

MSC 1003 - Music in Civilization Spring 2019 Room 6-170

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FTR - Tues, Thurs 4:10 - 5:25
UR - Thurs 6:05 - 9:00

Welcome to Music in Civilization! The title of this course is a bit of a misnomer, because it focuses almost exclusively on *Classical* music in *Western* civilization. (Back in the day such a class used to be called “Music Appreciation,” which was perhaps equally misleading.) By the end of this class you should be able to hear any piece of Classical music and have an idea of when it was written, who it was originally written for, how it is put together, and basically what the whole point of it is. For some people this makes the world of artsy concert music less intimidating and more enjoyable – hopefully it will do that for you as well.

The course catalog also promises some discussion of non-Western music. In this class the non-Classical component will be a unit on the African-American tradition of jazz, which we will understand as a combination of European and African influences.

Textbook

Our official textbook for the class is *Listening to Western Music* by Craig Wright (published by Cengage Learning.) There are actually four versions of the text you could use:

Listening to Western Music, 7th edition *Listening to Music*, 7th edition

Listening to Western Music, 8th edition *Listening to Music*, 8th edition

Listening to Music (without the “Western” part) is an extended version of the text that has a few more chapters and is usually more expensive (though maybe you can find a deal.)

In reality there are only going to be a few assignments which actually require you to use the textbook, and many students will tell you that they survived the class just fine without it. Copies are on reserve in the library, so that’s always a possibility. However, I would still encourage you to get your own copy and read the recommended pages as we go through the material – it will add depth to the overall experience and give you a second perspective on the class. Why settle for listening to some dummy who adjuncts at Baruch, when you could have the wisdom of Craig Wright, a much smarter and more important guy from Yale?

Recordings and stuff

You do not have to buy the CD or MP3 recordings that go with the textbook, nor do you have to subscribe to the interactive exercises called CourseMate. I will use our class web site to post YouTube and Spotify links for the music we will study.

I do suggest trying a Spotify Premium subscription for \$5/month (with student discount), or alternately a Google Music and Youtube Premium subscription for \$12/month. We will spend a lot of time listening to streamed music, and it is probably better if that experience is ad-free.

Also, I would recommend that you have a decent set of earphones or headphones.

Website

I am going to use my personal web space, davesmey.com, to support this class. There you will find the assignments for each class, class notes, and links to the music you need to study. You should get in the habit of looking at this web page before each session to make sure you've done everything you are supposed to do.

Each entry in the blog summarizes what happened in a class and assigns homework that is due before the next session. So, *after* we do Class 2 you would want to go to the website and look at the Class 2 blog entry. If you are logged in to the site it should automatically open to the page that is most relevant to you at any given moment.

Our class website is built by me and coded "by hand." I apologize in advance for any errors I might make, and ask that you contact me by email if you observe any problems.

Office Hours

I will do an office hour on Tuesdays, from 2:00 to 3:00.

My "office" is actually a cubicle deep inside the Dept. of Fine and Performing Arts office, room 7-235. You usually need to stop at the main desk and ask if I'm around – our department administrator will lead you to me.

It is sometimes possible to make additional appointments with me for one-on-one assistance. And remember, you can email me at any time with problems or questions, at david.smey@baruch.cuny.edu.

Grading

Our semester's grade is based on a combination of homework, quizzes, and attendance.

Homework: 30% of grade

There should be about 20 brief homework assignments which are completed through our class website (davesmey.com). At the end of the semester your overall homework average will be 30% of the final grade.

When I do homework assignments I give grades of "check plus," "check," and "check minus."

Check plus – This is worth 100 points. It means you did excellent work. For each assignment, I decide what that means. I might only give a check plus for perfect work on one assignment, and then give check plusses out for 50% correct answers on the next assignment. The first screen on each homework assignment tells you what the grading criteria will be.

Your work also has to be on time for it to be a check plus.

