Course Description

“Where words leave off, music begins,” wrote the German poet, Heinrich Heine. This is especially true when we experience events that the human mind struggles to process or verbalize—those with the potential to induce trauma, where music has frequently proven a powerful mechanism for documentation, examination, memorialization, and even healing. This course examines theories of trauma, post-traumatic stress, resilience, and post-traumatic growth in light of their potential for aiding interpretation of musical works that deal with potentially traumatic experiences, both individual and collective. We then undertake an overview of some of the existing literature on music and trauma, considering folk, popular, and classical works. Ultimately students will apply theories of trauma to trauma-related works in their own scholarship.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes

1. Gain an understanding of how theoretical models from other fields, including those from beyond the humanities, can be applied in the analysis and interpretation of musical works.
2. Develop a more holistic approach to the study of music, transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries both within and beyond music scholarship, while learning how to draw relevant research materials and analytical models from across an array of disciplines.
3. Improve skills needed to be successful as an academic—specifically writing and presentation skills.

Readings

Readings will be available in electronic form through the “course readings” section of the library website. (On the home page, select “course readings” and then our course number.) That page also has details of books and recordings placed on reserve for the course. All books from which readings are taken will be on 2-hour reserve in the library.

Evaluation

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<th>Component</th>
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<td>Attendance and participation</td>
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<td>Trauma theory exercise</td>
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<td>Leading discussion of a reading</td>
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<td>Final presentation</td>
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<td>Final paper</td>
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Assignments
1. Write a short essay that proposes a model for analyzing one of the songs assigned for our January 31 class utilizing an existing theory of trauma and prepare a 5-minute overview of your claims to present in class on January 31. 800-1200 words. Submit by email to Prof. Ansari as a Word document attachment before class on January 31.
2. Reading discussion, 20 minutes. Choose one of our music-related readings and lead class discussion on this reading for 20 minutes. You should prepare some short contextualizing introductory material and then compose a set of questions or exercises that will encourage a fruitful and engaging discussion of the reading.
3. Final project. Your final project should analyze a musical work or works (any genre; any time period) using theories of trauma. i) Give a 20-minute presentation on your final project in one of our final two classes. ii) Submit the full, final paper by email (Word document) to Prof. Ansari by 5pm April 23. 15-20 pages.

Course policies
- This course is all about discussion and participation. If you miss classes or are silent in class, this grade will be affected. If you cannot attend class for a degree-related or medical reason, please let me know in advance. Please come to each class having carefully considered the material listed in the syllabus and with plenty of critical perspectives to share with your colleagues. I encourage lively debate in class, so a wide variety of viewpoints will be very well received. I am always glad to hear opinions that differ from my own.
- Students that are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.
- Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted 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).
- Students that have themselves experienced trauma may find some of our class material triggering. I encourage any student experiencing discomfort with course material to contact me directly.
Class schedule

January 10: Theories of Trauma


January 17: Theories of Resilience and Post-Traumatic Growth


January 24: Cultural Trauma and Music


January 31: Analyzing Trauma in Folk Music

Due today: essay and presentation theorizing folk songs. Use a song from one of these collections for your project: Ensemble Hilka, Chornobyl Songs Project and Aleksander Kulisiewicz, Songs from the Depths of Hell, both available from
Smithsonian Global Sound through the library website. Also see liner notes under “related documents.”


**February 7: Music and memorialization; Secondary Musical Witnessing: the Politics of Representation**


Listen to John Adams, *On the Transmigration of Souls* and watch “The Pianist” and “Wunderkinder”.

**February 14: Gender and Sexuality-Related Trauma**


**February 21: NO CLASS (Reading week)**

**February 28: Traumatic Memory**


March 14: Auditory Trauma and Torture

March 21: Applied Ethnomusicology and Healing

March 28 and April 4: Presentations