

MUSIC

MUS 100fm Colloquium: Topics in Music-Fundamentals of Music (4 Credits)

Topics of MUS 100 especially designed for those with no previous background in music. They emphasize class discussion and written work, which consists of either music or critical prose as appropriate to the topic. Open to all students, but particularly recommended for first-year students and sophomores. An introduction to music notation and to principles of musical organization, including scales, keys, rhythm and meter. Limited to beginners and those who did not place into MUS 110. Enrollment limited to 20. {A}

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 101 World Music (4 Credits)

Music may not be a "universal language," but it is a universal phenomenon; every culture has something that we recognize as music. This course introduces you to a number of musical systems traditional, classical and popular—from around the world and uses case studies to explore the complex relationships between music and culture. By engaging with music analytically, as musicologists (paying attention to the sounds you hear) and ethnographically, as anthropologists (paying attention to the cultural context), you learn basic principles that enhance your understanding of music globally speaking. No prerequisites. {A}{S}

Fall, Spring, Alternate Years

MUS 102 Making Music History (4 Credits)

This class is an introduction to music history that combines a close study of music from the Western classical tradition with research methodology and an orientation to the discipline of musicology. Organized by genres and concepts, the class looks at classical music as both a repertoire and an object of cultural study. In addition to covering a range of works, we will address their production, performance and reception through a study of their social and political context, and raise questions of power, representation and patronage. We will also examine our own ideas about the role of the artist, what it means to be a musician and the social future of this music. Students will have the chance to do original research on a piece or topic of their choice and will get a foundation in the College's scholarly resources, especially the holdings at Josten Library and Special Collections. {A}{H}

Fall

MUS 105 Roll Over Beethoven: A History of Rock (4 Credits)

This course provides a critical survey of rock music, tracing the music's development from blues and blackface minstrelsy to heavy metal, grunge, and techno. Emphasis throughout is placed upon understanding musical developments in the context of American race and gender relations and the politics of youth cultures in the U.S. Topics to be covered include: Elvis Presley and American race relations; Jimi Hendrix and the blues; girl groups; the rise of arena rock; and the significance of the DJ in hip hop. Enrollment limited to 45. {A}{H}

Fall, Spring, Alternate Years

MUS 110 Analysis and Repertory I (4 Credits)

An introduction to formal analysis and tonal harmony and a study of pieces in the standard repertory. Regular exercises in harmony. Prerequisites: ability to read standard notation in treble and bass clefs, including key signatures and time signatures and the ability to name intervals. (A placement test is given before the fall semester for incoming students.) One 50-minute ear training section required per week, in addition to classroom meetings. Enrollment limited to 20. {A}

Fall

MUS 120 Music Decoded (2 Credits)

The primary goal of this course is to deepen students' understanding of the music they like, while forging connections to music that is unfamiliar to them, making them a more well-informed music consumer. Throughout the course, students hone active listening skills, helping them to identify technical components and to connect with the music on an emotional level. These skills help students describe more specifically what they hear, and decode increasingly complex music. Classes cover folk, popular, jazz, non-western classical and other styles. {A}

Spring

MUS 202 Thinking About Music (4 Credits)

This course explores different approaches to the study of music as a cultural phenomenon. The course considers basic questions, such as: Why is music so often at the center of one's most profound personal and social experiences? Why is music a fundamental means of connecting with one's lives, communities and the wider world? Through in-depth reading and in-class discussion, students study the institutions of music (concerts, recording studios) and the varied practices of music making (classical, popular, amateur, professional) in order to construct a picture of the musical worlds and to understand what they say about society. {A}{S}

Spring

MUS 203 Music as Memorial and Monument (4 Credits)

Music has long played an important role in both memorialization and monumentalization. In this class, we use music as a lens through which to consider the agendas and values behind public displays of memory, history, and political strength. We will study music written to commemorate victims of war, state violence, and illness, from requiems to 9/11 memorial works. We will also consider how composers, performers, and listeners have participated in monumentalizing historical or political occasions, from composer anniversary celebrations to national anthems. {A}{H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 205mp Colloquium: Topics in Popular Music-Metal and Punk: Rock History Out Loud (4 Credits)