Check – This means "pretty good." It is worth 92 points. This is also the best grade you can possibly get on late work.

Check minus – This is unacceptable work. It is worth a 60. That's a really bad grade, so I usually give you a second chance on check minuses.

Re-dos – After you get a check minus on an assignment, you'll have an opportunity for one re-do. Sometimes the assignment is programmed to let you try again immediately, and sometimes it makes you wait for a 24-hour lock-out period. If you do an acceptable job the second time around you can get upgraded to a check. Be careful, though – if you don't meet the criteria on your second try you'll get a *permanent check minus*.

Remember that re-dos are only for check minuses. You can't redo a check.

Zeros – If you don't do an assignment it factors a zero into your homework average. This does major, unnecessary damage to your grade! Since I do accept late homework there really is no reason not to take a few minutes to click through each exercise and get a grade – even a 60 is much better than a 0.

You can pause at any time. The assignments are not timed and you are allowed to stop and close the page after you've started. Just start again at the beginning, later – it will remember the answers you already entered and you'll be able to find the place where you left off. Don't try to monkey around with the URLs and skip a question, though – not doing a question is the same as getting it wrong.

All homework is due by the last day of class.

Quizzes: Four quizzes, 70% of the grade

In addition to our weekly homework there are four quizzes. These are equal weight (17.5% each) and all four will count. (I don't drop your lowest score or anything like that.)

Happily, there is no midterm or final, and aside from the most general concepts the class is not cumulative – after a quiz is over you can forget most of the information we studied for it.

As I'll discuss below, you really cannot afford to miss a quiz – on these days attendance is pretty much mandatory, and I reserve the right to NOT give you a make-up.

Listening and Reading Assignments

Aside from the little online exercises that go into your homework average, our class blog will post the relevant music from each day's lesson and recommend pages from the text to read. A lot of this material will eventually show up on the quizzes, so I recommend that you go over this after each class, so that you don't end up cramming at the last minute.

The listening assignments are probably the most unusual aspect of the class for most students. Ideally you should actually end up doing more listening than reading! I have a few recommendations for how to do this.

Set aside some quiet time to listen. Let's face it, in this day and age sitting around and concentrating on music is kind of weird. People normally listen to things in the background while doing other activities like riding the subway or hanging out with friends. The music for this class is subtle and complicated, however, and it needs your attention. Try to give it the same respect you'd give a reading assignment – do it in the library, with headphones, or during focused, quiet time at home.

Once is not enough. You should plan to keep cycling through the listening assignments on a day-to-day basis, to really get them "in your ears." There is no way you can really absorb much of anything with only one listening – I would say that you want to play everything at least three or four times.

When the quizzes roll around you will need to be able to recognize some of this music by ear, so repeated, thoughtful listening is crucial to a good grade.

Extra Credit

There is a little 3-point bonus for having very good attendance, which I'll explain below. Aside from that, however, I don't offer any kind of extra credit.

Attendance

The quizzes and homework for this class should be very straightforward – I usually tell you exactly what will be on them beforehand, and everything is carefully documented on the class website, so it is pretty easy to study the basic information, do some listening, and get A's.

However, *this is not the only point of the class* – in the actual sessions we tend to go deeper into the material. We will listen to more pieces and I will try to show you glimpses of more advanced topics. This is your opportunity to ask questions and steer the conversation as well. In a sense it is your job to be here and experience this extra stuff – it is part of the “work” that Baruch is asking you to do in exchange for credit.

Thus, you are required to be present in class for most of these sessions, and there is an attendance and participation modifier that will be applied to your grade on top of your overall average. Good attendance can earn you a small bonus, and poor attendance will create a penalty that can trash your grade and even cause you to fail.

In general, the way I do this is pretty unusual, so please read this section carefully.

The following details apply to classes that meet twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. If you are in the Thursday night “double class” (from 6:05 - 9:00) please refer to [your version](#) of the syllabus.

