

**Music Education Philosophy and Historical Inquiry Class 9641
Winter 2026**

Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University
Course Outline

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“Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough
to assume responsibility for it.” (Hannah Arendt, 1954)

COURSE PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is become familiar with the historical and current philosophical underpinnings that have shaped the field of music education, to think critically about these underpinnings and the impact they have on our field, and to compose and articulate ideas about philosophical issues in music teaching across educational, social, cultural, and political contexts. The goal is to have opportunities to reflect on and interrogate own and other's thinking about the value(s) of our profession as understood and imagined. In each of those opportunities, we will experience the role of thinking critically and responsibly while examining, critiquing, discussing, and writing. Note that this is not an exhaustive survey course, but an introduction to philosophical thinking in music education.

GRADUATE COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Understand music education philosophies, historically and currently, of leading scholars in the field.
2. Investigate our potential for musical experiences as felt individually and collectively.
3. Draw relationships between philosophy, and music learning and teaching.
4. Interrogate social, political, and cultural issues and how these impact equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization.
5. Engage in reflective practice, which includes connecting past experiences with current habits, assumptions, and ideals.
6. Identify, deconstruct, and challenge your own and others' assumptions regarding the roles of musicing individually and collectively, culturally, politically, and socially.
7. Participate responsibly and respectfully in class discussions about the nature and purpose of education with a focus on music education.
8. Articulate your current personal philosophy of experiencing music and learning and teaching others through music.

COURSE MATERIALS: REQUIRED READINGS AND CLASS SCHEDULE
(note additional resources at the end of the syllabus).

Day/Date	Topic/Video & Reading(s) for class	Assignment Due
Tue 1/6	Overview of the course and syllabus. Philosophical thinking, discussing, and writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of philosophical thinking • Processes of philosophical thinking • Processes of philosophical writing • In class: Goering, Sara. "Philosophy for Kids: Sparking a Love of Learning." <i>TEDxOverlake</i> (Jun 30, 2011). [10:42; highlighted excerpt: 0:00–4:30] 	ZOOM ID: 966 5482 5283 Passcode: 223417
Tue 1/13	Philosophical thinking discussing, and writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horban, P. (1993). "Writing a Philosophy Paper." <i>Simon Fraser University</i>. • Dewey, J. (1938). <i>Experience and education</i>. The Kappa Delta Pi Lecture Series. New York: Collier Books, Macmillan Publishing Company, Ch. 1-3. • Jorgensen, Estelle R. "On Philosophical Method." In <i>Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning</i>, ed. Richard Colwell, 91–101. New York: Schirmer, 1992. 	
Tue 1/20	Philosophical thinking discussing, and writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bowman, W. D., and A. L. Frega (2012). "What Should the Music Education Profession Expect of Philosophy?" In <i>The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education</i>, eds. Wayne Bowman and Ana L. Frega. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 17-36. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary form and/or bullet points and/or Venn diagrams or a similar visual that reflects ideas/points for the first paper. DUE: January 20 at 2:30.
Tue 1/27	Philosophical Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morton, C. A. (2012). "Music Education for 'all my relations'." In <i>The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education</i>, eds. Wayne Bowman and Ana L. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First paper. DUE: January 27 at 2:30 pm.