Heavy metal and punk rock have arguably been the definitive rock-and-roll styles of the post-1970 rock era. In this course, we explore metal and punk as interrelated musical genres, following their history and development and examining a range of social and musical issues along the way. Of particular importance will be the following: How and when did metal and punk emerge? What defines the two genres musically? What defines them socially? Taken together, how do they represent the changing status of rock music as a cultural and commercial form since 1970? Course limited to 20 students. {A}{H}{S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 205pp Colloquium: Topics in Popular Music-Producing Popular Music: The American Music Industry (4 Credits)

During the past three decades, the music industry has undergone substantial, even radical changes. This class will focus on recent developments in the music industry, while reflecting on larger issues that have informed the making and selling of music. Among the primary questions we will consider are: how have new technologies affected the ways in which music is created, bought and sold? What relationship exists between "live" and "recorded" music in the way the music industry operates? How do legal definitions and struggles over intellectual property shape the practices of musicians and music corporations? What does it mean to work in the music industry, and to what extent should the creative labor of musicians be considered similar to or different from other types of labor? Enrollment limited to 20. {A}{S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 210 Analysis and Repertory II (4 Credits)

A continuation of MUS 110. One 50-minute musicianship section required per week, in addition to classroom meetings. Prerequisite: MUS 110 or equivalent. Enrollment limited to 18. {A}

Spring

MUS 217 Colloquium: Feminism and Music Theory (4 Credits)

In this course, students evaluate the assumptions and foundations of Western music theory, primarily under the critical guidance of feminist theory. Tonal theory is often a routine part of undergraduate music study. What are the goals and criteria of this kind of analysis? While critically examining Western music theory's intellectual values, students develop approaches to analysis that are responsive, in a variety of ways, to queer, feminist and antiracist thought. Through readings and listening assignments, students consider various challenges to the fiction of objectivity in music analysis, including embodiment, subjecthood and identity, and the mediating force of language and concepts. Prerequisites: MUS 110. Enrollment limited to 18. (E) {A}

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 220pb Topics in World Music-The Power of Black Music (4 Credits)

The course focuses on the musics of Africa and the African diaspora through the lens of ethnomusicology. Concentrating on selected countries, including Benin, Brazil, Cuba, Nigeria, South Africa, and the United States, it examines the musical performance of gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality and the role of music in social and political movements. The course examines the global dimensions and resonances of Africanist musical aesthetics as enabled historically and sustained through ongoing transatlantic exchanges between Africa and the African diaspora. The course also explores the issues of representation and identity in iconic works like Black Is King & Lemonade by Beyoncé. Other topics include the adaptation of hip-hop in Africa and the phenomenal popularity of West African Afrobeats in the United States and globally. Workshops conducted by visiting professional musicians and discussions on the instructor's ethnographic research in West Africa, Brazil, Cuba, and the United States. Enrollment limited to 40. {A}{S}

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 222 World Music Theories (4 Credits)

Each musical tradition is best explained and understood by its own system of theory. This course introduces four musical traditions and their corresponding theories: Tuvan Throat Singing, Dagomba Dance Drumming, Javanese Gamelan and Hindustani classical music. Topics include theory fundamentals, listening methods, compositional approaches and aesthetics. Learning about these traditions will open doors to new modes of listening and to hearing familiar music in a brand new way. (E)

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 231 Colloquium: From Goat Songs To Flash Mobs: Music and Theater (4 Credits)

Music and theatre are both time-based arts that involve bodies in motion in front of an audience. Though they may be considered separate disciplines, the full extent of what they share often makes them wonderfully indistinguishable. This course probes the intersections of music and theatre through a survey of genres, works, artists, and practitioners. While material covered will include clearly relevant genres such as musicals and opera, the focus will be on more difficult to categorize topics such as performance art, immersive theatre, and experimental music, in an open-minded examination of what makes this alliance so compelling. Enrollment limited to 20. {A}

