MUSIC 3762B

Music and Politics

Instructor: Dr. April Morris
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Course Description:
This class will investigate the complex relationship between music and politics using twentieth- and twenty-first-century examples that span an array of genres and countries. Over the course of four thematic units, we will explore some of the ways in which music and politics interact, considering not only musical works that were intended to express political messages, but also the ways in which performance itself can be considered a political act, how socio-political considerations have impacted the lives and work of composers, and how music has been used to advance political agendas. Our discussions will be informed by analysis of musical works and performances as well as close examination of scholarship on music and politics. Ultimately, we will reach a richer understanding of music’s ability to respond to and influence its socio-political environment, whether it is used as an instrument of propaganda or one of resistance.

Objectives:
1. Gain an understanding of some of the ways in which music can encapsulate and express political attitudes and positions, and of how music is shaped by and contributes to its socio-political environment.
2. Become familiar with a variety of politically significant musical works, composers, and performers from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
3. Develop critical thinking skills and the ability to assess music in intellectual and socio-cultural contexts.
4. Identify key debates in contemporary musicology concerning music and politics.
5. Evaluate discussions of music and politics in mainstream media sources.
6. Develop skills in scholarly research and academic writing.

Course Materials:
All readings are available through the course OWL site. If you need books that turn out to be in high demand to be placed on reserve, please let me know.

Evaluation:
Attendance and Participation 15%
Media Review 20%
In-Class Presentation 20%
Final Paper Meeting 5%
Final Paper Outline 10%
Final Paper 30%
Assignment Summary:

1. **Media Review**: (750-1000 words, submit via OWL by **Thursday, February 15th**) Write an analysis of how an opera and its performances have been viewed in the media. How is the relationship between music and politics addressed in the media? What sorts of arguments are employed? What role do the voices of the composers/librettists/performers/producers of this opera play in this discussion?
   
   Choose one of the following operas:
   
   - *An American Soldier* (Huang Ruo/David Henry Huang)
   - *Blue* (Jeanine Tesori/Tazewell Thompson)
   - *The Central Park Five* (Anthony Davis/Richard Wesley)
   - *Death of Klinghoffer* (John Adams/Alice Goodman)
   - *Louis Riel* (Harry Somers/Mavor Moore)
   - *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Philip Glass/Christopher Hampton)

2. **In-Class Presentation**: a 15-minute presentation with a colleague on a text related to the topic of the week. Both partners should be equally involved in preparing and presenting your work. Explain the argument of your assigned text to the class and demonstrate how it relates to the themes we will be discussing in class that week. These presentations will be scheduled throughout the term. Presentation readings are included in the course schedule and will be assigned in the first week.

3. **Final Paper**: (2500-3000 words, submit via OWL by **Friday, April 5th**) Write a research paper on an example of music and politics that was not discussed in class. Your focus could be a musical work, a composer, a performer, or a performance, so long as it is connected to politics in some way. Your paper should advance a clear argument and be built on solid academic research. In preparation for your final paper, students will submit a Final Paper Outline (submit via OWL by **Thursday, March 7th**) and attend a 20-minute Final Paper Meeting (by **Friday, March 22nd** at the latest).

Course Policies:

i) **Course Prerequisites**: Music 2750F/G or the former Music 2710F/G and the former Music 2711F/G. Unless you have either the prerequisites 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.

ii) **Grading scale**: A+=90-100%, A=80-89%, B=70-79%, C=60-69%, D=50-59%, F=0-49%.

iii) **Academic Consideration for Student Absence & Missing Work (≥10%)**: Students are responsible for making up any missed classes or assignments as soon as possible. The University recognizes that a student’s ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. Academic Consideration provides students with consistent, fair, and pedagogically appropriate consideration, without compromising the academic integrity of the course or program, when they have been unable to complete some component of a course due to short-term extenuating circumstances. Students who have long-term or chronic medical conditions (physical or mental) that may impede their ability to complete academic responsibilities are directed to seek Academic Accommodation through Accessible Education (Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities).
Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the end of the period of absence covered, to the Academic Counselling unit or Office of the Associate Dean, Undergraduate (TC210), of the student’s Home Faculty together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the academic consideration being requested. Students are directed to read the Senate Policy on Academic Consideration for Medical Illness at the following website for further details regarding various requirements and procedures for the supporting documentation:  https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration.pdf

Whenever possible, students who require academic consideration should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and their Academic Counselling office in a timely manner.

iv) Academic Consideration for Missing Work (<10%): In cases where students miss work that is worth less than 10% of the total course grade due to medical illness or compassionate grounds, they may request accommodation from the course instructor. Students who have been denied accommodation by an instructor may appeal this decision to the Associate Dean’s office but will be required to present appropriate documentation.

v) Academic Offences: Submission of work with which you have received help from someone else (other than the course instructor or TA) is an example of plagiarism, which is considered a major academic offence. 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/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

vi) Mental Health & Wellness: Students that are in emotional/mental distress should refer to the Health and Wellness at Western page (https://www.uwo.ca/health/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help or to go to the Wellness Education Centre located in Thames Hall room 2170. Students in crisis in need of immediate care are directed to go directly to Student Health Services in Thames Hall 2170 or to click on the big green “I Need Help Now” button on the Health and Wellness page above.

