Don Wright Faculty of Music, Western University

REPRESENTATIONS OF DEATH IN MUSIC OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

MUSIC 3704A: TOPICS IN ROMANTIC MUSIC
Fall 2016
Course Syllabus

Course meetings: Mondays, 1:30–2:30 p.m. / Thursdays, 1:30–3:30 p.m. (TC-202)
Instructor: Dr. Eva Branda
Office hours: Mondays, 3:00–5:00 p.m. or by appointment (TC-321)
Email: ebranda@uwo.ca
Website: https://owl.uwo.ca/portal

Prerequisites:
Music 1710F/G and Music 2710F/G. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or
written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course
and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no
adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the
necessary prerequisites.

Course Description:
It is often said that nothing is certain in life except death and taxes. As musicologist Keith
Johnston observes, “music has been relatively silent about [taxes]. But death has been a central
concern for art music composers.” Indeed, in the nineteenth century, artists, poets, and
composers became especially preoccupied with death, in the midst of mounting interests in the
supernatural and the incomprehensible.

Keeping the broader cultural context in mind, we will investigate the ways in which composers
interpreted and represented death in music during the Romantic era. At course meetings, we will
study several nineteenth-century works in detail, considering attitudes toward death, the manner
in which dying has been enacted and staged, particularly in the realm of opera as well as various
musical expressions of grief, consolation, and commemoration. Each student will also have the
opportunity to explore a topic of his or her own choosing in the final paper.

Course Objectives:
By the end of this course, students should be able to:
1. Describe with precision the musical features of the works covered in class and place these
   works into historical context
2. Explain the various ways in which composers of the nineteenth century addressed the
topic of death in their music
3. Engage critically with a variety of primary and secondary sources and communicate ideas
effectively both verbally (in presentations and class discussions) and in prose (on exams
   and written assignments)
**Required Materials:**
None. Readings have been posted to the course website as PDFs and are on reserve in the library in hardcopy. (Many of the articles that we will examine may also be accessed electronically on JSTOR.) Recordings are available through the Naxos Music Library.

**NB:** You will not need to purchase any textbooks, course packs, or other materials for this course.

**Preparation:**
This course is conducted as a seminar. Each week, we will investigate a particular topic relating to our course theme. In preparation for Monday classes, you will need to study and become very familiar with the required listening. Thursday classes will be devoted to the discussion of a variety of articles and to in-class presentations. On select Thursdays, you will also be required to hand in a written response to the reading (see course schedule for details).

**Evaluation:**
- Attendance and participation 12%
- Weekly responses 12% (due on select Thursdays; 2% each)
- In-class presentation 10% (scheduled individually throughout the semester)
- Listening Quizzes 10% (October 3 and November 7; 5% each)
- Working Bibliography 3% (October 6)
- Essay Abstract 3% (October 24)
- Final Essay 25% (December 5)
- Final Exam 25% (TBA)

**Attendance and Participation:**
The success of this seminar will depend in large part on your contributions to class discussions. Make sure that you attend every class and that you come prepared, having completed the required readings and listening. While doing the readings, you should be thinking about the ways in which the author’s ideas relate to the course theme. Keep track of any aspects of the readings that you found to be particularly thought-provoking, intriguing, or insightful. Likewise, make note of anything that you considered to be confusing/difficult to understand and/or anything with which you disagreed. Take the same approach when listening to the assigned musical examples for each week. Specific discussion questions will also be posted to the course website on a weekly basis to help guide you through the material. In class, you need to be willing to offer your thoughts/opinions and to ask questions of others. We should all strive to create an environment in class where everyone feels comfortable sharing their ideas. Regular attendance and a curiosity for the topics at hand are essential in order for you to be successful in this course.

**Weekly Responses:**
On seven Thursdays (listed in the course schedule below), it is expected that students will submit a short written response to the day’s reading. You must choose to respond to six of the seven articles that have been assigned (i.e. this means you are allowed to miss one of the article responses without penalty). Your response should be between 250 and 350 words in length and should develop some aspect of the assigned article(s) in a bit of detail. Avoid simply reiterating or summarizing the author’s main points. Strive, instead, to make meaningful connections to
some of the topics discussed in the course and to communicate your opinion on the author’s position. These weekly responses are designed to ensure that you have read/thought about the readings before coming to class and to give quieter students the opportunity to share their ideas with me.

**In-Class Presentation:**
At the start of the semester, you must schedule an in-class presentation to be delivered at one of the Thursday classes. The presentation should be approximately 15 minutes in length. You will be required to provide an in-depth look at an excerpt from one of the pieces included on the syllabus (under Presentation Topics), drawing attention to the ways in which it relates to the week’s theme. This will involve some additional research beyond the assigned readings. You may use any kind of audio and visual aid that you think that will make your presentation more engaging, including CDs, DVDs, PowerPoint, handouts, live performances, etc. The presentation also has a written component (a handout or PowerPoint presentation) that will be submitted to me and made available to the other students in the class.

