

Music 239, "The Philosophy of Music" Fall 2019

Prof. Justin London

215 Music Hall; x4397
Office Hours: **M** 8:30-10:00 (AM)
(best to set up an appt.)

Required Texts and Materials

Philosophy of Song and Singing, by Jeanette Bicknell (Routledge, 2015)

All additional Readings (PDF format) and Listening Assignments (mp3 format) are in the course Google Team Drive folder, or available through the Carleton library website.

What is Music 239 about?

Music 239 is about a lot of questions: What is Music? Are there any sounds that couldn't ever be considered music? What exactly is a "musical composition," especially in the age of recorded music and sampling? How is music meaningful? Can music tell a story? Express an emotion? Convey a proposition? And if music can do any of these things, how does it do it? Likewise, how are we to judge the value of musical pieces and musical practices? What makes a piece or a performance "authentic"? Do we need to judge popular music differently from classical music? In Music 239 we will look at these questions. We won't answer any of them, but we (hopefully) will come to understand what they entail, and just what answering them properly would require. Along the way, we will listen to musical examples ranging from Mozart to the Muddy Waters. We will also read articles and other essays by contemporary philosophers of music and the arts.

What activities does the course entail?

On the attached syllabus you will find reading assignments for each class meeting; as you can see, each class meeting revolves around a particular question or topic. For each reading there is a set of companion listening materials that have been chosen to both illustrate as well as (at times) contradict (!) the arguments made in the reading. You will receive a set of prompts for each reading, as we will typically focus on a particular passage or topic with each chapter or essay. Additional readings may be added to the syllabus at the instructor's discretion.

The formal assignments for the class involves two (2) short papers (approximately 500 words each) and a take-home final exam. You will chose your short papers from four possible topics related to particular readings (see syllabus for specific paper topics and dates). You must chose one (1) of the first two paper topics, and then one (1) of last two paper topics. Short papers are due on the days the relevant readings are discussed. *NO EXCEPTIONS*. Revisions of your short paper assignments are permitted, indeed, encouraged(!) The final will essentially involve a pair of short papers. In addition, and as this is a discussion-based seminar, a portion of your grade is based on class participation, which includes various short assignments and in-class work. Weighting of grades is as follows:

| Assignment | Weighting |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Short Papers (2) | 23% each |
| Final | 43% |
| Class Participation | 11% |

Some remarks about the listening assignments

One of the primary goals of this course is learn to ground your arguments about musical meaning, value, etc., on your knowledge of particular musical examples. This requires active, attentive listening, and thoughtful reflection on your listening experience—you'll probably want to listen to each assignment more than once. Examples from your personal musical collection that are germane to a particular reading or discussion are also welcome, and encouraged. Please feel free to bring them in, and share them with the class.

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| Date | Topic | Reading | Assignment/Activity |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| 17-Sep | What is Music?/ Rudiments 1 | (none) | 1-sentence definition of Music |
| 19-Sep | What is Music?/ Rudiments 2 | Kania RCPM CH1; | Music, or not Music? |
| 24-Sep | Musical Sound & Medium | Judkins RCPM CH2; Margulis (2007) | Rank short clips re their "musical-ness" |
| 26-Sep | What is a Musical Work? | Mathesson & Caplan RCPM CH4; Davies (2001) | |
| 1-Oct | What is a Performance? | S. Davies (2001); Kania & Gracyk RCPM CH8 | P1: Performances vs. Versions of Bach |
| 3-Oct | What is a Recording? | Kania & Gracyk RCPM CH8 | |
| 8-Oct | What is an Improvisation? | Brown RCPM CH6; London (2013) | |
| 10-Oct | Meaning in Language & Music | Jackendoff RCPM CH10; Davies (1994) | P2: What does "Maria" say/sing? |
| 15-Oct | Meaning in Music & Pictures | Kivy (2002) | Looking at some pictures |
| 17-Oct | Emotion & Expression | Trivedi RCPM CH21, Matravers, RCPM CH20 | |
| 22-Oct | The Problem of Sad Music | Sizer (2019) | P3: Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" |
| 24-Oct | Words & Music | Bicknell CHs 1&2 | |
| 29-Oct | Singing | Bicknell CHs 3 & 4 | |
| 31-Oct | Authenticity | Bicknell CHs 5 & 7; Thom RCPM CH9 | J. Bicknell SKYPE(!) |
| 5-Nov | Appropriation and Ownership | Taylor (2016); Young RCPM CH17 | |
| 7-Nov | NO CLASS: JML at SMT MEETING | | |
| 12-Nov | Canons of Aesthetic Value | Gracyk RCPM CH16 | P4: Complexity in Messiah |
| 14-Nov | Popular vs. Art Music | Fisher RCPM CH37 | |
| 19-Nov | What is Music? (Recapitulation) | | Final Exam distribution |

RCPM = *Routledge Companion to Philosophy and Music* (digital resource)

25-Nov: End of Exam Period; Final Exams due 5:00 PM

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