

Studies in Transformational Theory

M9520
Fall 2024

Dr. Catherine Nolan
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Office hours by appointment

Course description

Transformational theory refers to a branch of music theory whose origins lie in David Lewin's influential treatise, *Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations* (1987). A focus on musical transformations encourages analysts and composers to think abstractly in terms of diverse musical spaces and the dynamic processes and relations by which a musical object is transformed to another. Over the past four decades, transformational theory has contributed significantly to a wide range of scholarship in analysis of harmonic practices in a variety of musical repertoires across different eras and cultures including nineteenth-century art music, twentieth- and twenty-first century art music, popular music, film music, and more.

Transformational theory offers constructive resources for the analysis and composition of music.

Course materials

Course materials will be available through OWL Brightspace.

Learning outcomes

As a result of their active participation in the course, students will:

- learn the accessible mathematical formalisms behind musical transformations.
- develop skills in abstract thought and communication.
- develop an appreciation for the repertoire-neutrality of transformational theory.
- deepen their understanding about the reciprocal nature of music theory and analysis.
- learn to participate in scholarly and professional discourse about transformational theory.

Course requirements

Weekly preparation (reading assignments, listening, viewing videos, etc.), oral reports on supplementary readings, final analysis or composition project (proposal, presentation, final project)

Evaluation

Active participation in class activities and productive contributions to class discussion of the assigned weekly readings are expected. Students must come prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Some of the readings will be challenging; we will take many opportunities to discuss the challenges and rewards of academic reading and writing.

Students will give one short presentation (c. 15 minutes each) on a reading selected from a list of supplementary readings to be provided after the first week of the course.

The remainder of the course requirements will revolve around a final analysis or composition project on an approved topic. The project may be either:

- an analytical study from a transformational perspective of a single piece of music from any repertoire or possibly a pair of pieces for comparison (a paper of c. 2000-2500 words plus musical examples).

or

- a short original composition, most likely for piano, based on a transformational model and explanatory essay of about c. 1000 words plus a score (for graduate students in composition).

Note: Students are welcome to propose an alternative type of final project. Please speak to C. Nolan as early as possible.

Proposal for the final project

The proposal should be a brief (1-page) overview of your project plus references to secondary literature you will cite (c. 3-5 sources). Please submit it by Friday, November 8.

Presentations on the final projects will take place during the final scheduled course meeting. Each presentation should be 15-20 minutes in length. (If needed because of the number of presentations, some presentations will take place a week earlier.) The final project is due on Friday, December 13.

The breakdown of the course requirements described above in your final grade is shown below:

Participation	20%
Oral report on supplementary readings	20%
Final project proposal (due Nov. 8)	10%
Final project presentation	10%
Final project (due Dec. 13)	40%

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Mandatory statements

Enrollment Restrictions

Enrolment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Don Wright Faculty of Music, as well as any student who has obtained special permission to enrol in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf.

Statement on Health and Wellness

Students who are in emotional or mental distress should refer to Mental Health Support at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Accessible Education Western

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.

Statement on 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 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.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools/software/apps is unacceptable in this course. Please consult the instructor if you have questions.

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Readings

In addition to the assigned readings, further materials including supplementary notes, videos, or images will be made available by the instructor.

Sept. 10	<p>Representations of musical space</p> <p>Hook, Julian. 2002. "Hearing With Our Eyes: The Geometry of Musical Space." In <i>Bridges: Mathematical Connections in Art, Music, and Science Conference Proceedings</i>, ed. Reza Sarhangi, 123-34. Bridges Conference Proceedings: Towson, Maryland.</p> <p>Devlin, Keith. 2000. "Finding Your Inner Mathematician: As the Abstraction Turns." <i>The Education Digest</i> 66.4: 63-66.</p>
Sept. 17	<p>Formalisms: Cartesian (intervallic) and transformational perspectives</p> <p>Hook, Julian. 2023. <i>Exploring Musical Spaces: A Synthesis of Mathematical Approaches</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3-18 and 173-79. [<i>pitch spaces, pitch-class spaces, definition of a group</i>]</p> <p>Rings, Steven. 2011. "Intervals, Transformations, and Tonal Analysis." In <i>Tonality and Transformation</i>, 9-27. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Morris, Robert. 2001. "Groups." <i>Class Notes for Advanced Atonal Music Theory</i>, 9-18. Lebanon, NH: Frog Peak Music.</p>
Sept. 24	<p>The Tonnetz and Neo-Riemannian transformations (P, L, R)</p> <p>Hook, Julian. 2023. <i>Exploring Musical Spaces: A Synthesis of Mathematical Approaches</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 22-25. [<i>Tonnetz spaces</i>]</p> <p>Cohn, Richard. 1998. "Introduction to Neo-Riemannian Theory: A Survey and Historical Perspective." <i>Journal of Music Theory</i> 42.2: 167-80.</p> <p>Siciliano, Michael. 2005. "Two Neo-Riemannian Analyses." <i>College Music Symposium</i> 45: 81-107.</p>
Oct. 1	<p>Triadic transformations and hexatonic cycles</p> <p>Hook, Julian. 2023. <i>Exploring Musical Spaces: A Synthesis of Mathematical Approaches</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 300-03, 310-13. [<i>uniform triadic transformations, additional neo-Riemannian transformations</i>]</p>