	Frega. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 472-491.	
Tue 2/3	<p>Philosophical Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younker, B. A. (2014). Philosophical musings Reflections and directions. In (J. Barrett & P. R. Webster, ed.), <i>Rethinking the musical experience: Essays in honor of the 25th anniversary of Northwestern University's Center for the Study of Education and the Musical Experience</i>, pp. 13-24, Oxford University Press. <p>Aesthetic Philosophy of Music Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reimer, B. (2022). <i>A Philosophy of Music Education: Advancing the Vision, Third Edition</i>, Forward by Peter R. Webster. New York: SUNY Press, pp. xi-xvii, Chapter 1. 	
Tue 2/10	<p>Aesthetic Philosophy of Music Education and Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younker, B. A. (2015). Consistent and Persistent, Distinctive and Evolving: Musical Experience as an Intellectual Human Condition. <i>Philosophy of Music Education Review</i>, Fall (Vol. 23, No. 2). • Allsup, R. E., & Judy Lewis (2015). "A Reappraisal of Bennett Reimer and His Meanings of Art." <i>Philosophy of Music Education Review</i> 23, no. 2 (Fall), pp. 168–182. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to a reading as presented in class (2)
Tue 2/17	READING WEEK	
Tue 2/24	<p>Praxial Philosophy of Music Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elliott, D. J. & Silverman, M (2016). Arts Education as/for artistic citizenship. In Elliott, D. J., Silverman, M, Bowman W. D. (eds.) <i>Artistic Citizenship: Artistry, social responsibility, and ethical praxis</i>. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, pp. 81-103 • McCarthy & Goble (2005). The praxial philosophy in historical perspective. In (David J. Elliott) <i>Praxial music education: reflections and dialogues</i>. New York: Oxford University Press, (Begin at the section titled, "Tensions of a Paradigm Change"—pp. 11-18 on side bar of pdf/p. 37 in the text). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to a reading as presented in class (2)
Tue 3/3	<p>Democracy and Music Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodford, P. (2005). <i>Democracy and Music Education: Liberalism, Ethics, and the Politics of Practice</i>. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, Chapter 1. 	<p>First Draft of Final Paper. DUE: March 3 at 2:30 pm</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodford, P. (2007). Reclaiming a Democratic Purpose for Music Education. IN <i>From Sea to Sea: Perspectives on Music Education in Canada</i>. Open Access, Peer-Reviewed Electronic Book 	
Tue 3/10	Decolonial and EDI perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gordon, Lewis R. "A Philosophical Look at Black Music." <i>35th Annual Alfred P. Stiernotte Lecture, Quinnipiac University</i> (September 23, 2019). [1:13:54; highlighted excerpt: 8:00–16:00] • Manning, K., Shifaw, S., Benedict, C (2021). What we have learned in a Faculty of Music: Dialogue with two Black musicians/scholars. Special Issue" Diversity in Music Education, <i>Canadian Music Educator</i>, Vol. 60, (1), pp. 28-35. 	
Tue 3/17	Decolonial and EDI perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knill, Rebecca. "How Technology Has Changed What It's Like to Be Deaf." <i>TED@Wells Fargo</i> (February 2020). [13:50; highlighted excerpt: 4:00–13:50] • Vagueois, L. (2007). "Social Justice and Music Education: Claiming the Space of Music Education as a Site of Postcolonial Contestation." <i>Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education</i> 6, no. 4, pp. 163–200. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to a reading as presented in class (2).
Tue 3/24	Theory/Construct of Care/Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheng, W. (2016). "Introduction: Dare We Care?" <i>Just Vibrations: The Purpose of Sounding Good</i>, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. • Sut, dir. bell hooks: Cultural Criticism And Transformation. US: Media Education Foundation, 1997. [1:01:00; highlighted excerpt: 48:45–59:30 / "Rap: Authentic Expression or Market Construct?" 9:59] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to a reading as presented in class (2).
Tue 3/31	Theory/Construct of Care /Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes will be given out from: Dimitriadis, G., & G. Kamberelis (2006). "bell hooks." In <i>Theory for Education</i>, pp. 145–150. New York: Routledge. • Noddings, N. (2005). 'Caring in education', <i>The encyclopedia of pedagogy and informal education</i>. [https://infed.org/mobi/caring-in-education/. Retrieved: 5/1/2023]. 	
Tue 4/7	No readings. Summary & review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Paper: Thursday. DUE:

		April 9 at 11:59pm.
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COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

1. ATTENDANCE (10%).

- a. Due to the nature of philosophical inquiry, discussions are critical. Attendance and participation allow for such discussion to occur. Your input in response to the readings and videos will be invited and encouraged.
- b. Part of the input will be reflected in the questions you bring to each class in response to either a reading or a video and to be shared with your trio. For some of the classes, we may shift the makeup of the trios to ensure engagement occurs across the class members.

2. FIRST PAPER DRAFT: **DUE January 20 2:30 (5%)**

- a. Based on readings and discussions, bring a one-page overview that will serve as an organizer and first draft for your first paper. Format can be as prose in a summary form and/or bullet points and/or Venn diagrams or a similar visual. Criteria include—single space, Time Roman font size 12, APA citation style.

3. FIRST PAPER: **DUE Tuesday, January 27 2:30am (15%)**

- a. Based on readings and discussions, write a two-page statement that reflects your understanding of philosophical thinking and writing. Criteria include—double space, Times Roman font size 12, APA citation style.
- b. Evaluation of writing will be based on the following criteria:
 - i. Clarity of writing
 - ii. Accurate use of references.
 - iii. Understanding of the content.
 - iv. Critical analysis of the content.

4. RESPONDING TO THE READINGS; GUIDING A DISCUSSION: **DUE: Tuesday February 10/24 and March 17/24 (15% for each presentation for a total of 30%).**

- a. Provide a summary of the main points of the reading and craft a question to spark discussion. The summary and question will be presented in the class (total of 2)
- b. Length for each presentation: **maximum—a total of 30 minutes**
- c. Evaluation of the presentation will be based on the following criteria:
 - i. Understanding of the content as reflected in the oral presentation.
 - ii. Critical analysis of the content.
 - iii. Accurate use of references.
 - iv. Organization of argument with examples/evidence.

- v. Relevance and significance to the field of music education and the varying contexts in which music is valued and made.