Bonus for good attendance (0-2 absences)

If you manage to miss only two (or fewer) sessions, you will get a three-point bonus on your final grade. This will probably bump you up half a grade! Please remember that this is a *bonus*, a little incentive to have truly good attendance. Straight-up bad luck may prevent you from getting it.

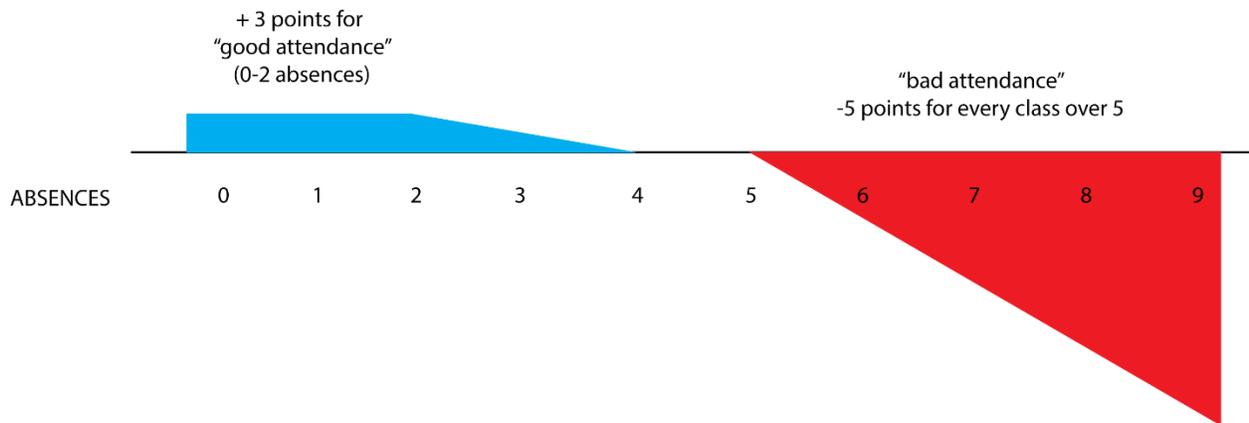
Mediocre attendance (3-5 absences)

Missing more than two classes isn't great, but I guess it's acceptable. You will get a gradually diminishing bonus of 1.5 points for 3 missed classes and nothing for 4-5 classes. So another way to look at these rules is that you are “allowed” to miss 5.

Bad attendance (6 or more absences)

Missing six or more classes will trash your grade. The penalty is 5 points for each missed class over five. Once you are over the limit even little things like being late end up costing you, so you really don't want to be in the "bad attendance zone."

Here's a little graph that summarizes how absences affect your grade.



Everything counts / No excused absences

Here's where it gets a little unusual. I count ALL absences, including illness, work conflicts, and family obligations. Think of your attendance grade as a "budget" in which you can only afford 5 misses, *regardless of the reason*. This may seem mean, but it also has a positive side – you usually don't need tell me your personal business if you can't make it to class, and we never have to argue over what's a legit excuse and what's not. (You can still tell me about it, of course, and I will smile and say "That's OK," and even make a note in your file about what happened. But I'll probably still add the absence to your total.)

(I do make exceptions for certain religious and culturally significant holidays, e.g. Sukkot, Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr, Diwali and Lunar New Year. Email me if your absence is due to an event like this.)

Quiz days are more strict

There are four days in the semester when attendance is pretty much mandatory – these are our quiz days. Skipping a quiz because you are not ready is a form of cheating – it is not fair to people who show up and do it at the scheduled time. Also, missing a quiz creates practical problems – I cannot give back corrected papers if you haven't taken it yet, and it costs me extra time to give you a supervised makeup.

So, if it turns out you have to miss a quiz, you will need to talk to me about it ASAP, preferably by emailing me on or before the day in question. I may require a documented excuse. I reserve the right to just give you a zero if I think you are cheating or otherwise being irresponsible.