	<p>Cohn, Richard. 2012. "Hexatonic Cycles." In <i>Audacious Euphony: Chromaticism and the Triad's Second Nature</i>, 17-41. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 17-41.</p> <p>Harrison, Daniel. 2011. "The New Riemann: Same as the Old Riemann?" In <i>The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Riemannian Music Theories</i>, ed. Edward Gollin and Alexander Rehding, 548-53. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p>
Oct. 8	<p>Transformations in diverse musical repertoires</p> <p>Yu, Man-Ching Donald. 2013. "Some Transformational Aspects of Pentatonicism in Post-Tonal Chinese Music." <i>International Journal of Contemporary Composition</i> 9: 44-63.</p> <p>Momii, Toru. 2020. "A Transformational Approach to Gesture in Shō Performance." <i>Music Theory Online</i> 26.4.</p> <p>Roeder, John. 2020. "Interactions of Folk Melody and Transformational (Dis)continuities in Chen Yi's <i>Ba Ban</i> (1999)." <i>Music Theory Online</i> 26.3.</p>
Oct. 15	No meeting / Fall Reading Week
Oct. 22	<p>Visual representation, graphs, and networks</p> <p>Hook, Julian. 2023. <i>Exploring Musical Spaces: A Synthesis of Mathematical Approaches</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 79-81. [graphs]</p> <p>De Souza, Jonathan. 2020. "Instrumental Transformations in Heinrich Biber's Mystery Sonatas." <i>Music Theory Online</i> 26.4.</p> <p>Hanninen, Dora A. 2019. "Images, Visualization, and Representation." In <i>The Oxford Handbook of Critical Concepts in Music Theory</i>, ed. Alexander Rehding and Steven Rings, 699-741. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p>
Oct. 29	<p>Transformations in film music</p> <p>Neumeyer, David and James Buhler. 2001. "Analytical and Interpretative Approaches to Film Music (I): Analysing the Music." In <i>Film Music: Critical Approaches</i>, ed. Kevin J. Donnelly, 16-38. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.</p> <p>Murphy, Scott. 2013. "Transformational Theory and the Analysis of Film Music." In <i>The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies</i>, ed. David Neumeyer, 1-31. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p>

	<p>Lehman, Frank. 2018. "Neo-Riemannian Theory at the Movies." In <i>Hollywood Harmony: Musical Wonder and the Sound of Cinema</i>, 85-126. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p>
Nov. 5	<p>Extended transformational analyses</p> <p>Rings, Steven. 2011. "Brahms, Intermezzo in A major, op. 118, no.2." In <i>Tonality and Transformation</i>, 285-202. Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Heetderks, David. 2011. "A Tonal Revolution in Fifths and Semitones: Aaron Copland's <i>Quiet City</i>." <i>Music Theory Online</i> 17.2.</p>
Nov. 12	<p>Contextual transformations</p> <p>Pearsall, Edward. 2004. "Transformational Streams: Unraveling Melodic Processes in Twentieth-Century Motivic Music." <i>Journal of Music Theory</i> 48.1: 69-98.</p> <p>Gillespie, Jeffrey L. 1992. "Motivic Transformations and Networks in Schoenberg's 'Nacht' from 'Pierrot Lunaire'." <i>Intégral</i> 6: 34-65.</p>
Nov. 19	<p>No meeting / CN must be away. We will discuss as a group how to make up this time.</p>
Nov. 26	<p>Retracing the pathways</p> <p>Brower, Candace. 2008. "Paradoxes of Pitch Space." <i>Music Analysis</i> 27.1: 51-106.</p> <p>Additional reading(s) to be determined.</p>
Dec. 3	<p>Student presentations on final projects</p>