

MUCH 495: Twentieth-Century Music

Music, Politics, and Power, post-1945

Spring 2020



Class Time and Location:
Mon/Wed/Fri, 8:00am-8:50am / Room C303

Instructor

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Office hours:

I am *only* scheduling office hours by appointment (due to the complexities of your individual schedules). Please come talk to me or email me—I'm very happy to meet with you throughout the semester. Also, please feel free to come talk about class or other things: my office is a safe space for discussions.

Course Description and Objectives

MUCH 495 covers music from 1945 to the early 21st century, and includes consideration of stylistic and formal elements together with aesthetic principles and historical perspectives. You will engage with primary sources, current scholarship, scores, and reference materials to gain knowledge of music history and understanding about how such knowledge is created and

revised. This course provides opportunities to hone intellectual skills such as close listening, score analysis, interpretation of original historical documents, critical thinking, and writing that requires synthesis. The focus of this course is class discussion of common assignments and an independent research project, which will be shared in class with peers during the various stages of research and development.

Spring 2020 Special Focus: Music, Politics, and Power, post-1945

While we will cover a broad swath of twentieth and twenty-first century music in this course, this semester's class will focus specifically on the relationships between music and formative political events of the past seventy-five years. While our class discussions may include connections to popular and vernacular musics, this course will primarily focus on art musics. We will analyze a number of issues, controversies, and questions, including:

- How do composers, critics, and audiences forge musical meaning, particularly in terms of linking music to external events? How does this differ in an untexted work versus a composition with lyrics or programmatic titles?
- How did art music serve not just as response to the cataclysms and controversies of the past seventy-five years, but also as an active participant in these events?
- The past seventy-five years have been a fraught period for the relationship between art musics and their audiences, encapsulated in Milton Babbitt's famous 1958 article "Who Cares if You Listen?" (or "The Composer as Specialist"). To what extent do various compositional strategies post-1945 attempt to retreat from political implications, or conversely, seek continued relevance through associations with extra-musical events?
- While this course syllabi includes works by women and people of color, compositional training and concert halls are famously places of exclusion, dominated by the works of white middle-class men from Western Europe or the United States. How do intersectional characteristics of race, class, gender, and sexuality affect the bodies and reception of politically inflected musics?
- How do selected works representing the various "isms" of twentieth-century music—such as total serialism, neo-Romanticism, minimalism, pluralism, etc—interact with political meanings, albeit in radically different stylistic ways?
- To what extent have works of music—such as Britten's *War Requiem* or Penderecki's *Threnody*—served as musical memorials for 20th century atrocities?
- What narratives do composers foreground about the political implications of their works? Why are we told what we are told? How do we critically assess politicized claims by composers and critics?

Students who successfully complete MUCH 495 should be able to:

- Recognize vocabulary, styles, genres, forms, individual works, and larger-scale philosophical debates from our class units on various aspects of music and politics in the 20th and 21st centuries
- Think creatively about how the legacies of the 20th century influence your twenty-first-century relationships with music
- Demonstrate facility with resources for music history research
- Frame a research question related to the course topic

- Identify appropriate sources for exploring the question
- Critically read the secondary literature related to your research question
- Analyze primary sources to construct an argument that engages secondary literature
- Communicate your ideas to classmates at various points in the research and writing process
- Engage in peer editing with your colleagues, learning how to provide feedback in a constructive manner

Course Requirements

Note: Students enrolled in this course should have already completed MUCB 323 (Music History III: Music since 1900). Any reading or listening assignment listed for a specific day should be completed prior to coming to class—please come to class prepared and ready to ask and answer questions. You are responsible for regularly checking Moodle for listening/reading assignments, discussion questions, and any possible updates/changes. Given the pace of this course, keeping up on all assigned reading and listening in advance of every class is essential. SUNY guidelines assume at least 2 hours of study time per hour of class time or credit. For this 3-credit class, which meets 3 hours/week, expect to potentially spend 6 additional hours a week outside of class (studying, listening, reading). The number of hours you spend reading will vary over the course of the week or the semester, but if you are obviously not doing the readings, you may fail the course. As you read articles, please make sure to take notes on the argument, vocabulary, use of evidence, etc. Please feel free to come to my office for guidance on how to organize your studying and reading time most effectively.

Reading/Listening Assignments

There is **no** required texts for this course. All readings and recordings for this course will be available to you through the Moodle site for this course. Visit <https://moodle.potsdam.edu> for your course resources.

Readings and listening assignments are required, and should be completed prior to each class. For each class, log on to Moodle to access the materials—each day's module on Moodle will contain PDFs and links for each class.

It is your responsibility to make sure that you can access the class materials; please let me know as soon as possible if you are having any problems. I may not be able to troubleshoot issues involving your personal computer. Please understand that if you cannot access course materials through your computer/tablet/etc, you must work with computers on campus. The number to Computing & Technology Services (CTS) helpdesk is (315) 267-4444 or helpdesk@potsdam.edu

For additional help with your assignments, the Crane Music library has a vast variety of resources. The url <https://library.potsdam.edu/music> will take you to a page with essential resources such as links to audio/visual databases, articles, the library catalog, etc.

