

PhD/DMA Programs in Music – Fall 2019 Course Descriptions

MUS 74500: Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis – Professor Poundie Burstein

An introduction to the practice of Schenkerian analysis, including discussion of its notation, terminology, and techniques. Assignments will involve intensive analyses of works and excerpts of works from the tonal repertoire, along with some readings from the scholarly literature. Students entering the class should have a strong background in harmony and counterpoint.

MUS 86100: Seminar in Mus History: Reading Late Medieval Song – Professor Anne Stone

In every textbook of music history there is a chapter called “the Ars nova,” in which we learn how advances in the notation of musical rhythm during the fourteenth century changed the way music was conceptualized, created, and consumed. Although most textbooks focus on the so-called isorhythmic motet as the agent of these new developments, this period also saw the invention of the polyphonic art song, which in the course of the “long fourteenth century” became a medium for intense exploration of musical representation; of self-reflexivity; the staging of individual subjectivity; and of working out of abstract quantitative relationships in the domain of time.

This seminar will offer a view of late medieval song from inside its notation: we will begin by learning to read late medieval mensural notation, attempting to achieve what a colleague of mine calls “near-native fluency,” so that we can think critically and analytically about songs composed roughly between 1300 and 1450 by composers like Guillaume de Machaut, Johannes Ciconia, Guillaume Du Fay, and many more obscure and anonymous contemporaries. We will do a lot of singing from notation in class, and listening outside of class, and read music-theoretical treatises on mensuration by Franco of Cologne, Jehan des Murs, and others. Additional readings and seminar discussion will connect the development of black mensural notation with parallel issues of late medieval culture such as the history of the book; the rise of vernacular literacy; and the question of the intersection between oral and literate culture.

Seminar requirements include weekly reading and listening; frequent short response papers and in-class presentations; a short midterm paper that provides the start of a longer conference-style presentation and paper at the semester’s end.

MUS 71500: D.M.A Topics, Fall – Professor Scott Burnham

D.M.A. Topics consists of two main areas: performance/analysis and an introduction to graduate studies aimed at D.M.A. students. The fall semester focuses primarily on analysis, looking forward to the D.M.A. First Exam given in the spring. The course will begin with a review of harmony and counterpoint and continue with form and phrase structure, harmonic rhythm, and some elements of set theory and serialism. We also examine some aspects of text/music relationships and elements of expression. Assignments will consist of analytical exercises and also analytical essays, which will help to focus on writing skills. (The second semester of the course will delve into research skills, leading to a mock dissertation proposal as a final project.)

MUS 86400: Sonic Rubble: Music after Urban Catastrophe – Professor Abby Anderton

Rubble is generally thought of as a material to be worked through, not as a catalyst for artistic production. Yet recent scholarship on the aftermath of urban destruction—ranging from postwar Germany to the Syrian Civil War—has documented an array of contexts in which musical life continues in spite of, and sometimes even inspired by, physical devastation. These ruined cityscapes profoundly alter the way in which music is transmitted, received, and composed.

This course will focus on the aftermaths of war and natural disaster in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries, as we explore the relationships between the body, trauma, and post-apocalyptic soundscapes. Through readings from Musicology and Sound Studies that focus on gender, race, class, and disability, we will listen at the links between music and rubble in various contexts including (but not limited to): post-industrial Detroit, post-earthquake Port-au-Prince, post-9/11 New York, atomic ruins, and the ruins of the Syrian Civil War.

****Note: The ability to read musical notation is not required.**

MUS 88550: New Music Laboratory – Professor Jason Eckardt

New Music Laboratory centers on creative collaboration between composers and performers, manifested in experiments among students that culminate in larger new works written directly out of the experience of these collaborations. These compositions will be premiered on a mandatory public concert at the end of the semester. The course will address topics including new extended techniques, electronic assistance/augmentation, aleatoric models, improvisational strategies, community building and sustainability, and notation and intention. Each topic is explored collaboratively with the roles of composer and performer being interchangeable, building partnerships through shared projects throughout the semester.

MUS 84100: Topic Theory: Analytical and Critical Issues – Professor Kofi Agawu

Topic Theory is the outcome of a collective research enterprise in which notions of topic (“subjects of musical discourse,” according to Leonard Ratner, the originator of modern topic theory) shape the interpretation of individual works. Rejecting the ostensible neutrality of musical material, topic theorists seek out sedimentations of style, history, pedagogy, convention and affect in music’s sounding forms and consider the syntactical implications of their piece-specific disposition. This seminar will explore some of the analytical and critical issues raised by topic theory. Readings will be drawn from the writings of Ratner, Allanbrook, Hatten, Sisman, Monelle and Mirka, among others. A substantial final essay on an aspect of topic theory will be required.

