

MUCR 488

Research Project in Music Studies

Spring 2026

Class Time/Location: TBD—we will arrange a weekly meeting time on or before the first week of classes

Instructor

Dr. Erin Brooks

Email: brooksem@potsteam.edu

Office: Schuette Hall A102

Office hours:

Office hours can be in person or via Zoom or by phone—any office hour is scheduled by appointment in order to maximize the overlap between your schedule and mine!

Please email or message me to set up these office hour meetings; I'm very happy to discuss course material or just offer a supportive ear for anything you'd like to share in a safe space.

Course Description and Objectives:

MUCR 488 is a written research project that, with the aid of a faculty adviser, will allow the Musical Studies major to draw together knowledge and experience. The capstone project in Music History is intended to create a hands-on experience with rigorous critical thinking and one-on-one interaction with faculty. You will engage with primary sources, current scholarship, and reference materials to gain knowledge of music history and understanding about how such knowledge is created and revised. A large-scale research project will achieve a higher level of critical thinking, research sources, and effective communication than in the upper-division electives.

While the final project should contain a significant written component, it is also possible to include other elements. For example, you may want to feature a performance or performed element, give a lecture or scholarly presentation, create a website or other internet resource, produce a podcast, etc. These are all welcomed, please see me with additional ideas. During spring semesters, you are encouraged to submit their work for the Learning & Research fair; I will discuss this during the first meeting.

While you are encouraged to draw on preexistent interests that will assist in other musical and scholarly endeavors, in general this project should stand alone—it should not be a term paper for another class, or the exact material of a President Scholars or Kilmer project. Questions about this issue should be directed to me.

Upon successfully completing MUCR 488, you should be able to:

- Formulate a research question and methodology for how to approach the research and organization of a semester-length project
- Establish methods for the use of primary sources as evidence for constructing historical narratives about music
- Locate, evaluate, and use authoritative reference tools and complex secondary source materials for research of music history
- Enhance critical thinking through writing and presentation skills
- Complete a well-crafted significant final product, comprising some written element

Course Prerequisites and Requirements:

1. Note: Students enrolled in this course should have typically have completed the music history core.
2. SUNY guidelines assume **at least** 2 hours of study time per hour of class time or credit. For this 2-credit class, expect to spend at least 4 additional hours a week outside of class (researching, listening, reading, writing).
3. For someone enrolled in MUCR 488, the normal schedule will entail weekly hour-long meetings to work, discuss progress and questions about the project, and figure out trajectory of the next week's work.
4. Scheduling of the weekly meeting time will take place during the first week of the semester.
5. **In general, you should consider the subject matter for the research question prior to this first meeting; please feel free to contact me or schedule a meeting before the start of the semester with thoughts on project topics.**
6. There may be occasional weeks during the semester where our meeting consists of exchanging drafts and comments in lieu of an in-person discussion.
7. There should be a continual rate of research, reflection, conversation, and production during this project; 15 weeks is a short time to complete a research project.
8. Please feel free to come to office hours for guidance on how to organize reading and research time most effectively.

Recommended Materials and How to Access Reading/Assignments:

1. There is **no required text** to purchase/rent for this course. All readings and recordings for this course will be obtained through research and discussions as part of the course.
2. It is possible that you may wish to purchase some materials for your project, but it is not required.
3. There is a Brightspace page for this course; we can use it as needed for your project.
4. For additional help with your assignments, the Crane Music library has a 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:

1. Grading will be based on the progress and weekly work during the semester as well as the final product.
2. In assessing the final project/paper, a rubric will judge the quality of formation of the thesis question, levels and types of research, integration of research materials in conjunction with individual opinion, and an emphasis on effective communication.
3. Consistent inability to meet deadlines or missed weekly meetings will result in a failing grade for MUCR 488.