Course Evaluation

Grading will be based on in-class work (attendance, participation in in-class activities, discussion, in-class writing, etc), online Moodle commentary, and a research project (which has a number of internal steps). For more details on each section, see below:

✦ Class Attendance, Participation, Preparedness	20%
✦ Online Moodle Commentary	20%
✦ Final Project	60%

(these are projected due dates, I reserve the right to push them back due to snow days, etc)

• Initial Research Topics—3%	Friday, Feb. 7, 5:00pm
• In-person Consultation on Research Topics—2%	Feb. 10—Feb.14
• Research Question and Bibliography—5%	Friday, Feb. 21, 5:00pm
• Abstract—5%	Friday, March 6, 5:00pm
• Draft of Podcast Script—10%	Friday, March 27, 5:00pm
• Peer suggestions on Podcast Script—5%	Friday, April 3, 5:00pm
• Revised Script (10%) and Final Podcast (15%)—25%	Friday, May 8, 5:00pm
• Peer Presentation during Finals—5%	Wed., May 20, 8:00-10:00am

**** Class attendance/Participation/Preparedness Procedures:** Individual class sessions will combine lecture, listening, discussion, group work, activities or workshops on various aspects of your term projects: overall MUCH 495 will only succeed based on the amount of effort that you invest in it. Our limited in-class time should focus on our group discussion of the concepts in the assigned reading and listening; it is imperative, therefore, that you have carefully read/listened to the assigned materials before coming to class and come prepared with questions and concerns. You should *always* come to class having taken notes on assigned materials and ready to respond and ask questions. I will assess your in-class grade based on your preparation and thoughtful participation in class discussions. If participation in class conversations is difficult for you—based on personality types, learning styles, language, etc—please come see me and we can find additional ways to make you feel more comfortable as you participate.

- You may miss **three** classes without any penalty at all (=3 free absences).
- If you miss more than three classes, you will lose 5% per additional class absence from your class attendance/participation/preparedness grade.
- While I understand occasional emergencies, chronic lateness will be treated as partial absences.
- In the unlikely event that anyone in the class misses more than 12 classes—unless in the case of a particularly unusual set of circumstances—I reserve the right to fail that student automatically.
- For more on potential excused absences (such as official Crane trips or religious observances) see “course policies” below.

**** Moodle Commentary/Discussion Forum Procedures:** You'll see a discussion forum posted on Moodle for many days of the class (there are a few exceptions). Start early, stay on top of it, and it should help us start our discussions from a more complex and interesting place!

Discussion Leader Guidelines (2x a semester): Signup for topics will be on Friday, Week 1

If you're one of the assigned discussion forum leaders for that topic or day, please post (on the Moodle discussion forum) a comment and two questions based on the day's reading and listening. Please don't post your comments *before* we've started the week in question (i.e., not before we've finished the previous week—anytime after that is fine). As a discussion leader, your comments must be posted by 9pm the day before the class in question in order to count towards your grade.

General Discussion Commentary (8x a semester) Guidelines:

You are required to **respond** to the discussion forums 8 times a semester (this is separate from your discussion leader posts).

A "response" will consist of at least 3 full sentences (you may write more). I will track these throughout the semester. You only get credit for one response per forum (but feel free to post followup comments in order to make the conversation better!).

You are not required to wait to comment until the discussion leader posts, but please don't post your comments *before* we've started the topic in question (i.e., not before we've finished the previous week, but anytime after that is fine).

I will accept general commentary posts until 11:59pm the day before the class in question (so for a Monday class, you can post until 11:59pm that Sunday).

(Guidelines on how to create a discussion post are contained on Moodle as well).

On the days on which you are not assigned to post Moodle commentary, you are still expected to complete the course readings and come to class having read your colleague's online commentary and be ready to carefully participate in class discussions.

Course Policies

Grading

All grades will be determined on the following scale:

4.0: 95-100	2.7: 82-84	1.3: 68-71
3.7: 92-94	2.3: 78-81	1.0: 65-67
3.3: 88-91	2.0: 75-77	0.0: 0-64
3.0: 85-87	1.7: 72-74	

Please note that passing grade for this course is 2.0 (75% or above).

