

Fall 2025: Music History III Reflection Questions

Overview:

- These were a graded assignment completed in class in the last week of the semester.
- Explanation offered:
- Why are we reflecting?
- Typical worksheet, drill-and-memorize, and test preparation approach to classroom teaching actually makes it difficult to retain the myriad bits of information you encounter during the school year. More effective is an instructional method that requires you to use important information repeatedly in complex and meaningful ways such as writing papers or completing projects.
- articulate and verbalize what you are learning—helps better digest and apply what you are learning in the course.
- self-reflection enhances learning and deepens connections and understanding with and between you & your colleagues.
- helps ME get descriptive feedback that I can use to improve my practice and the course itself.
- The questions were as follows (I asked for a hearty sentence for each):
- 1. Reflect on how you thought about **music after 1900** before you took this course and how you think about it now that the course is (almost!) over. What's **ONE** thing that changed for you?
- 2. What is **one research method** you used for something in this class?
- 3. What is **one detail you'd like to remind yourself about** in terms of what we discussed in this class? (this could be something we officially covered, or something that came up as you were thinking)
- 4. What is one thing that you learned in this class (or at least thought about in relation to this class) that **connects with other work that you do?** (this might include performing, teaching, scholarship in other disciplines, etc)

Anonymized student responses:

Note: Due to the sheer volume of student responses here, I have randomly selected the first **ten** responses submitted from each section and reproduced them below. I'm happy to share the full documents of responses from each section, but this is a representative sample.

Student #1:

1. I think the main thing that changed for me is just that I know more about it and in a more nuanced way. My expectations of what I'd learn were both met and exceeded.
2. I'm not sure if this counts, but the real world reenactment of the Rite of Spring premiere was very cool. I think that's a very cool thing to immerse people in history, especially as someone who's always trying to break down stereotypes and myths.
3. I'd like to think about the negative ways music can be used. I'm always trying to be conscious of the nuance of propaganda and the way art can be used against us. This is especially so with the arts under attack as AI rises in use.
4. I really enjoyed the discussion around "creation" when it comes to ballet. We say "Stravinsky wrote it, " but there were so many people involved in it. I think this can be extrapolated for most performing arts, and as someone who wants to work in musical theater, I like to remember about just how collaborative performance needs to be.

Student #2:

1. I feel like my view of the music in the time span we covered expanded to include so many more musical artists, styles contexts, etc. beyond associations I've had before primarily based on the things I've listened to growing up.
2. Something that seems obvious but can often be overlooked is to check the credentials of the authors of the sources and their nature. My rule of thumb has become, especially after doing our project, to always make sure it's from a trustworthy source and if it's the kind of role that would have a strong influence (eg does it come from a musicologist, music professor, music critic, etc)
3. I would like to keep in mind the contexts of the music that's written, especially since I may be in a position as a music teacher where I'm programming: I would always want to make sure what larger purpose the original music was meant for, honor that if I perform, or on the other hand stay away from music that's purpose maybe isn't too moral or ethical.
4. It's reminded me about how the students that I will eventually have as a music teacher, will have very different musical preferences in accordance with their upbringing, heritage, and family's value. My goal is to make sure not to diminish that, make everyone be represented while maintaining a safe and respectful environment with my class.

Student #3:

1. I never assumed music from the 1900s led into musical theatre and Broadway, but I was pleased to learn about how opera had its DNA in the origin of film music for silent film accompaniment, because it makes me glad to know all of it is interconnected in the performing arts.

2. Oftentimes, in the footnotes or references there is a rabbit hole of tangential knowledge, google scholar with quotation marks is your friend.
3. That ~ .0001% of artists make up the vast majority of streaming and record sales of all music that comes out, and media becomes self-referential/feeding when there is too much accessible at once.
4. Talking about tracks, recording history and perceptual context for direction and production of community/musical theatre.

Student #4:

1. Well to be fair, I took a Music History course at Schenectady County Community College (where I transferred from) that covered music from 1850-present day so a lot of the stuff we went over in this course was a refresher. It was interesting to hear about the history of music through a broader lens in this course, like what did the audience think about the music being performed.
2. I was not aware that we had access to scholarly search engines through Potsdam, I will definitely be utilizing that for any other papers I have to write while I am here.
3. One thing that stuck out to me that we discussed in class often is that there are more composers and performers than the typical white dead men that are usually discussed. If I ever have to program a concert, I will for sure be looking for lesser-known composers.
4. I learned about prepared piano and found it super interesting. It really does sound like a percussion ensemble, and it gave me inspiration to maybe try writing something like that in the future.