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 an undergraduate course is a 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 check email several times a day; if you don't hear back from me within 24 hours, feel free to try again. Please make sure to check your campus email regularly—I frequently send essential updates via email.
 - **Appointments/Office Hours:** Office hours can be in person or via Zoom or by phone—any office hour is scheduled by appointment in order to maximize the overlap between your schedule and mine! Please email or message me to set up these office hour meetings; I'm very happy to discuss course material or just offer a supportive ear for anything you'd like to share in a safe space.
 - **Trauma-Sensitive Teaching:** I am committed to using trauma-sensitive teaching and learning principles to support your resilience and success in this course. Trauma-sensitive principles help create a safe, transparent, connected, and collaborative space where you feel empowered and respected. Be sure to do periodic self-checks on how course material—and the ways in which material is delivered and discussed—are affecting you, and please talk with me if you are having difficulties with any aspect of the course. Getting support from friends, colleagues, family, and mental health professionals is also important, especially if you have risk factors or you find yourself becoming distressed. For additional links to campus and community services, see <https://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/wellness/counseling-center>
 - **Accessibility:** I'd like to borrow a few words from the wonderful scholar Mimi Khúc (scholar/artist/activist in Residence in Disability Studies at Georgetown University): "Everyone's access needs matter, and we will try collectively to meet them as they arise. Access needs are needs that when met enable participation in the course to the fullest--therefore they are wide- ranging and can be met in wide-ranging, creative ways. I am committed to making participation as accessible as possible. Please let me know if anything comes up that makes participation feel hard....We are taught not to have needs, that needs mean we are "weak"; resist this impulse. Access is relational. This means that creating access and accessibility is something we do together, in

relationship and community. It requires a shared commitment to each other's wellbeing and participation in the community space, and requires communication and negotiation and flexibility.

Everyone has access needs, and these needs change over time. I will try to anticipate as much as possible but I cannot know everyone's needs at all times. When you become aware of your access needs, please communicate them to me."

As this is an independent study, feel free to suggest things to me that may help your work process.

- **Late work:**

1. Extensions will be given as a result of conversations you have with me (I've given extensions in the past for illness, mental health needs, emergencies, tech reasons, etc)—keep in mind that extensions are necessary in many cases, but sometimes they also just delay your work unnecessarily and stress you out.
2. If you know you will have difficulty meeting a deadline, please talk with me about it—this should happen at least a day before the deadline except in unusual or emergency cases. As noted, I'm happy to work with you about extensions or other accommodations (although these do remain within my discretion to grant).
3. Your final work absolutely must be submitted sometime during finals week or before in order to complete this course.

- **Formatting and Writing Guidelines:**

1. For assignments both large and small, I will provide you a desired wordcount or length requirement (or time length for any spoken presentations). 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). If applicable, footnotes and bibliographies should be in Chicago Manual of Style; if you have another citation style you would like to use, just discuss this with me in advance.
2. Assignments should be free of spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. Minor problems will result in corrections; major writing issues may result in a request to redo the assignment. Continued problems may result in meetings or other guidance. While I am always happy to assisting you with revisions for assignments, note that you can also receive additional assistance from the SUNY Potsdam Writing Center: <https://www.potsdam.edu/about/administrative-offices/international-education-programs/international-students-scholars-2-5>

- **Academic Integrity:**

1. This class will 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.
2. In general, academic misconduct includes acts where an individual seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another person or source without authorization or citation. Disguising work by others as your own undermines both the academic community and your own credibility. Examples include (but are not limited to):
 - a. Cutting and pasting text from the web without quotation marks or proper citation.
 - b. Paraphrasing from the Internet or written texts without crediting the source.
 - c. Using notes or other sources in an exam or other situation when such use is not allowed.
 - d. Using another person's ideas, words, or research and presenting it as one's own.

AI/Chat GPT, etc:

Here's a specific guide on ChatGPT. <https://library.potsdam.edu/AI>

Borrowed in part from Jim Donahue:

This course is designed to give you an opportunity to form your personal thoughts on music—as someone who is about to go out into the world beyond SUNY Potsdam (maybe to grad school, maybe to work in the music industry, maybe to teach, etc).

As such, your ability to formulate your own thoughts – as expressed in your own words – are what I value most and what you need to take with you as your contribution to the world beyond this campus. They're kind of your superpower :)

You are prohibited from using AI tools (ChatGPT, etc.) for the composition of your written assignments, most especially your presentations or written work.

AI tools are notoriously impersonal, and as such have no place in a class whose purpose is to give you a space to share your thoughts.

Further, AI tools are notoriously incorrect about factual matters, and as such their use runs the risk of misrepresenting you and your beliefs.

If you are found to have used AI tools for the composition of your written work, you will fail that assignment or this course.

Not even because this is a form of cheating, but rather because you did not complete the assignment yourself. Every grade in this course will be earned through your personal contributions. If I wanted an AI-generated response to the issues raised in class, we would all miss out on your unique, individual contributions.

While I don't have issues with you using AI as a research tool, I'll just say BE CAREFUL (it's got issues and makes a lot of weird mistakes....it may actually be getting less accurate with time, not more so!).

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.