

## **Syllabus: FYI 100 What Is Music?: A History of Ideas**

Instructor: Dr. Timothy Cochran

Peer Mentor: TBA

### **Course Description and Goals**

Throughout the history of Western civilization, music has been defined by musicians, audiences, and thinkers in many different ways, each linked with the cultural, political, and philosophical values of its era. Yet despite the differences among eras, we can identify several recurring definitions of music in the history of ideas: music as morality, as a science, as spiritual force, as a language, as national, and so on. This course will explore these themes as they have been articulated (in primary texts) and experienced (in musical sound) at distinct points in time and place.

Although you will learn about a wide range of music and ideas, the primary purpose of this exploration is to develop three categories of skills that can be applied beyond our class to varied circumstances:

- (1) **Developing Campus Survival Skills:** you will complete a number of learning modules (mostly uploaded to Blackboard) designed to help you build healthy approaches to course work (e.g., academic integrity, time management), to make you aware of campus resources (e.g., library, advising), and to teach you how to navigate registration and other non-class responsibilities during your time at Eastern.
- (2) **Developing Academic Skills:** each academic assignment will be designed to challenge and grow you in (a) reading and writing analytically, (b) applying ideas to and solving problems creatively in varied situations, (c) evaluating new knowledge and perspectives in relation to pre-existing knowledge/perspectives, (d) exploring and articulating ideas through oral and written communication, and (e) supporting ideas with evidence from analysis and/or research. To achieve these goals, course activities will involve isolating arguments and evaluating rhetoric in primary and secondary sources, synthesizing and distinguishing between texts across time, applying ideas to analytical listening, and making thoughtful connections with our own cultural and musical experiences. Such skills (critical thinking, analytical writing/presentation, creative application, and integration/evaluation) are foundational markers of a liberal arts education that are valuable in a range of educational and career situations within and beyond your major. We will aim to not only develop these skills but also to become aware of them, their power, and their relevance for situations beyond our class.
- (3) **Creating Learning Communities:** students learn best in dialogue and collaboration with one another in environments where all student voices are valued. Therefore, class time will feature relational learning activities primarily: discussion, small group activities, presentation, and healthy debate (rather than rote memorization of facts); one of your main assignments will be a collaborative research and analysis project. Our goal will be for every student to take ownership of producing and sharing knowledge for the good of our learning community and to adopt this orientation toward shared responsibility and benefit as a valuable way of approaching challenges at Eastern and beyond. These goals will be met in

an environment built around mutual respect and collaboration in which students feel safe to take intellectual risks, believe their individual voices are valuable and valued by the group, and are motivated to contribute.

### **Required Textbook**

Piero Weiss & Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Western World: A History in Documents*, 2nd ed. (Schirmer)

### **Grades**

2 Synthesis Papers	25%
Comparative Analysis Assignment	10%
Collaborative Final Project	20%
Miscellaneous Projects/Debates/Co-Curricular Assignment	20%
Preparedness Quizzes/Participation	10%
Learning Modules	15%

### **Tentative Schedule of Topics**

Week 1 Introductory Concepts; What is the liberal arts?

Weeks 2-3 Music as Morality: Plato, Augustine, and Rock 'n' Roll

#### **\*Censorship Debate**

Discussion Reading: Taruskin, "The Danger of Music"

Primary Source Readings: excerpts from Plato, *Republic*; Augustine, *Confessions*; transcripts of 1985 PMRC Senate Hearings

Listening: music of Little Richard, Rolling Stones, and Madonna

Weeks 4-5 Music as Natural Science: How to Tune the World

#### **\*Listening to Public Soundscapes Assignment**

#### **\*Library Resource Assignment**

Discussion Reading: excerpts from Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and The Tuning of the World*

Primary Source Readings: excerpts from Nicomachus on Pythagoras; Helmholtz, *On the Sensations of Tone*; Messiaen interviews on birdsong

Listening: music of Brahms and Messiaen

Weeks 6-7 Music as Spirit: The Odyssey, Hoffmann, and the Unlikely Link Between Beethoven and *Beetlejuice*

#### **\*Synthesis Paper 1 Due**

Discussion Reading: excerpts from Cochran, "Enduring Romanticism: Spirit-Realms, Mass-Mediation, and the New Sincerity"

Primary Source Readings: excerpts from Homer, *The Odyssey*; E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Kreisleriana*

Listening: music of Beethoven, Jimi Hendrix, and select film scenes

Weeks 8-9 Music as Language: The Orpheus Myth, Bach, and *Wall-E*

**\*Playlist Assignment**

Discussion Reading: Kofi Agawu, "Music as Language," from *Music as Discourse*

Primary Source Readings: excerpts from Virgil, *Aeneid*; Burmeister, *Musica Poetica*; Ziporyn, "Who Listens if You Care?"

Listening: music of Gluck, Bach, Sufjan Stevens, and select film scenes

Weeks 10-11 Music as Modern: Opera, Futurism, and Hip Hop

**\*Comparative Music Analysis Assignment**

**\*Music Ownership and Technology Debate**

Discussion Reading: excerpts from Julian Johnson, "The Precarious Present," in *Out of Time: Music and the Making of Modernity*

Primary Source Readings: excerpts from Caccini, *Le nuove musiche*; Russolo, *The Art of Noises*; Cocteau, "Cock and Harlequin"

Listening: music of Caccini, Busoni, Satie, and Public Enemy

Weeks 12-13 Music as Nation: From Rousseau and Dvorak to Nazi Propaganda

**\*Synthesis Paper 2**

Discussing Reading: Taruskin, "Nationalism: Colonialism in Disguise?"

Primary Source Readings: Rousseau, "Letter on French Music;" Dvorak, "Music in America;" "Degenerate Music"

Listening: music of Rameau, Dvorak, and various jazz artists

Week 14 Tying Threads Together

**\*Co-Curricular Assignment: Concert Report**

Week 15 **Collaborative Final Project Presentations: Situating Music on Your Phones in the History of Ideas**