

PhD/DMA Programs in Music – Spring 2021 Course Descriptions

MUS 81502: Performance Practice: Baroque – Professor Gwendolyn Toth

This course, intended for performance majors at the doctoral level, is designed to provide students with an in-depth understanding of what performance practice means and why we study it. Specific course content includes knowledge of the conventions of musical performance during the period 1550-1800, with emphasis on the changes from Renaissance to early baroque, early baroque to high baroque, and high baroque to early classical. Students will also gain acquaintance with the development of musical instruments, music printing, and musician status, as well as changing audiences, during the time frame. First-hand sources of principal pedagogical publications of the period will be used to the extent possible. Students should gain an understanding of performance practice principles (rhetoric, phrasing, ornamentation, improvisation, instrumentation) in different periods from 1550-1800; but equally, will examine applications of performance practice in today's modern concert world internationally through critical listening. Students should attain sufficient knowledge to run an early music ensemble/collegium or teach a beginning course on historical performance. The format of the course will include introductory lectures, extensive readings, occasional assigned practical written exercises, in-class listening and discussion, area-specific (keyboard, winds, strings, voice) papers comparing recorded modern performances, and a comprehensive final exam.

MUS 71500: D.M.A. Topics (Spring) – Professor Anne Stone

The second semester DMA Topics course will focus on the various types of scholarly writing encountered by performers in doctoral work and beyond. In addition to reading and analysis/discussion of writing on music from multiple genres by both scholars and performers, weekly writing assignments will include in-class writing, evaluation of classmates' work, and ongoing work on longer assignments. These will include samples of: program notes, encyclopedia articles, pre-concert talks, and mock dissertation proposals, among other writing assignments. The course also serves as a continuing review of bibliography and research techniques as needed.

MUS 86300: Seminar in Musicology: Music in New York City: Between Wars (1918-1941) – Professor Jeffrey Taylor

One of the benefits of studying at the CUNY Graduate Center is the ability to examine the rich cultural history of New York while being physically immersed in the city. This course investigates music in NYC from the end of WWI, through the "Roaring" 1920s, through the beginnings of the Depression, to the build up to war in Europe finally catalyzed by the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The course crosses boundaries of musical style and tradition, focusing on both "popular music" and "art music" traditions and the interactions between these traditions. Topics of race, class, gender, and sexuality will be frequent touchstones. Composers and musicians as diverse as Dane Rudhyar, Henry Cowell, George Gershwin, George Antheil, Edgard Varèse, Duke Ellington, Ruth Crawford Seeger, James P. Johnson, William Grant Still, Benny Goodman, Aaron Copland, Jerome Kern, and many others will be examined. The period's obsession with technology (player pianos, radio, recording, film) will provide a central focus. Though we will have access to musical scores, the ability to read music is not a prerequisite for this class and students from other related disciplines are welcome.

MUS 86500: Seminar in Musicology: Critical Approaches – Professor Scott Burnham

The course will focus on several predominant aesthetic issues at play in contemporary musical thought. Chief among these will be the contested role of Beauty in music. After a quick survey of music aesthetics starting with Hanslick's "On the Beautiful in Music," we will examine recent treatments of beauty by philosophers Elaine Scarry and Alexander Nehamas, as well as musicologist Karol Berger. Other themes in the seminar will include Presence, the Sublime, and Materiality. Whenever possible, we will take up specific musical works in conjunction with each of these themes.

MUS 86100: Seminar in Musicology: Early Modern Voice – Professor Emily Wilbourne

Amanda Weidman has argued that in modernity, voice itself is a crucial site of knowledge: simultaneously "a set of sonic, material, and literary practices shaped by culturally and historically specific moments and a category involved in discourse about personal agency, communication and representation, and political power" (2014). In this class we will consider voice in literal, material, and metaphorical senses, particularly as it relates to subjectivity and representation. We will look closely at the shift in musical style and aesthetics that occurred in Europe (particularly in Italy) around 1600, and at gendered, raced, and otherwise marked voices (and subjectivity). Case studies will include the castrato, enslaved musicians, indigenous Americans, religious colonizers and converts.

MUS 84600: Seminar in Theory: analysis of Post-Tonal Music II – Professor Joseph Straus

We will look closely at selected works from both inside and outside the post-tonal canon (works by Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Stravinsky, Bartók, Crawford, Dallapiccola, Gubaidulina, Saariaho, Adès, Talma, Lutyens, Mamlok, León, and Farrin), roughly one or two works per class meeting. We will read in the secondary analytical literature on these works, where it exists, both to master the analytical methodologies and to evaluate the theoretical controversies. Prerequisite: a course in basic post-tonal theory or the equivalent.

MUS 82502: Seminar in Theory/Analysis: History of Theory II – Professor William Rothstein

This course covers over 350 years of Western music theory, from the death of Zarlino to the death of Schoenberg. Students will gain a broad knowledge of those disciplines that are known collectively as "music theory," whether or not they were regarded as "theory" in their own times. We will read extensively in English-language sources, both primary and secondary, and we will consider these sources from both present-day and (so far as is possible) historically situated perspectives. Requirements for the course include several short papers and a term paper.

MUS 78200: Seminar in Ethnomusicology: Analyzing Musics of the World – Professor Eliot Bates

This seminar will examine a variety of musics of the world with an emphasis on their formal features, emphasizing sound structure rather than socio-musical dimensions. Repertoires explored will range from so-called "traditional" music to "classical" traditions to more recent, studio-produced popular musics. In addition to score-based transcription and analysis, we will explore the use of regional notation systems and computer-based analysis tools.

MUS 89200: Composers Forum – Professor Jeff Nichols

The Composers Forum explores technical and aesthetic issues in contemporary composition, primarily through presentations by students of their own work and open discussions of repertoire chosen by the participants.

MUS 83100: Seminar in Ethnomusicology: Music, Gender, Sexuality – Professor Jane Sugarman

Issues regarding gender and sexuality are intrinsic to any study that assesses music or sound as a social phenomenon. This seminar will examine recent writings that relate gender and/or sexuality to music, or sound more broadly, in conjunction with background readings from other disciplines. The focus will be on ethnomusicological writings, although there will also be readings on Western concert, popular, and/or vernacular musics. Included will be readings on sonic and embodied constructions of gender and sexuality; feminist, trans, and queer performance; the intersection of gender and sexuality with issues of race, nation, class, and/or ability; ways that gender and sexuality inform our research strategies; and activist approaches to research on gender and sexuality. We will give particular attention to issues raised by the #METOO and Black Lives Matters movements and their impact on (ethno)musicological research. Instructor permission required.

Note: formal knowledge of music is not a prerequisite for taking this class. Open to students outside music.

MUS 84200: Seminar in Theory/Analysis: African Rhythm – Professor Kofi Agawu

In this course we will explore the rhythmic structure of selected idioms of West and Central African music. Topics include speech rhythm, time-line patterns, polyrhythm, and the art of lead drumming. Regular exercises in transcription and analysis will be supplemented by a critical evaluation of influential theories.

MUS 81504: Performance Practice: 20th – 21st Century – Professor Alan Feinberg

This course will focus on the different performance practices and performance styles related to the historical development of Western Classical music as it has unfolded in the last 120 years. There will be emphasis on the varying relationship between musical notation and performance legacies, nationalistic schools of playing, as well as some first-hand accounting of a number of 20th century composers playing coaching, and esthetic points of view. The class will include some ad hoc performances (depending on safely measures) and group projects examining the many styles, trends and performances that occurred during this period.
