

Exam 2: Short written response

Instructions for this type of question:

This question requires **somewhere in the neighborhood of a half-page of typed writing**—to receive full credit, you will need to provide multiple fully-fleshed out sentences). For your musical characteristics, make sure to be detailed and specific. Again, you may use your notes, textbook, and course lecture materials. I will be grading on accuracy, content, and writing style.

Question 1:

One of the things we've revisited multiple times during this semester is the idea that music is deeply impacted by and entwined with politics (or, in the words of one postcolonial scholar, we refuse to treat music or culture as an autonomous and politically innocent domain of social life).

Continuing to think about music and politics in the 1960s and beyond, please choose **ONE** of the following two options for this question.

- **Option A:**

During the Cold War, musical styles were **not** neutral: serialism was often seen as the "sound of freedom" by the West, whereas Soviet Bloc composers such as Shostakovich were forced to write tonal music in traditional genres (and avant-garde styles were forbidden). After the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, some of these political constraints eased up somewhat, but even by the mid-1960s, connections between musical styles and politics continued to be relevant. One well-known example dating from this period—and connected to these questions about politics and style—was Krzysztof Penderecki's work "Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima" (1960). Please start by writing a description of this work; in your answer, please provide **at least three** musical details about "Threnody." **Then:** explain how this piece is reflective of Cold War-era politics. How, in the case of this work, does politics influence the kind of music Penderecki was able to write as a Polish composer in 1960? What does the title tell us? How do we hear this piece programmatically because of the title?

- **Option B:**

One of the most important stylistic developments of the 1960s was the emergence of minimalism. In our class, we spent some time on general details of minimalism and then listened/discussed the early minimalist work by Steve Reich, "Come Out" (1966). In your answer, please start by explaining how "Come Out" is put together. What are **some musical characteristics** of this work? And how are those characteristics similar to or different from broad definitions of minimalism?

Next: some people have claimed that minimalism is "aloof from politics and commerce and above personal feeling," while others have argued that minimalist art in the 1960s directly engaged with social and political issues. How is Steve Reich's work "Come Out" **obviously connected with political** and social events of the 1960s? Why is it important to bring awareness of the context to our understanding of this work (as opposed to only focusing on musical style)?