

## MUS434–571.3: Music of the Modern Era

Spring 2013 – TU/TH 3:30–4:45 pm

**Instructor:** Dr. Kirsten Volness

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**Office hours:** Thursday 5:00–6:45 pm or by appointment (location TBD)

**Room:** Fine Arts Center E–205

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**Course Website:** <http://www.kirstenvolness.com/mus434.htm>

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

We will examine the development of modern art music from the early twentieth century to the present through the study and analysis of select musical works and the cultural and historical framework in which they were created. We will attend a concert of contemporary music, engage with living composers and their work, and discuss the possible future trends and practices in new music.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

To achieve knowledge and understanding of the place of music within its historical and cultural context.

RIBTS Standards: 1.1.; 5.1.; 5.2.; 6.4.; 6.7.

NASM Standards: BA.1.1.; BA.1.3.; BA.1.6.; BA.2.1.; BA.2.2.; BA.2.3.; BA.2.4.; BA.4.1.; BM.2.1.; BM.2.2.; BM.2.3.; BM.4.1.; BM.6.3.; BM.6.4.; BME.1.2.; BME2.4.

To become familiar with the output and musical characteristics of the principal composers who were active during the historical time frame covered in this course.

RIBTS Standards: 1.1.; 5.1.; 5.2.; 6.4.; 6.7.

NASM Standards: BA.1.1.; BA.1.3.; BA.1.6.; BA.2.1.; BA.2.2.; BA.2.3.; BA.2.4.; BA.4.1.; BM.2.1.; BM.2.2.; BM.2.3.; BM.4.1.; BM.6.3.; BM.6.4.; BME.1.2.; BME2.4.

To become familiar with the principal genres, forms, and styles of music that were cultivated during the historical time frame covered in this course.

RIBTS Standards: 1.1.; 5.1.; 5.2.; 6.4.; 6.7.

NASM Standards: BA.1.1.; BA.1.3.; BA.1.6.; BA.2.1.; BA.2.2.; BA.2.3.; BA.2.4.; BA.4.1.; BM.2.1.; BM.2.2.; BM.2.3.; BM.4.1.; BM.6.3.; BM.6.4.; BME.1.2.; BME2.4.

To understand and employ the important terminology used to discuss the music covered in this course.

RIBTS Standards: 1.1.; 5.1.; 5.2.; 6.4.; 6.7.

NASM Standards: BA.1.1.; BA.1.3.; BA.1.6.; BA.2.1.; BA.2.2.; BA.2.3.; BA.2.4.; BA.4.1.; BM.2.1.; BM.2.2.; BM.2.3.; BM.4.1.; BM.6.3.; BM.6.4.; BME.1.2.; BME2.4.

To be able to recognize and discuss the important stylistic traits of major works and composers studied in this course.

RIBTS Standards: 1.1.; 5.1.; 5.2.; 6.4.; 6.7.

NASM Standards: BA.1.1.; BA.1.3.; BA.1.6.; BA.2.1.; BA.2.2.; BA.2.3.; BA.2.4.; BA.4.1.; BM.2.1.; BM.2.2.; BM.2.3.; BM.4.1.; BM.6.3.; BM.6.4.; BME.1.2.; BME2.4.

To improve one's listening skills and ability to describe and discuss modern and contemporary music and culture, through its development to the present day.

### REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Ross, Alex. *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century*. New York: Picador, 2007.

## POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

**Attendance** is mandatory. Students are expected to be prepared to discuss reading and listening selections in class (be sure to bring materials to class for reference) and to submit assignments in a timely manner.

**Each student is allowed one unexcused absence per term; each additional thereafter will result in a 5% reduction in one's highest attainable final grade.** Absences will be excused in cases of illness (with doctor's note) or legitimate emergency (family or otherwise). **The highest attainable grade for late assignments will also be reduced by 5% for each day late;** please notify me prior to the due date in case of extenuating circumstances. Sleeping in class and/or being noticeably distracted by personal electronics or your computer during lecture, listening, or discussion will result in an unexcused absence for the day.

**Listening examples and additional reading materials** will be posted on the course website. Students may be asked to write short response papers and/or to lead discussion on a particular topic or piece.

## GRADING

- Short response assignments: 10%
- In-class Participation: 10%
- Unit 1 Exam: 20%
- Unit 2 Exam: 20%
- Final (Unit 3) Exam: 20%
- Paper (plus presentation for graduate students): 20%

Each item of written work will be graded on a scale of 100 points. Spelling and grammar count so please proofread your writing and/or make an appointment at The Writing Center for additional help. Each item will then be adjusted according to the percentage that it counts toward the final semester grade (see above). After I have calculated the number of points (adjusted for the above percentages), I will add all of them together and translate the grand total into your final letter-grade for the course, using the standard scale: A 93-100, A- 90-92, B+ 87-89, B 83-86, B- 80-82, C+ 77-79, C 73-76, C- 70-72, D+ 65-69, D 60-64, F less than 60.

## EXAMS

Exams will consist of short answer, matching, essay, and listening identification questions. For listening questions, students will be expected to identify the **composer, title, year**, and answer **specific questions** regarding the style of writing or context of the piece. Students may also be played other works not included on the listening list and asked to describe them and to make educated conjectures about their origins, authorship, stylistic characteristics, and techniques used.

## UNIVERSITY ANTI-BIAS STATEMENT

Each member of the University community has the responsibility to foster an environment of acceptance, mutual respect, and understanding. If you are a target or a witness of a bias incident, you are encouraged to contact the URI Bias Response Team ([www.uri.edu/student\\_life/brt](http://www.uri.edu/student_life/brt)) where you will find people and resources to help.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Please inform the instructor should you have any physical or learning disabilities or other special needs so that the appropriate assistance may be offered.

