

UPPER DIVISION GENERAL EDUCATION

• FOR AREA CC •

Music 323 - Music of Ritual & Religion

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1. See attached draft syllabus for Music 323.
2. This course is 3 units.
3.
 - a. This course has no prerequisite.
 - b. This UDGE course (also) fulfills a requirement for the VPA major as an elective.
 - c. The GE committee should make an exception for this course because it expands the range of UDGE offerings available within the VPA/Music curriculum. The course is already included in the University Course Catalog. Moreover, this is an opportunity for students to engage in an interdisciplinary undergraduate research experience. Given the assumptions that for many people, religious ideals and practices are the foundation for all of their other endeavors (commerce, politics/international relations, science, etc.); and that music embodies, as well as forms the medium and catalyst for spiritual or “soul” transformation - this dialogue and research based approach will inform and benefit all students regardless of major.
4. Music 323 introduces students to the basic assumptions of sacred music and ritual (as stated above). This is done principally from the frameworks of ethnomusicology (methodology), and cultural theory (principles). In this course students will study religious musicking¹, both from the perspective of the social-cultural milieu in which such traditions were derived, as well as the relative influences these ostensibly *sacred* works have (had) transnationally. There are many instances where the sacred has informed ‘secular’ aesthetics and are linked to performance practices in artistic creation in general (and vice-versa). Hence, we will explore some popular forms that exemplify this nexus, such as gospel-hip hop, hard rock-Christian rock, as well as Qawwali and Sufi traditions that have commercially and ‘spiritually’ influenced millions in the Islamic world.
5. Music 323 represents both past and present approaches to the study of spirituality, the arts, and religious philosophy. There is a long academic tradition within American universities to articulate diverse, and often divergent, religious thought and/or spiritual practices. The use of the term “divergent” simply implies and underscores the fact of a nation that is on the one hand dominated by a Judeo-Christian religious paradigm, but has historically struggled to accommodate differing traditions, as well as expand its’ collective philosophical envelope. In addition to numerous theological schools that are addressing religion’s impact on our daily lives, there are many new approaches and initiatives taking place within the CSU/UC systems², as well as in other American universities. This course will use a comparative approach,

¹ “To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing”. Small, C. (1998) *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press

² E.g. SDSU <http://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/admissions/ab/religiousstudies.htm>,

such as that used at Yale University where the issue of “spirituality” is addressed with the aim of producing pragmatic outcomes for individuals and institutions engaged in reconciliation (genocide and religious-ethnic wars), bio-ethical conflicts, healing, faith, and ethical issues in the workplace³.

6. An understanding of the wide range of values and ritual behaviors that are a part of world religions is an important prerequisite to acquiring cultural intelligence and participating responsibly in a pluralistic society. This understanding and/or capacity for critical analysis is a measure of good citizenship. As noted by Supreme Court Justice Tom C. Clark: “one’s education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization.”⁴
7. This course will include a survey of world religions [but] with a focus on the musical traditions that accompany them. Too many of us are woefully ignorant of the origin, history and basic tenets of the world’s major religions. Considering the significance of religious belief, the diversity of these beliefs and practices, as well as the imperative to establish peaceful coexistence - this ignorance is a liability in the face of increasing globalization. Global citizenship, as well as U.S. American citizenship, thusly requires some awareness and appreciation of religious beliefs and practices that may differ from one’s own.
8. **Targeted UGDE Learning Objectives:**
 - a. To help students recognize and evaluate aesthetic qualities through the study and creation of expressive works;
 - b. To introduce students to the arts as means to explore issues of race, class and gender, and as expressions of diverse historical, cultural, and geographical contexts.
 - c. To expose students to significant works of the human intellect through examination of religious texts as primary texts in the humanities;
 - d. To explore the spiritual bases of humanistic expression through time and in various world cultures.

Targeted Basic Skills Requirements:

Students will be introduced to the tenets of the major world religions traditions through a range of required activities that assume the use of multiple skills.

- a. Critical reading of excerpts from foundational texts to develop informational literacy, e.g. the Torah, Bible, and Koran;
- b. Directed listening of music/recordings from diverse religious traditions, formal group discussions of each topic;
- c. Focused writing assignments assessed for both germane content and writing proficiency in accord with the All University Writing Requirements.
- d. Interviewing and observation of musical “performances”

and UC Riverside http://religiousstudies.ucr.edu/about/why_religion.html

³ Center for Faith and Culture <http://www.yale.edu/faith/fg/fg.htm>

⁴ http://www.alaskool.org/resources/teaching/national_archives/abington_v_schempp.htm

Evaluation and Assessment

Although music is not “a universal language” in the sense that everyone experiences the *same* significance upon hearing the same song, it is nonetheless a viable medium for beginning to comprehend both similarities and differences presented in diverse religious doctrines and rituals. Specific musical performance practices tend to accompany religious rituals and/or traditions characterized by historical specificity. Student progress will therefore be measured in accord to his/her ability to contextualize religious music traditions, provide thoughtful comparisons in consideration of *cultural relativism*, engage in informed discussion, and present information in a public forum. Accordingly, students will be formally exposed to a range of recorded and live music, literature, video and fieldwork to place them in contact with not only the dominant Christian traditions in the U.S., but Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Native American, Jewish, and other African Diaspora sacred-music traditions as well.