vii) Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: Students work with Accessible Education which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

viii) Religious Accommodation: Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays (other than statutory holidays), and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. The Diversity Calendar from the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion provides information on multifaith, multicultural and diversity related holidays and observances and links to resources for more information. https://www.edi.uwo.ca/resources/2816-2023-Diversity-Calendar-PDF.pdf

ix) Contingency Plan: Although the intent is for this course to be delivered in-person, should any university-declared emergency require some or all of the course to be delivered online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience), the course will adapt accordingly. The grading scheme will not change. Any assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

x) Gender-Based and Sexual Violence: Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, either recently or in the past, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca or call 519 661-3568.
xi) **Electronic Devices in Classrooms:** The in-class use of electronic devices (other than for instructor-approved in-class uses) is expressly prohibited. Students found guilty of disrupting the class with electronic devices will be asked to leave the class and may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.

xii) **Plagiarism Detection Software Usage:** 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, which includes AI writing detection tools. All papers submitted for such checking 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 (https://www.turnitin.com/).

xiii) This course is all about **discussion and participation:** attendance and participation represent 15% of your grade. If you cannot attend class for a degree-related or medical reason, please let me know in advance. Otherwise, your participation grade may be affected if you miss classes or are silent in class. Please come to class having done the reading and listening assignments and be prepared to share your ideas and questions with the class. Students who are not comfortable speaking in class are welcome to speak with me regarding alternate methods of participation.

xiv) **Controversial or disturbing content and consideration for others:** In this course we will discuss material that is controversial, disturbing, and potentially polarizing. The topic of music and politics is intrinsically connected to controversial issues like nationalism, racism, sexism, violence, and intolerance. This course will not shy away from discussing controversial issues. However, I ask that we all show respect for each other’s views and offer our own views in a sensitive and respectful manner. I do not take it lightly that course content and discussions have the potential to offend or upset some students, and I expect us to address this head on by working together. I encourage any student experiencing discomfort with course material to contact me directly.

xv) **Policy on flexible deadlines for written work:** This course follows a flexible deadline policy for submissions of written work (this does not apply to scheduled in-class presentations). The recommended deadlines included in this course outline are intended to distribute your work evenly throughout the term; however, students are welcome to contact me to arrange alternate deadlines for any written assignment. The hard deadline for submitting late Media Reviews or Final Paper Outlines is Friday, March 22nd. The hard deadline for submitting Final Papers is Monday, April 8th. Late assignments will not be accepted after these hard deadlines except in cases covered by the policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absence & Missing Work (≥10%) (see policy iii).

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### Class Schedule

**Tuesday, January 9th – Introduction**

**Thursday, January 11th – Understanding the relationship between music and politics**

**Reading:**


I: POLITICAL MUSIC

Tuesday, January 16\textsuperscript{th} – Political Music: Implicit and Explicit Messages

Reading:


Thursday, January 18\textsuperscript{th} – War Support

Reading:


Tuesday, January 23\textsuperscript{rd} – War Protest

Reading:


Presentations:


Thursday, January 25\textsuperscript{th} – Proletarian Music and the Composer’s Collective

Reading:


Listen to Elie Siegmeister, “A Strange Funeral in Braddock” (1933)

Tuesday, January 30\textsuperscript{th} – Music and Racial Identity

Reading:


Listen to Billie Holiday, “Strange Fruit”

Presentations:


Thursday, February 1st – Gender and Women’s Voices

Reading:


Listen to Barbara Pentland, Disasters of the Sun (1973)

Presentation:


II. THE POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE

Tuesday, February 6th – Political Interpretations

Reading:


Presentation:

Thursday, February 8th – Musical Diplomacy

Reading:


Presentation:


Tuesday, February 13th – Representation and the Politics of Identity

Reading:


Listen to Michael Callen’s recording of “Glitter and be Gay”

Presentation:


Thursday, February 15th – Sonic Disobedience **Media Review due at 5pm**

Reading:


—Reading Week—

Tuesday, February 27th – Political Performances

Reading:


Presentations:


III. THE POLITICS OF COMPOSING

Thursday, February 29th – Composing in Nazi Germany

Reading:


Tuesday, March 5th – Musical Nationalism

Reading:


Presentations:


Thursday, March 7th – Music and National Identity in Canada

Reading:


Tuesday, March 12th – Shostakovich and Socialist Realism

Reading:


**Thursday, March 14th – Composers in Positions of Power**

**Reading:**


**Tuesday, March 19th – U.S. Composers and the Red Scare**

**Reading:**


**IV. THE USE OF MUSIC IN POLITICAL CONTEXTS**

**Thursday, March 21st – Sonic Violence and Torture**

**Reading:**


**Presentation:**


**Tuesday, March 26th – Government, Broadcasting, and Propaganda**

**Reading:**


**Presentations:**


**Thursday, March 28th – Inspiring the Troops**

Reading:


Presentation:


**Tuesday, April 2nd – Music in Political Campaigns**

Reading:


**Thursday, April 4th – Conclusions: Music and Politics/Music as Politics**

Reading:


**Final Paper due Friday, April 5th at 5pm**