## **PLAGIARISM / CHEATING**

If you are found to have committed plagiarism or are caught cheating on a quiz, you will immediately receive a score of zero (0) for the assignment. Please cite all of your sources properly with footnotes (or endnotes) and bibliography – Chicago Style preferred, but MLA and ALA citations will also be accepted.

## **FIELD TRIP**

**Thursday, Feb. 21 at 8 pm – The Boston New Music Initiative presents *Convergence***

Ryles Jazz Club – 212 Hampshire St., Cambridge, MA

We'll be attending a concert of new works by living composers and I will be performing one of my pieces on the program. More details will be available nearer the date.

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

A more detailed schedule including assignments and listening list will be provided at the beginning of each unit.

**JAN 24: INTRODUCTIONS – DEFINITIONS – EXPLORATIONS**

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**JAN 29: THE BREAKDOWN OF TONALITY – EXPRESSIONISM & EXOTICISM**

**JAN 31: THE BREAKDOWN OF TONALITY – EXPRESSIONISM & STRUCTURE**

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**FEB 5: FOLK, JAZZ, & ART MOVEMENTS IN EUROPE**

**FEB 7: AMERICAN IDENTITY**

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**FEB 12: RESISTANCE IN GERMANY**

**FEB 14: RESISTANCE IN RUSSIA**

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**FEB 19: WWII EXODUS TO USA**

**FEB 21: FIELD TRIP! – Boston New Music Initiative concert, 8 pm**

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**FEB 26: Review session**

**FEB 28: EXAM 1**

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**MAR 5: 1950's: IVORY TOWER, MODERNISM, BIRTH OF THE AVANT-GARDE**

**MAR 7: 1960's EUROPEAN MODERNISM**

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**MAR 12–14: SPRING BREAK!**

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**MAR 19: MORE FOLK AND POPULAR INFLUENCE**

**MAR 21: REDEFINING MUSIC – CAGE AND FLUXUS, EARLY ELECTRONIC MUSIC**

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**MAR 26:** NATURAL SOUNDS / HYBRIDIZATION

**MAR 28:** POLITICS AND MUSIC

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**APR 2:** Review Session

**APR 4: EXAM 2**

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**APR 9:** FREE JAZZ / EXPERIMENTAL

**APR 11: FIRST DRAFT PAPER DUE** – SPECTRAL MUSIC

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**APR 16: GRADUATE STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

**APR 18:** MUSIC AND VISUAL ART

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**APR 23:** MINIMALISM & LATER ELECTRONIC MUSIC

**APR 25:** POST-MINIMALISM – UP & COMING

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**APR 30: FINAL DRAFT PAPER DUE** – Review session

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**FINAL EXAM: Tuesday, MAY 7, 3:30–5:30 pm**

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Response papers**

Reading or listening response papers should be **1–2 pages typed single-spaced in 12-point font**, unless otherwise noted. (B.A.1.1.)

### **Final Paper**

Undergraduate students: 5–7 pages (double-spaced 12 pt font)

Graduates: 10-15 pages (double-spaced 12 pt font) + presentation

Students are welcome to choose one of the options below for the term paper. Topics must be approved by the instructor.

#### **OPTION 1 – ANALYSIS**

Choose a piece from the modern repertoire to research and discuss in your paper, whether from the listening list or another piece of your choosing, and address the following issues:

–Provide a thorough musical analysis of the piece, describing techniques employed and stylistic traits or defining characteristics.

–Describe how the piece fits within the composer’s body of work and career.

–Describe connections/relationships between your chosen piece and other music in relevant historical “streams” – influential works, related contemporary works, later compositions that may have been influenced by your chosen piece. Remember these connections may reach beyond the subgenre of “classical” concert music so use your imagination.

–Discuss any relevant connections between the piece and the context in which it was created: personal, social, political, and/or historical factors, trends in other forms of art, technology, etc.

\*Graduate students should choose more than one piece to discuss, comparing and contrasting each based on a chosen issue (e.g., modern settings of the Mass, use of timbre in musical form, how technology has affected compositional choices, uses of folk material, etc.)

## OPTION 2 – INTERVIEW A LIVING COMPOSER

Choose a living composer (list available on course website) whose music interests you and contact them to request an interview. You may conduct the interview via email or in real time, provided you record the conversation or take good notes. Choose a piece your composer has written to analyze and discuss. After you have completed your analysis, ask the composer to discuss:

- Their identity as a composer: one’s style, influences, process, background
- Discuss the piece(s) you have chosen: Specific influences upon the creation of the piece(s) whether drawn from other music, books, art, personal experience, etc.
- How does each piece fit into the composer’s output (however small)?
- What risks does the composer feel they have taken in each piece? What do they find are common devices they tend to use?
- What hopes/fears/expectations do they have for new music’s future?

Report your findings and provide your own analysis of the pieces, describing any connections/relationships you notice between your chosen piece and other music in relevant historical “streams” – influential works, related contemporary works, later compositions that may have been influenced by your chosen piece (if relevant). Remember these connections may reach beyond the subgenre of “classical” concert music so use your imagination.

**\*Graduate students** should choose more than one piece to discuss, preferably pieces contrasting in ethos and instrumentation. Ask the questions above and provide your own analysis, comparing and contrasting the works to achieve a broader understanding of that composer’s output and development.