5. PHILOSOPHICAL PAPER:

a. **First draft DUE: Tuesday March 3 at 2:30am. (20%)**

- i. Criteria include–1000-1500 words (approx, 5 pages), references from the readings and others listed at the end of this syllabus, double spaced, Times Roman font size 12, APA citation style. A guide for APA citation style is available on the University Library website.
- b. Evaluation of the writing will be based on the following criteria:
 - i. Clarity of writing.
 - ii. Understanding of the content as reflected in the oral presentation.
 - iii. Critical analysis of the content.
 - iv. Accurate use of references.
 - v. Organization of argument with examples/evidence.
 - vi. Relevance and significance to the field of music education and the varying contexts in which music is valued and made

c. **Second draft DUE: Thursday April 9 at 11:59pm. (20%)**

- i. Criteria include–1500-200 words (approximately 5-7 pages), references from the readings and others listed at the end of this syllabus, double spaced, Times Roman font size 12, APA citation style. A guide for APA citation style is available on the University Library website.
- ii. This one should reflect a deeper critical discourse/reflection than the first draft with continued references to the readings. There should be an increased clarity about the values that you are espousing with support from the readings covered in the class.
- d. Evaluation of the writing will be based on the following criteria:
 - i. Clarity of writing.
 - ii. Understanding of the content as reflected in the oral presentation.
 - iii. Critical analysis of the content.
 - iv. Accurate use of references.
 - v. Organization of argument with examples/evidence.
 - vi. Relevance and significance to the field of music education and the varying contexts in which music is valued and made

GRADING SCALE: A=80-100%, B=70-79%, C=60-69%, F=00-59%

CALENDAR DATES

January 5: Winter term classes begin

January 15: Deadline for submission of fall term grades for continuing students

February 14–22: Spring Reading Week (no classes)

February 16: Family Day (official holiday)

April 3: Good Friday (official holiday)

April 9: Winter term classes end

April 10–11: Study Days

April 12–30: Exam period

April 30: Deadline for submission of winter term grades for graduating students

May 13: Deadline for submission of winter term grades for continuing students

‘COST STATEMENT’ PER THE MINISTRY

There is no cost to the students other than tuition to take this course.

STATEMENT 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, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

STATEMENT GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

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.

ENROLLMENT RESTRICTIONS

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in Music.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES

Students who are in emotional/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 (AEW)

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 THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools/software/apps for any assignment as outlined in the section **Course Assignments and Evaluation**, is to be fully disclosed. Discussions about the use of AI will be included in the classes.

Additional Resources

- Allsup, R. E. (2010). Philosophical perspectives of music education. In H. Abeles & L. A. Custodero, *Critical issues in music education: Contemporary theory and practice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Bloom, A. (1987). *The closing of the American mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Bowman, W. (1998). *Philosophical perspectives on music*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Colwell, R., & Richardson, C. P. (Eds.). (2002). *The new handbook of research on music teaching and learning* (pp. 675-694). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper and Row.
- DeNora, T. (2000). *Music in everyday life*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Eisner, E. (1987). The celebration of thinking. *Educational Horizons*, 66 (1), 24-29.
- Elkind, D. (1997). The death of child nature: Education in the postmodern world. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80 (3), 241-245.
- Giroux, H. A. (2010). Stealing of childhood innocence---Disney and the politics of casino capitalism: A tribute to Joe Kincheloe. *Cultural Studies---Critical Methodologies*, 10 (5), 413-416.
- Green, L. (1997). *Music, gender, education*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Horsley, S. (2000). Chaos in music education. *Canadian Music Educator*, 41 (1), 7-11.
- Jorgensen, E. (1994). Justifying music instruction in American schools: An historical perspective. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 120, 16-31.
- Jorgensen, E. (1997). *In search of music education*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Lamb, R. (1994). Feminism as critique in philosophy of music education. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 2 (2), 59-74.
- Lamb, R. (1993/1994). Aria senza accompagnamento: A woman behind the theory. *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning*, 4 (4) and 5 (1), 5-20.

- McCLary, S. (1990). Towards a feminist criticism of music. *Canadian University Music Review*, 10 (2), 9-18.
- Morton, C. (2002). Facing the music on and off stage: Pedagogical possibilities and responsibilities in the aftermath of September 11. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 10 (2), 124-139.
- O'Toole, P. (1993/1994). I sing in a choir but I have no voice! *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning*, 5 (4), 65-76.
- Reimer, B. (2002). *A philosophy of music education* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Schmidt, C. M. (1996). Who benefits? Music education and the national standards. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 4 (2), 71-82.
- Tanner, L. N. (1988). The path not taken: Dewey's model of inquiry. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 18 (4), 471-479.
- Woodford, P. (2018). *Music education in an age of virtuality and post-truth*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Woodford, P. (2011). Why Canada does not have national standards, or does it? In P. Woodford (Ed.), *Re-Thinking Standards for the 21st Century: New Realities, New Challenges, New Propositions*. *Studies in Music from the University of Western Ontario*, 23, 91-108.
- Woodford, P. (2012). What does music mean, and can music education really matter? In P. Schmidt & C. Benedict (Eds.), *The place of music in the 21st century: One Hundred Eleventh 2012 National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook*, 111 (1), 34-50. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Woodford, P. (2002). The social construction of music teacher identity in undergraduate music education majors. In R. Colwell & C. P. Richardson (Eds.), *The new handbook of research on music teaching and learning*, (pp. 675-694). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Woodford, P. (1996). Evaluating Edwin Gordon's music learning theory from a critical thinking perspective. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 4, 83-95.
- Yunker, B. A. (2003). Philosophical underpinnings for music making in democratic spaces. *Canadian Music Educator*, 45 (2), 20-22.