

## **Auditory Theory: Aesthetics & Communication**

MUS 410 01

3 credits

Tuesday & Thursday 11:30 AM – 12:45 PM

Location: Benildus 249

Instructor: Steven M. Miller

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### **Syllabus**

#### **Overview**

This course is an upper-division seminar on a broad range of topics subsumed under the general rubric 'aesthetics & communication.' Another possible course title might simply be 'music and ideas' – and not just ideas about music. We will encounter a broad range of ideas and their implementations across stylistic, philosophical, cultural, and disciplinary boundaries. We will examine some major trends and lesser-known by-ways of musical thought concerning music in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries. Along the way we will delve into relationships between and among musicology, philosophy, acoustic ecology, acoustics & psychoacoustics, political economy, anthropology, technology, aesthetics, information theory, sociology, critical theory, cultural studies, etc.

This course, perhaps more than most, will be more about questions than answers. We will encounter contradictory and perhaps even antagonistic viewpoints. The task will be to sift through a welter of information and viewpoints, ideas and opinions, and begin to develop for ourselves a set of questions that will help guide our own encounters and explorations with music. Music is a multifaceted human phenomenon – our explorations this semester will undoubtedly bear this out.

#### **Expectations Concerning Student Work**

As this is an upper-division seminar, an emphasis will be placed on informed and productive participation in all discussions. It is expected that all readings will be done in advance of the assigned discussion dates, and extensive notes will be brought to class to aid in discussion. These notes will also serve as material for the final paper. In particular, readings should be assessed not only for content, but also for indications of biases, beliefs, assumptions, pitfalls, strengths, opportunities, and resources that each embodies and presents. Finally, these readings should be fit into a framework of your own thought as it relates to your own aims, goals, and experiences (as well as your biases, beliefs, assumptions, etc.) in music. Keep in mind that you don't need to agree with everything you understand, but you should, at the least, understand everything with which you disagree.

*Note: This is NOT a lecture course – you are all responsible for shaping the content and flow of the course through discussion in relation to the readings and assignments.*

#### **Required Texts**

Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner, eds. *Audio Culture; Readings in Modern Music*, Continuum 2004

Michael Bull and Les Back, eds. *The Auditory Culture Reader*, Berg 2003

All other readings are on reserve and online. PDFs of all assigned readings not in the course texts are available in my public folder on the CMP server (Users/millersteven/Public). Hard copies of all are in binders on reserve, as are the original texts from which they were drawn.

### **Assignments & Projects**

In addition to the weekly readings, notes, and in-class discussion, each student will do 2 short (15-20 minutes) in-class presentations, a mid-term paper, and a final paper. The papers will be turned in as soft-copies in MSWord format dropped in my public folder on the CMP server. Audio files to accompany the papers will be in AIFF format 44.1 kHz/16-bit (CD-Audio standard) files.

Presentation 1 – Give an introductory summary on a Tuesday of the readings, ideas, issues, etc. for a specific week's topic. This may not be the same week/topic as presentation 2. You will provide the class with a written outline of your presentation and 2 discussion questions.

Presentation 2 – Present and discuss 1 piece (recording and score, if appropriate) of music on a Thursday that is presented, mentioned, related to, or somehow exemplifies the readings, ideas, issues, etc. for a specific week's topic. This may not be the same week/topic as presentation 1. You will provide the class with a written outline of your presentation and 2 discussion questions.

Midterm Paper – This research paper will be based on a section of one of the two course texts not already covered in the assigned readings and discussions. You will clear your selected topic with me no later than week 4 of the semester. In addition to the selected readings from the course text, additional sources will be consulted from print & electronic media. The paper will summarize and discuss the relevant ideas, issues, etc., and also give an in-depth analysis of at least 1 piece of music (not your own) related to the topics. A recording (and score, if appropriate) of the piece of music will accompany the paper. Minimum 8 pages (not including title page, bibliography, music score, etc.), with no more than 1" margins, no larger than size 12 font. Must follow appropriate style guidelines.

Final Paper – This paper will synthesize the major topics of the course into your own thinking on music. You will be expected to show evidence of encountering, understanding, and applying the ideas, techniques, and concepts from the course into formulating a major statement about your own work as a musician/composer. In addition to the assigned course readings, additional sources will be consulted from print & electronic media. You will also give an in-depth analysis of at least 1 piece of your own original music related to the topics of your paper. A recording (and score, if appropriate) of the piece of music will accompany the paper. Minimum 15 pages (not including title page, bibliography, music score, etc.), with no more than 1" margins, no larger than size 12 font. Must follow appropriate style guidelines.

### **Grading**

All students will be responsible for completing assigned readings and projects and fully participating in all class discussions. While acknowledging and allowing for special circumstances, students are expected to complete assignments in a timely manner. All assignments will be typed/printed. Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the due date. Late assignments will receive half-credit.

Presentation 1	15%
Presentation 2	15%
Midterm Paper	30%
Final Paper	40%
Semester Grade	100%

### **Americans With Disabilities Act**

The College of Santa Fe makes every effort to provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act. Students may receive the accommodations if they contact their professor and register at the Center for Academic Excellence with the Disabilities Service Coordinator.

**Note: All reasonable attempts will be made to adhere to the schedule & information in this syllabus. However, the instructor reserves the right to make accommodations & adaptations based on class progress, special opportunities, as well as occurrences outside the instructor's control.**