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 233 Intro to Composition (4 Credits)

Basic techniques of composition, including melody, simple two-part writing and instrumentation. Analysis of representative literature. No previous composition experience required. Prerequisite: MUS 110 or equivalent. {A}

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 235 Introduction to Audio Production (4 Credits)

A hands-on introduction to the basic concepts, equipment and software involved in modern music production. This course serves as an introduction to MIDI sequencing, Digital Audio Workstations, analog and digital audio, digital audio recording, mixing and basic studio techniques. Enrollment limited to 8. Instructor permission required. (E) {A}

Spring

MUS 241 Diction for Singers (2 Credits)

In this course, we will learn to use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as an efficient tool to approach accuracy in lyric diction. Choral and solo singers must frequently perform music in languages that they do not speak, and therefore often struggle to sing with accurate pronunciation. IPA is a set of orthographic characters, almost entirely based on the Roman alphabet, that standardizes phonetics across most major languages. Corequisite: MUS 952, MUS 953 or individual voice performance lessons. Enrollment limited to 20.

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 249/ REL 249 Colloquium: Islamic Popular Music (4 Credits)

Offered as MUS 249 and REL 249. Music is a complex issue in many Islamic societies. There are tensions between those who believe that music has no place in Islam and try to prohibit it, those for whom it is a central component of mystical devotion, and those who tolerate it, albeit within well-defined parameters. The debate intensifies in the case of popular music, a core part of the self-identification of young people everywhere. Despite this, there is an amazing variety of vibrant popular music throughout the Islamic world. This course explores the religious debates over music and the rich musical tradition (including religious music) in Islam. Enrollment limited to 35. {A}{H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 251 Divas, Queens and Spectacle: A History of Opera (4 Credits)

This course offers an introduction to opera from the 16th to the 21st centuries, with an emphasis on gender performance, virtuosity and the unique history of opera performance at Smith College. Earlier works include Monteverdi's Orfeo, Handel's Rodelinda, Mozart's Marriage of Figaro and Verdi's Aida, while more modern and contemporary operas include Strauss's Salome and Kaija Saariaho's L'Amour du Loin. {A}{H}

Fall, Spring, Alternate Years

MUS 258/ ANT 258 Performing Culture (4 Credits)

Offered as MUS 258 and ANT 258. This course analyzes cultural performances as sites for the expression and formation of social identity. Students study various performance genres such as rituals, festivals, parades, cultural shows, music, dance and theater. Topics include expressive culture as resistance; debates around authenticity and heritage; the performance of race, class and ethnic identities; the construction of national identity; and the effects of globalization on indigenous performances. Enrollment limited to 30. {A}{S}

Fall, Spring, Alternate Years

MUS 260 The Music of J.S. Bach (4 Credits)

This course is an introduction to the music, life, and legacy of the composer Johann Sebastian Bach, whose music inspired generations of composers and performers across genres. In addition to studying some of his works in depth and his biography, we will explore the cultural and historical context in which he worked, raising questions about performance, instruments, religious life, and patronage. We also look at his influence on music in the nineteenth century, the controversies around his St. John Passion in the twentieth, and his legacy in the twenty-first century. {A}{H}

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 262 Experimental Music (4 Credits)

What counts as music? Who decides? Can anyone make music? This course raises these and other questions by focusing on experimental music. The course explores the history and practice of experimental music, focusing on text, graphic and other forms of notation. The course also looks at the history of experimental music in performance and makes in-class performances of several key pieces. Through reading and practice, the course asks questions about musical authority, skill and even failure, and the role of institutions in shaping musical ideas. {A}{H}

Spring

MUS 321 Seminar: Songwriting (4 Credits)