Student Learning Outcomes

The following learning outcomes or acquired abilities are central to the course:

- a. Situate the historical particularity of musical practices and use of ritual in these traditions via systematic, but generalized musicological inquiry, i.e. listening and observing musical practices associated with religious ritual;
- b. Compare/contrast musical performance practices, and spiritual significance of music and ritual within and between ‘Western cultures and non-Western’ spiritual and healing traditions;
- c. Conduct fieldwork, i.e. observations and structured interviews of varied sacred/secular musical rituals;
- d. Discuss and present their research findings in class and within an organized public forum to be scheduled for the end of the semester.

Skills Assessment

In addition to developing the aforementioned skill sets, the following activities/assignments are designed to prompt both cognitive and affective responses and abilities vis-à-vis a critical analysis of historical and contemporary events/processes involving music and religion. They will entail not only the student’s interpretation and derivation of meaning, but also solicit an evaluative and emotional response. These activities are intended to provide a foundation and medium for both understanding and acceptance of the other through an understanding of musics of the soul.

Example Assignment 1

SLO - To help students recognize and evaluate aesthetic qualities through the study and creation of expressive works;

A cursory examination of the oeuvre of J.S. Bach suggests that the majority of his compositional output was sacred music. Bach wrote passions, oratorios, masses, Magnificats, cantatas – and many other forms for the liturgical calendar. As a devote Lutheran he harmonized traditional hymns and set the standard for chorales that were later distributed throughout the Western world (and parts of the global south). The dominantly Protestant religious traditions of the U.S. in all of its manifestations, has been profoundly

effected by Bach's music. These works also form the basis for teaching Western music theory, as well as keyboard performance practice. Although his work has been canonized (no pun intended), within American and Western European universities and provides the aesthetic framework for composing, there have been myriad (i.e. diverse) stylistic approaches and genres that still bear traces of Bach's intellectual gifts. Hence, Bach's work has accommodated diverse historical and cultural contexts.

After listening to recordings from: Lutheran hymns, African-American Baptist (or gospel) music, and typical Tin Pan Alley popular songs; students will explain how, and proffer reasons why Bach's music has transcended national borders, cultures, and sacred-secular musical domains. This assignment will require students to research library databases, and corroborative Internet sources to support their claims.

Example Assignment 2

SLO - To introduce students to the arts (music) as means to explore issues of race, class and gender, and as expressions of diverse historical, cultural, and geographical contexts.

Evangelical Christianity is one of the fastest growing forms of religion in the world; this is particularly the case in the U.S., Africa, and Latin America. In Brazil for example, evangelicals have made a great in-road into a society and cultures that was traditionally/historically Catholic, and to a lesser degree, based on neo-African religious practices, e.g. Candomblé and Macumba. Using Leslie Goffe's video expose on evangelicals in Africa (BBC Focus on Africa, July-September 2005) as a point of departure; students will also read and discuss articles by Burdick (2009) and MacArthur (2007), that illustrate the use of music amongst evangelicals in Brazil and the U.S., respectively. They will then write a brief essay in response to the following question:

Compare and contrast: a) how music is used in the conversion process of evangelical Christians, esp. the youth; b) how is social-inequality manifest in the relationships of race, class and gender - between these youth communities and the broader society to which they are peripheral; and c) in what ways is cultural identity created and/or maintained with music in these respective communities?

Burdick, J. (2009) "The Singing Voice and Racial Politics on the Brazilian Evangelical Music Scene". *Latin American Music Review*, Vol. 50, No. 1, Spring/Summer 2009

MacArthur, T. (2007) "Singing the Lord's Song – Evangelism and Music". *International Review of Mission*. Vol. 96 No. 1. 3S21383, July-October 2007

Additional Assignments

- After reading about Tibetan Buddhism *dybangs* music-culture, students will hypothesize regarding the relationship and/or role of forced migration (the 1959 exile from Tibet to India) has played in changes in this music culture. The current polemic is to whether it is prayer (not performance), and that it has moved from the sacred to the secular. Students will be charged to be reflective and to examine their own ethnic histories in regard to the practice of religious freedom. Students will discuss and translate these and other "sacred" practices in terms of their own experiential knowledge (or vicariously through the survey process of peers and other members of their community).

- Students will visit a local church, synagogue, temple...where music is a part of the proceedings. He/she will observe, interpret and write about their own and other's emotional response when listening to, and participating in sacred music as a measure of affective and aesthetic domains.
- After viewing the documentary "Amazing Grace with Bill Moyers PBS" students will discern and discuss variations in musical meaning across culture and across sacred-secular domains, i.e. how can a given song mean something different to/for different people?
- Students will examine variations on the function of ritual music in both sacred and secular settings by comparing their own experiences with that of others: 1) facilitation of courtship- weddings, establishment and maintenance of social identity through rites of passage, e.g. the bar mitzvah, funerals, the Quinceañera; 2) relief from anxiety and psychological pain, such as healing ceremonies; and 3) social organization and the promotion of group cooperation, e.g. Al Adhan (the Muslim 'call to prayer').