**Listening Quizzes:**
There will be two listening quizzes scheduled during the semester. These are meant to ensure that you are keeping up with the listening. They will also help to break the listening up into smaller chunks for you, so that the listening section on the Final Exam is less overwhelming.

**Working Bibliography:**
In order to make sure that you begin researching your final paper topic early, you will be required to submit a properly-formatted working bibliography prepared in Chicago style with a minimum of eight scholarly sources on it. Your bibliography must reflect a prudent and critical eye for good sources.

**Essay Abstract:**
You must write an abstract of about 350 words, providing a concise and well-crafted summary of the main argument that you wish to make in your paper. The abstract should give the reader a sense of the focus and scope of your paper as well as the ways in which your study builds on existing scholarship.

**Final Essay:**
The final essay should be approximately 8 to 10 pages in length and it should relate closely to some aspect of the course. Many essay topics will suggest themselves as you complete the weekly readings/listening and engage in class discussions. You are strongly encouraged to choose a topic that interests you and one for which there are sufficient scholarly materials. If you are stuck, please come see me with at least a rough idea of what you would like to do/where your main interests lie. Avoid selecting a piece/topic that was discussed in detail in class.

**Final Exam:**
The final exam will contain a series of short and long answer questions to which you will be required to write thoughtful responses. These questions will draw upon some of the main themes and ideas that were explored in the readings and during in-class discussions. The final exam will also have a listening component to test your familiarity with the required musical examples.
**COURSE POLICIES**

**Communication with Course Instructor:**
If you have any questions or comments related to the content, organization, or any aspect of the course, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am available for consultation during my regular office hours on Thursdays from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. or by appointment. You may also get in touch with me by email (ebranda@uwo.ca) and can expect to get a response within 24 hours.

**Classroom Etiquette:**
During class, please be courteous to your classmates, avoiding any kind of behaviour that may be disruptive or distracting to your colleagues. Make an effort to arrive on time, and be respectful to those who are speaking/contributing to class discussions. Cell phones must be turned off, and laptops may be used for note-taking and accessing course articles/scores ONLY.

**Format and Submission Policies for Written Work:**
The Final Essay must be type-written and double-spaced in 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. All other written work may be single spaced. When submitting an assignment, include your name, your student number, the course name and number, and the date on the assignment. With the exception of the Working Bibliography, all written work must be uploaded to the course website before class and submitted in hard copy at the start of class (9:30 a.m.) on the due date, accompanied by a UWO email printout confirming online submission.

**Late Policy:**
Late Weekly Responses will not be accepted (see above for details). All late Opera Reviews, Working Bibliographies, Essay Abstracts, Essay Outlines, and Final Essays are to be submitted to Linda Kusters (TC-220) and will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day. (Any work submitted after 9:30 a.m. on the due date will be subject to the late penalty.) Assignments will not be accepted after one week.

**Plagiarism and Turnitin:**
Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found at: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergraduate.pdf. If you are unsure of whether or not you are committing a Scholastic Offence, please contact me immediately.

Turnitin.com will be used in this course for both of the required papers (the short assignment and the final essay). All papers submitted to Turnitin.com will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (http://www.turnitin.com).

**Religious accommodation:**
When scheduling of course requirements conflicts with religious holidays that require absence from the university, the student must inform me at the start of the term, so that alternate
arrangements can be made. For religious holidays recognized by the university, please see the multi-faith calendar on the Registrar’s website.

**Accommodation for disabilities:**
If you need accommodation for a disability, please discuss this with me and contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities.

**Accommodation for medical illness:**
The University has a new policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness; [www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeal/accommodations_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeal/accommodations_medical.pdf) states that in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student’s overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the appropriate Dean’s office (i.e. Associate Dean, Undergraduate). In this course, documentation for medical illness will be required even for work worth less than 10% of the total course grade.

**Mental health:**
Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western [http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/](http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (September 8)
Introduction: Defining Romanticism

Listen: Schubert’s Der Tod und das Mädchen (1817), D. 531 and String Quartet No. 14 in D minor, D. 810 (1824), 2nd movement

Read: No required reading.

PART 1: CONTEMPLATING DEATH

Week 2 (September 12 and 15) / (No response due this week)
Death intrigues the Romantic hero


Week 3 (September 19 and 22) / (Response due on Thursday)
The beckoning of the Linden tree: An autobiographical song cycle?

Listen: Schubert’s Winterreise (Winter’s Journey, 1827), D. 911: No. 1 “Gute Nacht” (“Good Night”), No. 5 “Der Lindenbaum” (“The Linden Tree”), and No. 24 “Der Leiermann” (“The Organ-Grinder Man”); Schumann’s Dichterliebe (A Poet’s Love, 1840), Op. 48: No. 1 “Im wunderschönen Monat Mai” (“In the Wonderfully Fair Month of May”) & No. 16 “Die alten, bösen Lieder” (“The old, angry songs”)


Presentation Topics: Schumann’s Frauenlieb und –leben [A Woman’s Love and Life] (1840); Mussorgsky’s Songs and Dances of Death (1875–77)
Week 4 (September 26 and 29) / (Response due on Thursday)

A symphonic suicide note?