If you do miss a quiz entirely, please try to study during your absence and be ready to make it up on the day you return. (And again, contact me before you return to class – be proactive.)

Students who cannot make up the quiz within a day or two may be assigned an alternate paper project instead. These are generally more work and may be graded harder than the quizzes.

If we agree to a make-up appointment and you fail to show up I will probably not give you a second chance – that's pretty much a guaranteed zero. Also, I will be very reluctant to let you make up more than one quiz.

Weather Policy

If CUNY is open, I try to hold class as scheduled. (I live in Washington Heights, so it's easy enough for me to get here.) I do understand that some people travel from much further away and I am willing to be flexible on days with dangerous conditions. This does include quiz days – if it's snowing I'll probably give the quiz but also arrange makeups for people who can't make it.

If Something Terrible Happens

If you are facing a serious long-term injury, illness, or traumatic event I will be happy to work with you to help you complete the course materials without any attendance penalty.

Other stuff that counts on your attendance score

Your attendance score can also reflect things that happen in class.

Being late usually counts as a quarter absence. (And yes, this includes being “a little late.” If you arrive after I've finished roll call and we've already started doing work, this may be a quarter absence.) If you must leave before class is over, try to run it by me in advance. If you leave before the class is half over I usually feel compelled to mark it.

In addition, I want you to try to stay in your seat for the entire session. I do understand that people occasionally need to step out for biological and other reasons, but if I notice that you habitually take a break in the middle of every session, disappear for a long period of time, or

leave at a particularly inappropriate moment, I may mark it on your grade as a quarter or half absence.

In-class conduct

There are a few other things you may be tempted to do in class that simply cannot be allowed. These may cause me to add extra demerits ($\frac{1}{4}$ absence, $\frac{1}{2}$ absence et cetera) to your attendance grade.

You cannot chat with your classmates while I'm talking, while we are listening to a piece, or while we are doing in-class discussion.

I am generally pro-technology, so laptops, tablets and phones are allowed as long as you are using them for class. However, please try hard to resist the temptations for distraction that these devices offer – do not text, surf the web, watch video, or do work for other classes while you are here. If I notice that you are blatantly not paying attention to what we are doing I will give you a partial absence. (One behavior that is particularly over the line is wearing earphones and watching video while class is in session. If I notice you doing this I will definitely mark it! Also, surfing the web *and* simultaneously talking about it with a classmate is super annoying – that tends to get my attention pretty fast.)

Other kinds of rude, disruptive, or harassing behavior directed toward your classmates or me may result in whole absences or even ejection from the class.

Cheating

I have no tolerance for students who cheat on quizzes. Any use of electronic devices during a quiz is strictly forbidden, and of course you cannot use a concealed answer sheet or copy off another student. If I think you have done any of these things I will assign you a penalty, which can range from 10 points off of your grade to an F for the semester and referral to the Dean of Students.

Cases of copying that cannot be decisively resolved may result in both students being required to retake the test.

The best way to get an A

- Take notes during class. This may not seem necessary because I post class notes online, but outlining what we are talking about keeps you engaged and will help you recall the info later.
- Listen to the music assignments a little bit every day.
- Have good attendance – the three-point bonus means you only have to hit a 90 to get an A!

The most common scenario

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{Homework} & + & \text{Attend bonus} & + & \text{Decent (but not necessarily perfect) quizzes} & = & \text{A} \\ \text{about a 95 average} & & \text{extra 3 points!} & & \text{an 88 average or better} & & \end{array}$$

Best way to get a C, D or F

- Don't read this syllabus.
- Miss six or more classes.
- Blow off the listening assignments.
- Leave homework assignments unfinished.

But seriously, this is a fun class!

Most students won't need to worry about any of this stuff. If you like music, and you can get into unfamiliar *kinds* of music, this class should be pleasant and relatively easy. Let's relax and have fun.