

CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Division of Humanities & Social Sciences

Fall 2008
Time tbd
Prof. Tom Neenan

Mu 21 - Understanding Music

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Course website: <http://www.hss.caltech.edu/~neenan/Mu21/>

Course Materials

Text: Joseph Machlis & Kristine Forney, The Enjoyment of Music, (Shorter Version) Norton
Note, a less-expensive e-book version of the text is available from www.wwnorton.com which you may use if you prefer

- Listening:** Students will complete a weekly listening assignment consisting of **two parts:**
- Part 1):** “**Listening Guides**” using the **8-CD-set listing** found on the inside front and back covers of the text; and
- Part 2):** Supplemental pieces from the literature which will enhance the students’ understanding of the music of the period under study. The supplemental listening is intended to enhance and deepen what you learn in the Part 1 assignments. It is important that you focus primarily on Part 1 and use Part 2 more for enjoyment and exploration than for concentrated study. **Listening skills evaluations will be confined to material from Part 1.**

All music for Listening Part 1 is available for check-out at the front desk of Millikan Library. If the student so desires, the 8-CD set may be purchased through the bookstore or through Norton at www.norton.com

All music for Listening Part 2 is available on CDs (Mu21, Week 1, 2, 3 etc.) available from the reserve desk at Milikan.

If you have some of the works from Listening Part 2 in your own library or care to purchase some of them you may listen to your own recording. Because the Part 1 Listening is associated with the Listening Guides in the text, please do not use other recordings for Part 1 Listening. You are encouraged to do the listening assignments with others from the class, comparing points of interest and checking /confirming your understanding of form and style. However, please devote 100% attention to the music when doing the Part 1 listening assignments. Please, no other homework or activity during these assignments. When checking out materials from the library, return them promptly; serious penalties will be meted out for chronic “late-returns.”

Other Matters

Regular Class Attendance is expected

Students absent from **four** class meeting (6 hours) may FAIL the course unless a written excuse from the Dean's office can be provided. Your **attentive** presence in class is of paramount importance due to the nature of the subject and the amount of in-class listening we do.

Exams & grading

- There will be three quizzes, devoted to Parts 1 – 3 as shown in the syllabus. Quizzes will be given in class and consist of true/false, multiple answer, and short answer questions.
- There will be 3 listening skills evaluations intended to help you evaluate your ability to perceive elements of musical style and form. Listening evaluations will take place at the same time as the quiz and may include the following:
 - Identifying works (by title) and composer (where applicable) from the Listening Guides found in the text;
 - Identifying and explaining elements of musical style in pieces which may or may not be included in the Listening Guides but are reflective of the music which has been studied;
 - Identifying within a reasonable range the approximate period in which a piece of music was composed;
- You will **not** be asked to identify specific works by composer or title unless they are included in the Listening Guides found in the text. **You will not be asked to identify specific works from the supplemental listening.**
- You are required to write a concert report after attending each of the two required concerts (see below)
- By 9:00 am each day the class meets, you are required to submit to me by email (neenan@hss.caltech.edu) a question regarding the reading and/or listening assignment for that day (I will usually request questions on a given area of study or musical work at the end of the day on Monday or Wednesday). I will choose one question for a brief, **non-graded** response to the question which you will write at the beginning of each meeting. I hope your submitting and answering these questions will provoke in-class discussion. They will also provide me with an accurate attendance record.
- Combined quizzes constitute 60% of your final grade (equally weighted). The listening evaluations are worth 20% of your total grade; concert reports are worth 10%, and involvement in the class and attendance are worth 10%. A grade of A is generally given to those with total averages of 90% or better, B: 80% or better, C: 70% or better etc. Involvement in the course (attendance; involvement in class discussions and questions; attentiveness during lectures, listening and videos; office visits etc.) may, at my discretion, be weighted more heavily than 10% if deemed appropriate.

Check lists will be made available for each quiz and are intended to help you prepare for upcoming quizzes. They may be downloaded from the course webpage.

The WW Norton Website has a large number of helpful ancillary and e-materials you may wish to access. Visit www.wwnorton.com.

Concert attendance

You are required to attend **two** performances of live music during the term and to write a report for each concert. Concert #1 is mandatory. You may choose from concerts 2a-b. The website contains guidelines for writing concert reports. If you have an insurmountable conflict and cannot one of the concerts listed, a substitute concert will be possible, with Prof. Neenan's ok.

Concert #1: Sunday, November 9, 2:00 p.m. Los Angeles Philharmonic, Disney Hall. Music of Copland, Britten and Revueltas. **Leave Caltech at 11:45** (bus transportation provided); a subsidized lunch *may* be provided at Disney Hall (to be confirmed with Dean's Office); 1:00 p.m. lecture (mandatory); 2:00 p.m. concert. Cost: \$15 (includes concert and transportation).

Concert #2a: Saturday, October 18, 7:30 p.m. Pasadena Symphony, Pasadena Civic Auditorium. Music of Mexican Composers. Note: Revueltas's "La Noche de las Mayas" appears by coincidence on both the October 18 and November 9 programs. An interesting experience would be to compare performances and acoustics. Student tickets \$10 at the box office with valid I.D.

Concert #2b: Saturday, November 15, 7:30 p.m. Pasadena Symphony, Pasadena Civic Auditorium. Music of Brahms and Bartok. Student tickets \$10 at the box office with valid I.D.

A note on the text

We live in a society which, for better or worse, is consumed with egalitarianism and political correctness.

Requiring a study of the classics – whether in literature, painting or music - has in recent times been viewed by some as a manifestation of our society's inherent imperialism, sexism, racism, you name it. While not denying that these elements do exist and that our society needs to address them in its national life, there is some question as to the value of attempting to broaden what is essentially a survey of Western European and American art (classical) music to include modes of musical expression whose connections to it are tenuous at best (ie rock, pop and music of non-Western cultures), interesting, important, valuable and enjoyable as they are.

All of this is to say that many of the Cultural Perspectives offered in the text, along with some of the listening guides (those omitted in the list of assigned listening) are viewed by the instructor as peripheral material. They do offer interesting perspective and variety for the inquisitive student but are not considered as important in the context of the present course as the main body of the text and listening assignments. Similarly, because of time constraints, certain chapters in Parts III and IV will be omitted.

SYNOPSIS

PART I

Class meeting (1.1 = Week One, Monday; 4.2 = Week Four, Wednesday)

- 1.1-1.2 The Materials of Music.** Text Units I & II
- 2.1-3.1 The Medieval & Renaissance Periods.** Units III & IV
- 3.2 More Materials of Music.** Unit V
- 4.1 Quiz and Listening Evaluation on Part I**

PART II

- 4.2 – 5.1 The Baroque Period.** Units VI - VIII
- 5.2 More Materials of Form.** Unit IX
- 6.1-7.1 18th-Century Classicism.** Units X – XIV
- 7.2 Quiz and Listening Evaluation on Part II**

Part III

- 8.1-9.1 The 19th Century.** Unit XV – XX
 - 9.2 - 10.2 The 20th & 21st centuries.** Units XXI – XXV
- Note: Because of time constraints, we will omit Chapters 69, 71-74, 78
- December 10: Quiz and Listening Evaluation on Part III**