

## **Music 9739B: Cognitive Musicology**

Don Wright Faculty of Music, Western University

Winter 2023 / Mondays, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm / Talbot College, Room 340

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan De Souza

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Office hours: Thursdays, 10:30–11:30 am (Talbot College, Room 117)

### **Overview**

While music scholars examine cultural and theoretical aspects of musical activity, psychologists and neuroscientists probe it for insights into 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 meetings prepared for in-depth discussion. You will need to read carefully and 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.

You will create a *summary* for one of our meetings. The summary 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. It should provide a synthetic, critical overview of the issues at hand. Summaries are always one week after the class and will be shared via OWL.

You will also give two *presentations*. The first will be fifteen minutes long and will introduce a topic that will not be studied by the class as a whole, by reviewing 3 articles of your choice. For this presentation, you will prepare a handout that includes a short annotated bibliography. The second presentation, near the end of the term, will involve a ten-minute lightning talk about your research project. You will sign up for summary and presentation dates at our first meeting.

Your research project can take various forms, including (but not limited to) a design for an experiment; a critical essay on a topic related to music cognition; a cognition-inspired analysis of a particular piece, performance, or musical corpus; or a proposal for evidence-based pedagogical or practice techniques. Preliminary abstracts (250 words, maximum) will be due after the Spring Reading Week (February 27), and we will discuss them in class. You will submit a draft for peer review (March 27) and will provide a review for one of your colleagues (April 6). The final version of your project will be due on April 21.

These elements will combine in your final grade as follows:

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

## **Policies**

*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.* Students who are in emotional or mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

*Accommodation for Medical Illness.* The Graduate Program in Music recognizes that a student's ability to fulfill academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by illness or injury. To ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's course grade shall be granted only in cases where there is documentation indicating that the student could not reasonably be expected to meet the academic responsibilities. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the office of the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies), not to the course instructor.

*Accessibility.* Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction. 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.

*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](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](mailto:support@uwo.ca) or call 519-661-3568.

### **Important Dates**

January 9	Classes Begin
February 18–26	Spring Reading Week (no classes)
February 27	Project Abstract Due
March 27	Project Draft Due
April 6	Peer Review Due
April 7	Good Friday (no classes)
April 10	Last Day of Classes
April 21	Final Project Due