

Don Wright Faculty of Music
Western University
Department of Music Research and Composition

9556. Studies in Contemporary Repertoire.

Winter term, 2026-27
Dr. Omar Daniel; odaniel@uwo.ca

Studies in compositional techniques of the late 20th and early 21st century.

Students from all disciplines are invited to enroll in this class. The course has an emphasis on musical analysis, but will branch off into discussions surrounding historical and cultural issues, performance practice, pedagogy, etc. As such, students from all disciplines are welcome, but they should have undergraduate experience reading and interpreting scores. The discussion methodology and choice of repertoire is, to a certain degree, dependent on the constituency of the class. As such, the repertoire that the class discusses evolves on an ongoing basis. Generally, the instructor chooses the repertoire for the first four or five classes, and then offers several ways to proceed, requesting input from students. Course materials and general communication (announcements, etc.) will occur through OWL Brightspace.

In past years, this course has included works by:

Arvo Pärt, György Ligeti, Sofia Gubaidulina, Galina Ustvolskaya, Steve Reich, Alfred Schnittke, Chris Paul Harman, Magnus Lindberg, Ann Southam, Krystof Penderecki, György Kurtág, Gérard Grisey, Bernd Alois Zimmermann, Karin Rehnqvist, Valentin Silvestrov, James MacMillan, Helmut Lachenmann, Radiohead, Leo Brouwer, Alberto Ginastera, Julia Wolfe, Peter Maxwell Davies, Nicole Lizée, Linda C. Smith, David Lang, Ana Sokolovic, Alexina Louie, Tan Dun, Cassandra Miller, Michael Hersch, Julius Eastman, Rebecca Saunders, Caroline Shaw and many others.

The class will meet every week for 3 hours.

Evaluation

Evaluation for the course will be based on three components:

- 1) Preparation and in-class discussion. Students will be required to familiarize themselves with selected repertoire on an ongoing basis, attend all seminars, and participate in class discussions (25% of final grade).
- 2) Presentation. Each student will be required to give an in-class fifty-minute presentation on a topic of their choice (30% of final grade).
- 3) Final essay. Each student will be required to write a substantial paper on a topic of their choice (45% of final grade).

Learning Outcomes:

After completing the course, students will have:

- an increased knowledge of significant 20th and 21st century composers, methodologies and compositions.
- additional experience participating in discussions relating to analysis, history, cultural issues, performance practice, notation, etc. (see Evaluation).

- additional experience in presenting ideas in a lecture/presentation format (see Evaluation).
- additional experience writing a major essay (see Evaluation).

Materials

There is no textbook for this course. Repertoire study and readings will be assigned on an ongoing basis. The OWL platform will be the main communication platform. The instructor will regularly refer to the resources folder, where repertoire excerpts, power point presentations and other information will be accessible. It is a good idea to become familiar with OWL Brightspace before our first meeting. Bring a notebook, some score paper, a pencil and eraser to the first lecture.

Outline:

Week 1 and 2: Sacred and Profane: Madrigals and Oratorios (January 4 and 11)

Using the monumental St. Matthew Passion by J.S. Bach as a point of reference, this unit will explore music for voices in the context of 'Oratorio' and 'Madrigal'

Repertoire:

J. S. Bach: *St. Matthew Passion*

David Lang: *Little Match Girl Passion*

Tan Dun: *Water Passion*

Arvo Pärt: *Miserere*

György Ligeti: *Nonsense Madrigals*

Caroline Shaw: *The Isle*

Week 3 and 4: Me Against Everyone: the Concerto (January 18 and 25)

Using Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto* as a starting point, we will investigate the concept of the concerto and how composers have accepted, adapted or ignored conventional approaches to the idiom.

Repertoire:

Alban Berg: *Violin Concerto*

Einojuhani Rautavaara: *Piano concerto no. 1*

Alfred Schnittke: *Violin Concerto no. 4*

Sofia Gubaidulina: *Sieben Worte*

Valentin Silvestrov: *Metamusik*

György Ligeti: *Hamburg Concerto*

Paul Frehner: *Cloak*

Week 5 and 6: The Social Contract of Chamber Music (February 1 and 8)

The genre of chamber music has been transformed over the last fifty years. Always a forum for the intimate interaction of musical ideas and the drama of performer relationships, the String Quartet no. 8 by Dimitri Shostakovich will provide a backdrop for contemporary approaches to the idiom.

Repertoire:

Dimitri Shostakovich: *String Quartet no. 8*

Nicole Lizeé: *Hitchcock Etudes*

Ann Southam: *Full Circles*

Brian Ferneyhough: *String Quartet no. 6*

Toshio Hosokawa: *Birds Fragments*

Dorothy Chang: *Bagatelles*

Cassandra Miller: *About Bach*

Dinuk Wijeratne: *Two Pop Songs on Antique Poems*

Reading Week (February 17)

Week 7, 8 and 9: Student presentations: (February 22, March 1, 8)

Week 10: The Promise of Opera: (March 15, 22)

The increase in small opera companies has created a vibrant opera scene, particularly outside of Europe. Using the model of Britten's *Turn of the Screw*, we will examine the rise of the chamber opera

Repertoire:

Benjamin Britten: *Turn of the Screw*

Ana Sokolović: *Love Songs*

James Rolfe: *Beatrice Chancy*

Week 11 and 12: The Future of the Orchestra (March 29, April 5)

Dismissed by some as 'expensive and elitist' and praised by others 'the most profound of classical idioms', what is the future of this complex ecosystem?

Repertoire:

B.A. Zimmermann: *Photoptosis*

Galina Ustvolskaya: *Symphony no. 2*

Steve Reich: *Radio Rewrite*

John Luther Adams: *Become Ocean*

Rita Ueda: *let us not be the reason why someone out there is praying for peace*

POLICIES

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

Marking Scale: A= 80–100%, B=70–79%, C=60–69%, F=0–59%.

Medical Accommodation. 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. 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.

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

Contingency Plan. Although the intent is for this course to be delivered in-person, should any university-declared emergency require some or all of the course to be delivered online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience), the course will adapt accordingly. The grading scheme will **not** change. Any assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

Examinations & Attendance. Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the

department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Use of Electronic Devices

Printed versions of any score under discussion is the best way to manage the seminars. PDF scans of pertinent repertoire excerpts will be available to you, but you are encouraged to print out hard copies if at all possible. You may bring a tablet or laptop to view scores, but the use of electronic devices for anything other than viewing scores is prohibited. Students found guilty of disrupting the class with electronic devices will be asked to leave the class and may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.

Plagiarism Detection Software Usage. All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism, which includes AI writing detection tools. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI tools may be used for light editing of prose but not for any substantive conceptual development.

Intellectual Property. Concerning course materials, Omar Daniel owns the intellectual property (IP) in all the lectures and lecture materials posted online. Given this fact, students are not to post lectures or lecture materials to any other websites or platforms or use the lecture recording or materials for any other purpose without the instructor's consent. Students are also prohibited from recording live lectures and recorded lectures.

RESOURCES

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.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities. Students work with Accessible Education which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

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.

Health and Wellness. 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.

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. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca or call 519-661-3568.

Religious Accommodation. When scheduling of course requirements conflicts with religious holidays that require absence from the University or that prohibit or require certain activities on the part of the student, the student will not be penalized for absence because of religious reasons. If a suitable arrangement involving a graduate course cannot be worked out between the student and instructor involved, they should consult the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies). Further information can be found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf