-away for Monday, Week 2**

Week 2

- Read: Page 70 through Chapter 8
- Listen closely at least twice to all music covered on page 71 through Chapter 8
- Complete:
 - **Complete Weekly take-away, Response Question and Listening Exercise (“Notre Dame Organum” and “Machaut’s ‘Rose, liz’”)**

Week 3

- Read: Chapters 9 – 10 (we will omit Chapter 11)
- Listen closely at least twice to all music contained in Chapters 9 and 10
- Complete:
 - **Complete Weekly take-away, Response Question and Listening Exercise (“Da Vinci” and “Music by Victoria...”)**

Week 4

- Read: Chapters 12 – 14 through page 183 (we will not cover String Quartet or Opera Buffa)

- Listen closely at least twice to all music contained in Chapters 12 - 14 through page 183
- Complete:
 - **Complete Weekly take-away, Response Question and Listening Exercise (“Bach ‘s St. John” and “Fugue in G minor”)**

Week 5

- Read: Page 198 through Chapter 16
- Listen closely at least twice the first movement of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5, at least once to the other movements, and twice to the 1st movement of the Sonata, Op. 109
- Complete:
 - **Complete Weekly take-away, Response Question and Listening Exercise (“Bach vs. Mozart” and “Hearing sonata form”)**

Week 6

- Read: Chapter 17 (we will skip Chapter 18)
- Listen closely at to all music in Chapter 17
- Complete:
 - **Complete Weekly take-away, Response Question and Listening Exercise (Beethoven’s “Sixth” and “Diabelli Variations”)**

Week 7

- Read: Chapter 19 (skip “Responses to Romanticism”)
- Read Unit 5 introduction and Chapter 20
- Listen closely to the music in Chapter 19 through “Pictures at an Exhibition”
- Complete:
 - **Complete Weekly take-away, Response Question and Listening Exercise (“Winter’s Journey” and “The Moldau”)**

Week 8

- No class meeting November 28 – Thanksgiving Holiday
- Read: Chapters 21 and 22 (skip “The First American Modernist: Charles Ives”)
- Listen closely to the music in Chapters 21 and 22 (skip Ives’s “Second Orchestral Set, II)
- Complete:
 - **Complete Weekly take-away, Response Question and Listening Exercise (“Modernism” and “Pictures”)**

Week 9

- Read: Chapters 23
- Listen closely to all the music in Chapter 23
- Complete:
 - **Complete Weekly take-away, Response Question and Listening Exercise (“German Expressionism” and “Rite of Spring”)**

Week 10

- Read: Chapter 24

- Listen closely to all the music in Chapter 24
- Complete:
 - **Complete Weekly take-away, Response Question and Listening Exercise by 11am Monday, December 7 (“Milton Babbit” and “Ellen Reid”)**