**Listen:** Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74 *Pathétique* (1893), 1st movement and 4th movement


**Presentation Topics:** Berlioz’s *Roméo et Juliette* (1839); Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* (1830)

Week 5 (October 3 and 6) / (Listening Quiz on Monday / Working bibliography due on Thursday)

Wordless ruminations on death

**Listen:** Richard Strauss’s *Tod und Verklärung (Death and Transfiguration)*, Op. 24 (1888–89), especially 2nd movement; Sibelius’s *Valse Triste* for *Kuolema (Death)*, Op. 44 (1903–4)


**Presentation Topics:** Richard Strauss’s *Also Sprach Zarathustra [Thus Spoke Zarathustra]*, Op. 30 (1896); Liszt’s *Totentanz [Death Dance]*, S. 126 (1847–62)

**PART II: THE ACT OF DYING**

Week 6 (October 13) / (No class on Monday: Thanksgiving / Response due on Thursday)

The tubercular heroine: Disease and death

**Listen:** Verdi’s *La Traviata (The Fallen Woman)*, 1853), Act II: “Non sapete quale affetto” (“You don’t know yet how I love him”) and Act III: “Signora, che t’accadde?” (“My lady! What has happened?”) to the end of the opera


**Presentation Topics:** Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835); Offenbach’s *Les Contes d’Hoffmann [Tales of Hoffmann]* (1881)
Week 7 (October 17 and 20) / (Response due on Thursday)

The art of dying on the operatic stage

**Listen:** Puccini’s *La Bohème* (1896), Act III: “Mimi è una civetta” (“Mimi’s a heartless maiden”) and Act IV: “Musetta… Cè Mimi” (“Musetta… It’s Mimi”) to the end of the opera


**Presentation Topics:** Puccini’s *Tosca* (1899–1900); Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* (1904–6); Bizet’s *Carmen* (1875)

Week 8 (October 24) / (Essay abstract due on Monday / No class on Thursday: Fall Study Break)

Staging suicide

**Listen:** Jules Massenet, *Werther* (1892), Act III: “Pourquoi me réveiller” (“Awaken me no more”) and Act IV, 2nd tableau: “La mort de Wether” (“The death of Werther”)


**Presentation Topics:** None.

Week 9 (October 31 and November 3) / (Response due on Thursday)

Living while dying and desiring death


**Presentation Topics:** Wagner’s *Parsifal* (1882); Verdi’s *Otello* (1887)
**PART III: EXPRESSIONS OF GRIEF, CONSOLATION, AND COMMEMORATION**

**Public mourning: Funeral marches as expressions of collective grief**

**Listen:** Beethoven’s Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, *Eroica*, Op. 55 (1803), 2nd movement; Chopin’s Piano Sonata No. 2 in B-flat minor, Op. 35 (1837), 3rd movement “Funeral March”


**Presentation Topics:** Berlioz’s *La Damnation de Faust*, Op. 24 (1846); Saint-Saëns’s *Danse macabre*, Op. 40 (1874);

**Week 11 (November 14 and 17) / (Response due on Thursday)**

**Exploring the requiem mass tradition: Music offering comfort?**

**Listen:** Brahms’s *Ein deutsches Requiem (A German Requiem)*, Op. 45 (1868), No. 1 “Selig sind, die da Leid tragen” (“Blessed are they who bear suffering”), No. 5 “Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit” (“Now, you have sadness”), and No. 7 “Selig sind die Toten” (“Blessed are the dead”); Fauré’s Requiem, Op. 48 (1877–1900), “Libera Me” and “In Paradisum”


**Presentation Topics:** Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem* (1874); Dvořák’s Requiem, Op. 89 (1891)

**Week 12 (November 21 and 24) / (No response due this week)**

**Music as a means of paying tribute to the dead**

**Listen:** Dvořák’s Cello Concerto in B minor, Op. 104 (1894–95), 2nd and 3rd movements; Ravel’s *Le tombeau de Couperin*, Suite for Piano (1914–17), Prélude and Menuet


**Presentation Topics:** Liszt’s “Funérailles” from *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses [Poetic and Religious Harmonies]* (1849)
Week 13 (November 28 and December 1) / (No response due this week)

Reliving the trauma of loss and finding solace

**Listen:** Mahler’s *Kindertotenlieder* (*Songs on the Death of Children*, 1901–4): No. 1: “Nun will die Sonn’ so hell aufgeh’n” (“Now will the sun so brightly rise”), No. 2: “Nun seh’ ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen” (“Now I see well why with such dark flames”), and No. 5 “In diesem Wetter” (“In this Weather”)


**Presentation Topics:** Brahms’s *Vier ernste Gesänge* [*Four Serious Songs*], Op. 121

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Week 14 (December 5) / (Final essay due on Monday)

Conclusions

**Read:** None.

**Listen:** No required listening.

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**FINAL EXAM PERIOD (December 10–21)**

* The course syllabus may be subject to minor changes.
Course Reserves/Recommended Sources


