Overview

“Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.”
— Wittgenstein (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, Proposition 7)

“Inexpressible, many-sided idea, will you let it be so explained?
Shall Aron, my mouth, fashion this image?
Then I have fashioned an image too, false, as an image must be.
Thus am I defeated! Thus, all was but madness that I believed before,
And can and must not be given voice. O word, thou word, that I lack!”
— Schoenberg (Moses und Aron, Act II)

“I wanted to write that my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have not written. And precisely this second part is the important one.”
— Wittgenstein (letter to Ludwig von Ficker)

What are the limits of language? Are there inexpressible thoughts? What does it mean to represent an idea? This course will explore these and related questions in Wittgenstein’s early language philosophy and Schoenberg’s music aesthetics. We will examine the compositional, ethical, and aesthetic convergences between Wittgenstein’s Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus and Schoenberg’s Moses und Aron—two famously intractable works that illuminate each other while casting light on the project of modernism/modernity itself.
**Course Texts**

Electronic copies of most texts will be provided, but you may wish to buy the following:


AbeBooks.com is a good option for discounted texts.

**Requirements**

Assigned readings, class discussions, two presentations with written summaries, one extended essay.

**Evaluation**

- Essay (20 pages): 60% [thesis statement: 5%; bibliography: 10%; essay: 45%]
- Presentations: 25% [10% + 15%]
- Participation: 15%

**Essay** (approx. 5000 words)
Your topic should treat some aspect of (musical) language and/or representation in Schoenberg and/or Wittgenstein. A thesis statement and bibliography are due on Nov. 12. The final essay and bibliography are due Dec. 3.

**Presentations** (25 and 40 minutes)
Generally, you’ll begin with ideas from the readings, but feel free to direct these toward interests of your own. Your presentations are an opportunity to steer the course “off course” and teach us something while you’re at it. 750- and 1000-word overviews will be due one week after your first and second presentations.

**Participation**
I expect you to come prepared and to make productive contributions to each class. Should you miss more than two classes for undocumented reasons, you will forfeit this portion of your grade.

**Learning outcomes**

Students will develop an understanding of aesthetic and philosophical issues in early 20th-century music and culture. Students will analyze and evaluate primary and secondary sources in Schoenberg and Wittgenstein scholarship. Students will apply interdisciplinary insights in philosophy and musicology to general questions of modernism and modernity. Students will demonstrate what they have learned by producing a well-organized and well-written research project.

**Statement on accommodation for medical illness**

"In order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing ten percent 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 office of the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies). Students with special learning needs or other circumstances are asked to inform the instructor as soon as possible so that necessary accommodations can be considered." University policy regarding medical illness can be found here: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf)
Statement on 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 here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Statement on mental health

“As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western Graduate Instructional Information, 2019–20 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 here: https://www.uwo.ca/health/crisis.html
READINGS

Week 1 (9/10): Introduction

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRI_ZSh6iF4)

Week 2 (9/17): Schoenberg/Wittgenstein


Week 3 (9/24): Schoenberg/Wittgenstein


Week 4 (10/1): Schoenberg/Wittgenstein


Week 5 (10/8): Schoenberg/Wittgenstein


Week 6 (10/15): Wittgenstein


Week 7 (10/22): Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus. Translated by C. K. Ogden [and F. P. Ramsey].
Week 8 (10/29): Wittgenstein

Steiner, George. “Schoenberg’s ‘Moses and Aaron’.” Encounter 24, no. 6 (1965): 40–46.

Reading Week (11/5): No class

Week 9 (11/12): Schoenberg


Week 10 (11/19): Schoenberg


Week 11 (11/26): Schoenberg


Week 12 (12/3): Schoenberg