Student #5:

1. The music that I've studied in class before 1900 has been almost purely from the Western classical style. One of the most stark differences that I've noticed is that early forms of this music were often performed for social settings, involving a vibrant audience and dramatic audience responses. This is a stark difference from the norms around most Western classical music in the concert hall today, as audience members are expected to sit silently during a piece, and to clap and cheer once it is finished. However, I have seen people perform Western classical music in other contexts. Singer, composer, conductor, teacher, and graduate of the Crane School of Music and The Juilliard School, Shavon Lloyd once performed Gioacchino Rossini's Largo Al Factotum at a social dinner. In this video, audience members were seen laughing, eating, and having conversation during the performance. My thoughts of music before 1900 have honestly not changed much during this semester, though I am more curious about which underrepresented music may have had a role in shaping music of today.
2. One research method I've used in Music History III this fall has been citation chaining.

Citation chaining is when you find a credible article that discusses your desired topic, then you access different sources that are referenced within your initial source. This can be repeated several times until you develop a chain or web of sources.

3. In Music History III, I was continually intrigued by the social contexts of music. Topics of clashing narratives especially caught my attention. From disagreements around the so-called purity of Ragtime music and dance, to questions about which organizations classify which pieces of music as “distinguished musical compositions,” music proves to be connected with and maybe even an inseparable extension of existing social dynamics.

4. In Music History III this semester, I learned of some of the nuanced and delicate ways that symbolism plays a role in music culture. The unifying nature of Marian Anderson often changed the words, “I, me, my,” to “we, us, and our.” An example of this can be heard when she opens the 1939 Lincoln Memorial concert with My Country ‘Tis of Thee. Instead of singing the phrase, “of thee I sing,” Anderson sings, “to thee we sing.” This subtle decision is one that can have a large effect on listeners. The challenges of racism and discrimination that Marian Anderson has faced in her career make many of her performances very significant in the context of wider social issues like the fights for African American civil rights. Shifting gears, to a different topic around disco, cultural authenticity, and media. The 1977 film Saturday Night Fever opened with the disco track Stayin’ Alive by the Bee Gees, a predominantly white pop, rock, and disco band. In this opening scene, you can see character Tony Manero, played by John Travolta, strutting to the beat of the music as he walks down the street and gets briefly distracted by an unnamed woman he finds attractive. Because disco was a genre that initially emerged as a form of dance music in social circles of black, queer working class people, this can be seen as a deliberate attempt to support the claim that disco can be made and consumed by white Americans as well. Because of heavy racism and segregation of the time, situations like this flag topics of cultural authenticity and cultural appropriation.

Student #6:

1. I thought of Music History in the 1900s as being mostly jazz and video game focused (I’m biased towards video games) but was surprised by how much else occurred in the last century. Something that changed me is how I view music as part of other mediums; the history of playing music alongside moving pictures as well as things like diegetic and non-diegetic music.

2. I enjoyed spacing out steps for larger assignments. Even though the final project was structured in that way, I might do that by myself for future classes with larger assignments.

3. Something that stuck with me was how people would believe that music was meant to be without emotion. I believe that small detail helps me solidify my own view of

music and that I want the music I write and the music I surround myself with to be filled with emotion.

4. Nationalism and musical authenticity. As a composer, I feel this could be fairly relevant to me, especially if I decide to start composing in specific styles that are often gatekept by countries or communities I myself am not a part of.

Student #7:

1. Before taking this course, I mainly thought of music after 1900 as music I was already familiar with. I didn't realize how broad, experimental, and diverse the music really is. Throughout the semester, I was introduced to pieces and composers I had never encountered, and I found it especially fascinating to explore extended techniques and how they reshape the way we listen and analyze music. One major change for me is that I now understand music after 1900 as a wide-ranging and innovative period. I do not think about it as just pop music anymore, but a rich field of artistic exploration that challenges traditional ideas of sound, form, and expression.

2. I did not know that checking off the peer-reviewed box meant that we only saw scholarly sources. Will definitely be remembering that for the future.

3. I thought the music and dance topic was very interesting. I loved discussing the specific qualities of music for dance. I love how subjective music for dance is and how it can be interpreted in many different ways. I also thought it was interesting comparing how we study music of the past vs. dance of the past.