This seminar is a practicum on songwriting. Through weekly creative assignments, in-class workshops and listening, students develop and strengthen their skills as musicians, performers and lyricists. Students try several songwriting and compositional techniques, and create and finalize work to be presented in a final concert. Students should have a basic working knowledge of music notation and theory, including harmonic analysis. Prerequisites: MUS 110 or equivalent. Enrollment limited to 12. Juniors and seniors only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 325 Seminar: Writing About Music (4 Credits)

This course considers various kinds of writing—from daily journalism and popular criticism to academic monographs and scholarly essays—that concern the broad history of music. Via regular writing assignments and group discussions of substance and style, students have opportunities to improve the mechanics, tone and range of their written prose. Required of senior majors; open to others with instructor permission. Enrollment limited to 12. Juniors and seniors only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Spring

MUS 330 Seminar: Music and Democracy (4 Credits)

How have social justice movements used music to mobilize people to fight for equality and rights? How have anti-democratic movements used music for reactionary ends? What is the role of music in sustaining—or eroding—democracies? This class examines a range of U.S. and global case studies, including Black Lives Matter, the abortion wars, global protest movements, and music and urban redevelopment. Through the study of national anthems, resistance songs like “Fight the Power,” and by examining the sounds of protest itself, students practice critical listening and reflect on how sound and music can press for social change—for better or worse. Students look at the role of music in democratic processes, the importance of music for belonging and citizenship, and whether and how music itself is significant to political participation. Prerequisites: MUS 102 or 202. Enrollment limited to 12. Juniors and seniors only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 341 Seminar in Composition (4 Credits)

Prerequisite: a course in composition. May be repeated for credit. Enrollment limited to 12. Juniors and seniors only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Spring

MUS 345 Intro to Electro-Acoustic Music (4 Credits)

Introduction to musique concrète, analog synthesis, digital synthesis and sampling through practical work, assigned reading and listening. Enrollment limited to 8. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall

MUS 400 Special Studies (1-4 Credits)

In the history of Western music, world music, American music, composition and digital music, or music theory and analysis. For juniors and seniors, by permission of the department.

Fall, Spring

MUS 430D Honors Project (4 Credits)

Fall, Spring, Annually

MUS 431 Honors Project (8 Credits)

Fall

MUS 901 Chamber Music Ensembles (1 Credit)

Exploration and coaching of varied repertory for duos and small ensembles. May be repeated for credit. Open to instrumental students. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring

MUS 903 Conducting (2 Credits)

Introduction to the art of conducting. This course examines philosophical and practical aspects of the modern conductor's role. Discussions include a musical gestural vocabulary, baton technique and score study/internalization of the printed page. May be repeated for credit. Prior music performance experience and study of Western music theory is highly recommended. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring, Alternate Years

MUS 906 Class Piano (2 Credits)

This course is an introduction to basic keyboard skills for beginner pianists. Students develop technique and music-reading skills through solo repertoire and ensemble playing. Applied music theory such as major and minor scales, keyboard harmony and improvisation is also explored. Repeatable for credit. Prerequisite: MUS 100. Enrollment limited to 8. Instructor permission required.

Fall, Spring, Variable

MUS 914Y First Year Performance (2 Credits)

This is a full-year course. Credits: 4, at the completion of two semesters. Prerequisite: MUS 100 or equivalent. Department application required. {A}

Fall, Spring, Annually

MUS 924Y Second Year Performance (2 Credits)

This is a full-year course. Credits: 4, at the completion of two semesters. Prerequisite: MUS 914Y. Department application required. {A}

Fall, Spring, Annually

MUS 930Y Advance Performance (2 Credits)

This is a full-year course. Credits: 4, at the completion of two semesters. Prerequisite: MUS 924Y. Department application required. {A}

Fall, Spring, Annually

MUS 940Y Emphasis in Performance (4 Credits)

Reserved for seniors who have been approved for the Music Major with an Emphasis in Performance. No early registration. Credits: 8, at the completion of two semesters. Audition and department approval required. {A}

Fall, Spring, Annually

MUS 951 Introduction to Singing (1 Credit)