MUS 86300: Seminar in Music: Cage & Cunningham – Professor David Grubbs

Composer John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham began collaborating in the early 1950s, giving rise to a half decade of productive and disruptive innovations in music, dance, and visual art. This research seminar will take Cage and Cunningham as a starting point to address broader interdisciplinary themes in performance from 1950 to 2010, including collaboration, improvisation, duration, notation, and chance and indeterminacy. The class is designed to facilitate the development of students' own research papers, and is timed to take advantage of the Cunningham centenary in 2019.

****Auditors with permission.**

MUS 88300: Music in the Eastern Mediterranean – Professor Eliot Bates

This class will examine both the sociocultural, material cultural, and music-theoretical aspects of music from case studies selected amongst the broader Eastern Mediterranean region (e.g. present-day Greece, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, Egypt, Cyprus, and Iraq). Sociocultural topics may include: nationalism, ethnicity, religion, political protest, affective communities, and the role of music in producing/contesting cultural geographies (e.g. local vs national, rural vs urban, imagined communities). Material culture topics may include musical instruments, music media, and the architectural spaces in which music-making happens. Music-theoretical aspects will include elements of modal, rhythmic and formal theories, and experiments to push the boundaries of these on the part of avant-garde artists.

****Instructor Permission Required**

MUS 85700: Rhythm in Tonal Music – Professor William Rothstein

In this seminar we survey theories of rhythm and meter from the eighteenth century to the present day, with emphasis on North American writings since 1980. The music of Beethoven figures centrally in our analytical investigations, with extensions backward to the early eighteenth century and forward to ca. 1900. Work for the course consists of weekly readings, assignments in analysis, and a final presentation.

MUS 70000: Introduction to Musicology – Professor Karen Henson

An introduction to the discipline and practice of musicology. The emphasis will be on developments since the 1990s; in the second half of the course, we will explore some literature from outside the discipline that has influenced recent musicological thinking.

MUS 84200: Current Trends in Music Theory – Professor Joseph Straus

A survey of recent developments in the field of Music Theory. Topics may include

- transformation theory,
- neo-Riemannian theory,
- atonal voice leading,
- theoretical approaches to jazz, rock, pop, non-Western, and early music,
- theories of tonal form,
- topic theory,
- partimenti,
- chromatic harmony,
- race, gender, sexuality and disability,
- analysis and performance,
- perception and cognition.

The course will feature guest lectures from within and outside CUNY.

MUS 83200: Field Methods in Ethnomusicology and Sound Studies – Professor Eliot Bates

This seminar provides practical training for fieldworkers in the practice of ethnographic research, especially for projects that entail a music-sonic-cultural component. Topics that may be covered include: understanding and defining the “sites” of research; taking ethnographic field notes; the basics of audio, still photo, and video documentation of ethnographic observations (including elements of both capture and editing/processing); managing digital data; the design and implementation of interviews; the elements of IRB proposals; online ethnography; and issues of ethics and risk as they relate to fieldwork.

****Instructor permission required.**

MUS 83500: (Ethno)musicology and Social Theory – Professor Jane Sugarman

This course is designed to introduce students to some of the classic and contemporary schools of social thought that music scholars have drawn on in recent decades. Theoretical writings in sociology, anthropology, philosophy, history, cultural studies, feminist and postcolonial studies, and related fields will be paired with case studies that situate the creation, performance, circulation, and reception of music within the unfolding of societal processes. Writings that have been of particular interest to ethnomusicologists will be emphasized, but the case studies illustrating them will be drawn from all branches of music scholarship. In the first part of the course we will cover Marxist and Marxian approaches, structuralism and semiotics, interpretive anthropology, and poststructuralism. Remaining weeks will be devoted to a selection of recent writings on major theoretical topics that students will help to choose. Assignments will include weekly written responses and a final paper assessing the literature on a specific musical topic.

****Instructor permission required.**

MUS 88500: Counterpoint, Form & Non-Innocence – Professor Suzanne Farrin

"Counterpoint, Form, and Non-Innocence" seeks to reconsider and reframe our habits that arise as a result of cultural notions of "goodness," "trueness," or "craft." Analytical discussions will focus on musical awareness of the self and other (counterpoint) and wish-fulfillment (form). Readings on feminisms, race, and gender will lead to a discussion of "why these?" (non-innocence).