4. One thing I learned in class that connects to other musicking I do is simply the amount of music that exists. There are so many composers out there that are not talked about enough. It is our job as musicians to keep them alive by performing their music. I will focus on incorporating a more diverse range of composers into my repertoire.

Student #8:

1. I lowkey thought it was all boring except a few classical bangers, but I've come to realise that most music is pretty incredible, and with the right context, all music can be enjoyed.

2. Office hour with Dr. Brooks... Life saving

3. I really connected with our talks about how the audience should react to the music, and the part they play. I specifically remembered talking to my friends after their chorus concert and how when they did 4:33 it reversed the roles and almost made them the audience watching how we reacted. Cool stuff.

4. I found the talks of emerging extended techniques to be very interesting, I didn't know they've been around for so long.

Student #9:

1. Honestly, before this class, I wasn't too interested in music since 1900. I found a lot of it to be too academic and too intellectual, and felt it had little emotion. And I never really connected with popular music. However, now I see in the classical world, there was a lot more emotion put into the works I considered emotionless. And I gained a new appreciation for the sophistication of popular genres.
2. I learned to look in periodicals specific to the issue you are trying to address, like a specific genre or subject.
3. I think a detail I'll keep in mind is about Shostakovich, mainly that we tend to look back and give him rebellious attributes when there's not really any evidence to suggest that.
4. I learned a lot about composition through this class. Most of the music we covered is music that I don't really write. But learning about how tradition is challenged and reinforced gave me, as a classical composer in 2025, more information to work with for how I want to approach the legacy of the past.

Student #10:

1. Before this course, I mostly thought of music before 1900 as "old" or formal, but now I see it as more of a reflection of cultural, political, and social contexts, full of meaning beyond just the notes on the page.
2. One research method I'll remember is using keyword searches when searching through databases to find articles that are more specific to my research topic. Additionally, this helped filter out less reliable sources, and more easily find scholarly journals.
3. I want to remind myself how powerful subtle musical gestures can be, such as Shostakovich embedding irony or protest within seemingly conventional Soviet compositions.
4. I learned to listen for connections between the cultural context of music and the way it's performed or taught, which will influence how I approach teaching or performing repertoire from different eras.

Student #11:

1. This may sound concerning, but I never realized how truly connected music and culture are. As a classically trained violinist, I rarely see cultural movements reflected in violin music. Statements are rarely made via violin music, but music can also be used as a form of resistance.
2. Create a research plan and stick to it. This has been one of the simplest research projects I have ever done, and not because the premise is simple. The research plan is clear and sets you up for success with very little stress. I did a good job managing the various steps, and it is certainly paying off.
3. I think I want to remember the different ways that privilege or lack of privilege affects

the art/music that people create. We learned about dozens of artists and songs this semester, but each one has its own intersectionality. Exploring the different identities that influence these artists gives us a lens into their lives.

4. Don't stop consuming meaningful music media. As I get closer to being in the field I realize how important it is to keep learning and listening to music. The Guest DJ is a great example of how everyone has meaningful musical experiences that inform the way they live. Listening to others' meaningful moments makes me want to search out these moments for myself.

Student #12:

Before I took this class I had not been as interested in music history. The courses prior had taught me a lot but it was so hard to focus since classical music has never been my favorite. Going into music history 3 I knew there would be a lot of stuff that I knew but oh boy was I wrong. I learned many new vocabulary words and many many names of composers and artists.

Now that I had to use the scholarly sources, the practice spent in this class is going to help me a lot for the future of my academic studies. The DJ sets and disco night life of the city was something that particularly stuck out to me since I live in the city and I love that kind of music. In this class I learned a lot about the industry for my music business degree as well as a lot of the ways these composers lived and created. The context for creation is something I took for granted and now I am very grateful I am able to take a deeper look into these artists backgrounds.

Student #13:

1. I did not put much thought into the music we discussed in class. I occasionally thought of Shostakovich because I enjoy history and did some research on my own in high school. I enjoyed learning about music and politics as that was never really discussed in Music History I and II.

2. I will definitely be doing more literature review so knowing how to do that has been a big help.

3. Music is always more interconnected than we like to think. Too often we think about the composer and not about their circumstances, about who could perform, about what they were allowed to write, about what the music was made to do.