This class is designed for students with little to no musical experience. In this course, students develop a sustainable singing technique, expand their range and learn the basics of reading sheet music. Repertoire is selected based on student abilities and interests and has in the past included vocal jazz, classical choral pieces and folksongs. Interested students should email the instructor with a description of your musical interests and experience (if any). May be repeated once for credit. S/U only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring

MUS 952 Smith College Glee Club (1 Credit)

Formed in 1885, the Smith College Glee Club performs annually at Commencement and Christmas Vespers, on Family Weekend, for Autumn Serenade and at college events including Opening Convocation and Rally Day. The Glee Club selects music from a diverse repertoire, including major works for treble voices, jazz, contemporary, folk music of the U.S. and from international traditions. Guest choirs from such universities as Harvard, Rutgers, Cornell, Michigan and Virginia regularly come to campus to collaborate on a major work. Auditions for Glee Club are normally held during orientation and in the first two weeks of classes in both semesters. S/U only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring

MUS 953 Smith College Chamber Singers (1 Credit)

Members of the Glee Club are eligible to audition for the highly selective Smith College Chamber Singers. The internationally known Chamber Singers have performed throughout the world since 1951. Touring normally every two years, the program provides financial assistance enabling all members to travel regardless of financial need. Auditions for Chamber Singers are held during orientation, in the first two weeks of classes in the fall semester and, occasionally, before the spring semester. S/U only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring

MUS 954 Smith College Orchestra (1 Credit)

A symphony orchestra open to Smith and Five College students. The orchestra gives at least one concert each semester and performs at annual events such as Family Weekend and Christmas vespers. S/U only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring

MUS 955 Smith College Javanese Gamelan Ensemble (1 Credit)

One concert per semester. Open (subject to space) to Smith and Five College students, faculty and staff. No prior experience necessary. S/U only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring

MUS 956 Smith College Jazz Ensemble (1 Credit)

The jazz ensemble performs at least one concert per semester. Favoring traditional big band instrumentation and performing a variety of jazz styles, the ensemble is open to Smith and Five College students, faculty and staff (space permitting) with all levels of music training. Prior jazz experience is recommended but not required. S/U only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring

MUS 957 Smith College Wind Ensemble (1 Credit)

At least one concert per semester. Open to Smith and Five College students, faculty and staff with prior instrumental experience. S/U only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring

MUS 958 Smith College Celtic Music Ensemble: The Wailing Banshees (1 Credit)

At least one concert per semester. Open to Smith and Five College students, faculty and staff. S/U only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring

MUS 959 Handbell Choir (1 Credit)

The choir performs at the Family Weekend Montage concert, the annual Advent Dinner for the Roman Catholic community, Christmas Vespers and the second semester Spring Ring. In addition, the choir occasionally performs in off-campus community concerts. S/U only. Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring

MUS 960 Chinese Music Ensemble (1 Credit)

This course introduces students to the modern Chinese ensemble and a variety of Chinese music styles. The course is designed to be hands-on and experiential, encouraging students to explore the basic ideas of Chinese music and culture through rehearsals, practices and performances. At least one concert per semester. S/U only. Enrollment limited to 18. Audition and Instructor permission required. {A}

Fall, Spring

MUS 961 Electric Guitar Lab/Ensemble (1 Credit)

Designed for beginner and near beginner students interested in the electric guitar. S/U only. Enrollment limited to 8. Instructor permission required. (E)

Fall, Spring, Annually

MUS 962 Five College Collegium (1 Credit)

The Five College Collegium is the flagship ensemble of the Five College Early Music Program. The ensemble is made up of experienced singers and instrumentalists from the Five College Consortium, and prepares four large scale projects in the course of the academic year for public performance. The Collegium rotates its rehearsal residency among the schools in the Five College system, and focuses on repertoire from the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque periods. Whenever possible, the Collegium invites professional musicians as guests to work with the ensemble on material that is relevant to the current project. S/U only. Enrollment limited to 25.

Spring