

**Music 9739B: Cognitive Musicology**  
Don Wright Faculty of Music, Western University  
Winter 2021 / Online via Zoom (Link on OWL)

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan De Souza

Email: [jdesou22@uwo.ca](mailto:jdesou22@uwo.ca)

### **Overview**

While music scholars examine cultural and theoretical aspects of musical activity, psychologists and neuroscientists probe it for insights about the mind and brain. Humanistic and scientific approaches to music are often disconnected. This can lead to experiments with flawed stimuli or musicological writings with problematic assumptions about perception and cognition. Yet these approaches also complement each other: musical questions can inspire empirical studies, and suggestive experimental results prompt musicological interpretation and application. In this course, we will explore interactions between musicology and the cognitive sciences, from nineteenth-century responses to Helmholtz to recent work in music neuroscience. Throughout, we will critically examine various aspects of musical activity—as well as the disciplinary lenses through which we study it.

### **Outcomes**

By the end of this course, students will be conversant with current topics and methods in cognitive musicology, and they will have a sense of the field's history. They will be able to critically evaluate scientific and humanistic studies of music perception and cognition. And they will have developed skills related to interdisciplinary research and communication.

### **Materials**

Readings and resources will be available via OWL.

### **Evaluation**

This course will involve intensive reading, and I expect you to come to our synchronous sessions prepared for in-depth discussion. You will need to read carefully and to take detailed notes. Preparation will be evaluated in two ways. First, you will periodically be

asked to prepare brief in-class activities. Second, I will often ask you to write three to five questions that respond to the assigned reading. You will share these questions on our OWL forum, no later than noon on the day before our meeting.

Throughout the term, you will create one or more “protocols.” A protocol is a written document, 2–4 pages long, that reflects on in-class discussion, with relevant quotes from the week’s readings and follow-up questions. Rather than a mere summary, it should provide a synthetic, critical overview of the issues at hand. Protocols are always due in the next class and will be shared at the beginning of class.

You will also give two twenty-minute presentations. The first will introduce a topic that will not be studied by the class as a whole, by reviewing 3–5 articles. For this presentation, you will prepare a handout that includes a short annotated bibliography. The second presentation, near the end of the term, will give a preliminary version of your final project. You will sign up for protocol and presentation dates at our first meeting.

Your research project can take various forms, including a proposal for an empirical study or a more theoretical investigation. Preliminary abstracts (250 words, maximum) will be circulated after the Spring Reading Week, and we will discuss them in class. Additionally, you will submit a draft for peer review and will provide a review for one of your colleagues.

These elements will combine in your final grade as follows:

Preparation	10%
Protocols	10%
Presentations	30% (2 × 15%)
Research project	50%

## **Policies**

*Accommodation for Medical Illness.* The Graduate Program in Music recognizes that a student’s ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by physical or mental illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. The Graduate Program in Music further recognizes that physical or mental illness situations are deeply personal, and respects the need for privacy and confidentiality in these matters. 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.

*Academic Offences.* 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 [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf).

*Health and Wellness.* As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help students achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing a graduate degree. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone in whom they feel comfortable confiding, such as a faculty supervisor, a program advisor, or the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies). Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html).

*Netiquette.* Of course, I expect that you will be professional and respectful of your colleagues online, just as you would be in person. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is an essential part of the scholarly environment.

### **Important Dates**

January 11	Classes Begin
February 15–19	Spring Reading Week (no classes)
February 26	Project Abstract Due
March 26	Project Draft Due
April 2	Good Friday (no classes)
April 12	Last Day of Classes
April 23	Final Project Due