Grade Appeals

If you have questions about a grade, please speak with me (in person) first. Please note that the Undergraduate Catalog includes the specific criteria upon which you are allowed to appeal a course grade. If we cannot come to an informal resolution, you would then complete a formal Grade Appeal Form and we would consider if additional resolution is necessary. Details about

the specific steps and timelines for this process are located in the Undergraduate Catalog: <https://catalog.potsdam.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=191>

- **Emails:** I attempt to respond to emails in a timely manner (generally within 24 hours of receipt). I do not always have time to respond to emails over the weekend, so depending on the situation, weekend emails may be answered on Monday morning.
- **In-office Time/Appointments:** Please feel free to talk to me in person about curiosities, questions, problems, concerns or whatever comes to mind. While you can drop by my office to see if I'm there, I always suggest you schedule an appointment to make sure you catch me. Please make sure to check your campus email regularly—I frequently send essential updates or class comments via email.
- **Note taking:** You should **come** to class with your own notes on the assigned reading and listening assignments for each class. I strongly encourage that you take notes during each class meeting, particularly on verbal content, points that emerge from class discussion, and musical concepts from scores and listening. Please do not record class lectures unless you have received permission to do so.
- **Technology:** You are encouraged to use electronic devices to take notes or access readings, but be aware that you will have to skillfully manage your attention to both your device and classroom discussion—I reserve the right to ask you to keep all devices put up when we are having class discussions. Anyone who struggles with appropriate technology usage—texting or messaging during class is particularly frowned upon—may be asked to speak with me and revise their approach or access.
- **Classroom conduct:** Active participation in this class involves taking notes, contributing questions and commentary, and challenging each other to think more deeply. Indeed, critical engagement—which should include reasoned debate, critique, and questions—is one of the best ways to learn. It is essential, however, that we be considerate in the ways we conduct these discussions; have an open mind, don't make assumptions about your classmates, have respect for different viewpoints, and hone your ability to listen thoughtfully and compassionately to each other and the instructor. Anyone who struggles with this policy will be asked to meet with the instructor; please let me know if you have any concerns about discussion during the semester.
- **Attendance:** If you know that you will be missing class for a school-sponsored activity (such as an off-campus performance), you should inform me as soon as possible. While I may also receive a memo about your absence from the Dean's Office, it is ultimately your responsibility to check in with me about your absence before the scheduled event. You are always expected to make up work missed due to travel, but you and I will need to find specific accommodations for each absence (depending upon activities missed). Please note that any makeup deadlines will only be given as a result of medical emergency or extraordinary hardship. Per New York State Law, any student with a conflict between an academic requirement and any religious observance should be given an alternative for meeting the academic requirement. If you have a

conflict with a class meeting or deadline due to a religious observance, please let me know well in advance (at least two weeks). You will not be penalized for missing class material, but you will have to makeup your class material in some alternate way.

- **Formatting and Writing Guidelines:** I will provide you a wordcount for all assignments (or time length for the podcast). As a matter of policy, the typical style required by many journals is double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, and one-inch margins (although I will not be policing acceptable font alternatives if you're devoted to Avenir font). Footnotes and bibliographies should be in Chicago Manual of Style; if you have another citation style you would like to use, you would need to discuss this with me in advance. Assignments must be free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. Minor problems will result in deductions; major writing issues may result in a request to redo the assignment. Continued problems with assignment redos will result in grade deductions. While I will be assisting you with some revisions for your assignment, note that you can always receive additional assistance from the SUNY Potsdam Writing Center: <https://www.potsdam.edu/about/administrative-offices/international-education-programs/international-students-scholars-2-5>
- **Late work:** No late work will be accepted without penalty. **Late assignments will lose 5% for each day they are late. Assignments will not accepted more than three days late.** If you believe you will have difficulty meeting a particular deadline, you must talk with me at least *three days in advance of the due date*. (Discussion leader posts must happen on the schedule earlier in the syllabus, no late work will be accepted for those). In fairness to all students, there are no automatic deadline extensions for students who miss a regular class meeting (regardless of reason for the absence).
- **Accessibility:** In order to fully include all students in this course, it is essential to provide reasonable accommodations or program modifications for anyone with a disability. Please let me know **during the first week of classes** if you need any accommodations in curriculum, instruction, or evaluation. For most accommodations, you should have a registration on file with Accommodative Services (<http://potsdam.edu/support/oas>), located in Sisson Hall Room 111. If you're already working with Accommodative Services, or have worked with them in previous semesters, please inform me immediately. Any accommodations or modifications require advance notice, so make sure to work out these details with me well in advance.
- **Academic Integrity:** This class will strictly follow SUNY Potsdam's policies on academic integrity. Please consult the Academic Honor Code website (<http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/studentconduct/honorcode>) or the Undergraduate Catalogue for more information regarding your responsibilities as a student. In general, academic misconduct includes acts in which a student seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation. Examples include (but are not limited to):
 1. Cutting and pasting text from the web without quotation marks or proper citation.
 2. Paraphrasing from the web or written texts without crediting the source.
 3. Using notes in an exam when such use is not allowed.
 4. Using another person's ideas, words, or research and presenting it as one's own.

I encourage you to discuss class content with each other inside and outside of class. For writing assignments, however, no collaboration with other students is permitted. Disguising words written by others as your own undermines the academic community here at SUNY Potsdam. If you have any questions about this, don't hesitate to ask me. For specific questions on intellectual property and proper citation techniques, advice is available both at SCCS and the Writing Center.

Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, falsification and other academic honor code violations are taken very seriously. Any suspicious situations will be dealt with through proper judicial channels and may result in serious consequences. For more information about academic misconduct procedures, see the processes and procedures at the Academic Honor Code website.