4. I've learned that music requires understanding beyond what we hear. This is something someone would need for any performance they do or present.

Student #14:

1. I think I had thought of it as being relatively similar across the board and that it was really just people writing music but after this course I realized how much really was at play for so many things.

2. I really liked using that website proquest. It got me to a lot of really interesting websites and journals on topics I thought were really interesting.
3. I always like to remind myself about how intersectional music is with just about everything. It was a really interesting detail that I know think about it with most music.
4. I think about the lineage of a lot of the music I play now. About where these ideas came from and what implications that has for the music I'm playing or listening.

Student #15:

1. Before this class, I mostly thought music after 1900 wasn't really connected to classical music, but for some aspects I can see how music styles are always changing and a lot of times, older styles are revived and incorporated into newer music over the years.
2. I learned how to use the potsdam library page better with sorting through and using filters in order to find the perfect sources for me. I was able to locate scholarly sources a lot easier than I have in the past.
3. I want to remember how often music after 1900 blends different styles, genres, and traditions, and how it creates new ways of listening.
4. Learning to think about music not just as notes on a page but also its cultural relevance has deepened the way I approach teaching. It has helped me become more culturally responsive as a teacher.

Student #16:

1. I had a harder time connecting music before 1900 and music of today, but after taking this class I am able to see how so many things happened in the 1900s to bridge that gap.
2. I learned how to better narrow down my ideas to make my arguments easier to back up.
3. I would like to continue to remind myself that the riot at the Rite of Spring is a hoax. I used to believe it.
4. I enjoyed learning about Debussy's inspirations for composing because I take a lot of inspiration from his style for my compositions.

Student #17:

1. Before this course, I never thought about using music in politics, just always performing. These classes (yours Dr. Brooks) always opens my mind to how music is used in perhaps non-traditional ways.
2. I had never used the Potsdam Library resources before, I enjoyed seeing what they had to offer and it was nice to compare them to other articles found on the web.
3. I'd say to always remember that there is so much that goes into music. We learned about a lot of background on music, but also how is it all played, why is it

popular, and to always have others' opinions in your mind - your interpretation is not the only one that matters.

4. I really enjoyed learning about sound studies and experimental music.

Going on the sound walks made me become more aware of my own musical creation; aware of not only what is going on around me, but how others create music around me. I think this is a great mindset to go into teaching with because everyone learns and creates differently!

Student #18:

1. The main thing that has changed in my understanding of music since 1900 is comprehension of the historical context behind musical eras. It was particularly interesting to learn about how music shaped progressive movements like the Civil Rights Movement.

2. Researching for the podcast project was my first time using Google Scholar. It pointed me towards some very good sources quicker than the databases would have, and it's something I would definitely continue to use in my research!

3. A detail that stuck with me is the question of who is seemingly excluded from certain musical stages. Unfortunately, we have silenced the works of many women and minorities throughout history, and it is important to understand this so that we can try to be better about it in the future./

4. Our discussions about extended techniques were probably most relevant to the music that I engage in. It was very interesting to learn about how they progressed on my instrument and on all others.

Student #19:

1. Before taking this course, music before 1900 always seemed somewhat boring. That is, in the sense of music I enjoy listening to (driving in the car music). I enjoyed the pre-1900 music that I would sing in studio, and some choral music, but it was never my top interest. However, since learning about music in politics I do think this has changed slightly. Knowing the background of the piece can be incredibly helpful. It's like there is drama, it's fun.

2. One research hack I think I will use down the road is any sort of library database. I have definitely been taking advantage of my access to that while here at school. I have gotten a lot better at knowing what to look up to get the answer that I want.

3. I don't think I'll soon forget people's reactions to the Rite of Spring. When we were each given a character to portray in class, that really helped my understanding of the topic. It was also quite interesting.

4. Connecting to other music making I do, I would love to start singing music from the time of "music and politics" (what we talked about in class). The stories are so interesting, and I would love to be able to tell them myself.

Student #20:

1. This course gave me a different outlook on music and politics, demonstrating how big of a role music can play in economical, cultural, and societal issues.
2. Before the semester project, I hadn't used the Potsdam database to find articles, so it provided me with a new resource for academic projects going forward.
3. I think it is really important to remember that music can be very political, as seen in the majority of the music we looked at this semester.
4. I thought that the extended techniques units were quite interesting, especially the discussion about John Cage when we were performing 4'33 in concert choir.