Syllabus MUS 450
SPIRITUALITY AND MUSIC IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Class meetings: Mon & Wed 2:30-3:50pm
Room: 2322
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Office: 2339 (second floor, left side)
Office Hours: Mon 12-1pm
and by appointment
Phone: 632-7330 (Music Department)
COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Format

This course is a seminar designed for students who have completed (at least one, and preferably all) courses in the music history sequence and want to explore some aspects of certain repertoire in more depth. The repertoire for a substantial portion of the course is drawn from music from 1960 to present. If you have completed MUS352, it will be very helpful. However, we will review some basics of the 20th century music before we turn to our central topic.

Since this is a seminar, there are no exams or quizzes. Each member is expected to be present at each class, to be fully prepared, and to participate actively. There is no such thing as "getting someone's notes," this is a communal learning experience, and who is not present does not learn (see attendance policy below). Towards the end of the course, more attention will be given to music research and writing about music.

Context

The course explores how contemporary composers in the western world interact with issues of spirituality, including established religious traditions and various philosophical ideas. We will begin with a brief review of music and spiritual practices prior to the mid-twentieth century and then plunge into in-depth studies of selected works by European and American composers from 1960 to present, including John Cage, Arvo Pärt, Jonathan Harvey, Alfred Schnittke, Sofia Gubaidulina, John Zorn and others.

We will consider a wide array of eastern and western spiritual traditions that serve as an inspiration to post-1960 composers, and consider the cultural, political and economic conditions in which composers worked. We will also discuss some texts about the relationship between spirituality and art in general, and music in particular by the 20th century composers, artists, and philosophers. The authors may include Wassily Kandinsky, Henri Bergson, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Andrey Tarkovsky and Jonathan Harvey, as well as some recent texts by music scholars.

Goals

To summarize, I hope this course will allow you to learn to appreciate a wide variety of contemporary music, learn contemporary research tools, and learn to write about music in a way that appeals to contemporary reader.

While exploring philosophical issues and reflecting on their role in composition, performance and perception of music, we will address the following questions:

- How can we define spiritual music today? How is it different from religious music?
  What is the relationship between music and spirituality in a society where religion does not play a dominant role?
- In what ways do contemporary composers draw inspiration from religious or philosophical sources? How do composers’ beliefs influence their approach to composition?
- How does the spiritual dimension of music affect the performer and the listener?
- What musical qualities make a piece sound spiritual to us?
COURSE WORK

Weekly assignments

Since this is a research-focused course, there will be no exams and no quizzes. A substantial portion of your grade will depend on weekly assignments and participation in the discussions. You should expect to invest at least 2-3 hours every week in addition to attending the class. Assignments may include some of the following:

- make a 10 min presentation and be prepared to discuss 10-15 pages of reading;
- make a 10 min presentation about a composer or a piece, based on your own research;
- write a 1-3-page paper or a précis about assigned reading or material discussed during previous week;
- write a response to an hour-long podcast.

…

All written assignments must be handed in at the beginning of each class on the day they are due, unless otherwise noted. All texts for required reading assignments will be posted on blackboard.

Attendance/participation

We are a small number of individuals embarking on collaborative venture. As such, everyone’s presence is extremely valuable. This means that you are expected to attend all sessions, and prepare for each one by doing all of the assigned reading/listening/writing etc. A maximum of two unexcused absences are allowed without damage to your grade. If you have a very important event that happens at the same time as this seminar, let me know at least one week ahead of time and I will give you a written assignment that will count towards your attendance grade.

Research project

During the last four-six weeks of the course, most of your weekly assignments will be related to a research project that will become your final paper. The grade for the final project will depend in part on the related assignments (the process), and in part on the final product.

Grading breakdown

- attendance and participation in discussions (20% of final grade)
- weekly presentations/short written reading and listening responses (30% of final grade)
- research project and final paper (50% of final grade)

Status of this syllabus

This syllabus is a working document. As the term progresses, we may make changes to readings, assignments and due dates to reflect the needs of the group.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

UNIT 1 INTRODUCTION: “WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUAL MUSIC?”

Monday, August 28

Introduction to course syllabus
Wednesday, August 30

Introduction to course subject: brief history of spiritual movements in the 20th century, their relationship to composition, performance and reception of music.


Monday, September 4

Labor Day (classes not in session)

Wednesday, September 6

Introduction to course subject: defining spirituality

- Texts:
  - Optional Texts:

UNIT 2 TRADITIONAL SPIRITUAL MUSIC IN THE WESTERN WORLD

Monday, September 11

Polyphonic Mass in Catholic tradition

- Music:
  Guillaume de Machaut, Messe de Nostre Dame (c. 1365)
  Johannes Ockeghem, Missa Prolationum (c. 1470)
  Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, Missa Papae Marcelli (1565)
  Ludwig van Beethoven, Missa solemnis in D major, Op. 123 (1819-1823)
  Anton Bruckner, Mass No. 3 in F minor (1868)

Wednesday, September 13

Chorale and Passion settings in Protestant tradition

Psalmody and Synagogue chant in Judaism

- Texts:
iohannem (1982),” Contemporary Music Review, 12:2, 35-48


➢ Music:
Heinrich Schütz, St Matthew Passion (1666)
J. S. Bach, St John Passion (1724)
Kol Nidrei, The Kaddish, The Shirah

UNIT 3: SPIRITUAL MOVEMENTS IN THE 20TH CENTURY BEFORE 1960

Monday, September 18

Before WWI: Scriabin, theosophy and mysticism

➢ Texts:
Anna Gawboy “Oneness through the sharpening of contradictions: Theosophical Polarity in Scriabin’s Late Harmonic Practice.” Journal of Musicological Research, Volume 36, No. 3 (August 2017), 181-207 (optional)
➢ Music:
Alexander Scriabin, Poem of Ecstasy, Op.54 (1905-08), Vers la flame, op 72 (1914)

Wednesday, September 20

Spirituality and music during WWII: Olivier Messiaen

➢ Texts:
➢ Music:
Olivier Messiaen, Quatuor pour la fin du temps (1940–41), Vingt regards sur l'enfant Jesus (1944)
Monday, September 25
Response to World War II: Adorno and Schoenberg

Texts:


Music:
Arnold Schoenberg, *A Survivor from Warsaw* (1947)

UNIT 4 1960–PRESENT: DIVERSITY OF BELIEFS AND STYLES
Wednesday, September 27
Zen Buddhism as inspiration for innovation: John Cage

Texts:


Music:

Monday, October 2
Spirituality as manifestation of freedom in the USSR: Alfred Schnittke

Texts:


Music:
Wednesday, October 4

Philosophical idealism of the past and composing music today

➤ Andrey Tarkovsky, “Art – a yearning for the ideal.” Sculpting Time, 36-56

Monday, October 9

Sofia Gubaidulina: Religious symbolism in secular works

➤ Texts:

➤ Music:

Wednesday, October 11

Time in music

➤ Texts:

➤ Music:
   Sofia Gubaidulina, Hommage a T.S. Eliot (1987)
   Karlheinz Shtokhausen, Aus den sieben Tagen (1968), Mantra for two pianos and electronics (1970), operas Licht: Die sieben Tage der Woche (1977)

Monday, October 16

Arvo Pärt in the USSR

➤ Music:

➤ Texts:
Wednesday October 18

**Arvo Pärt in the West**

- **Music:**
  
  Arvo Pärt: *Passio Domini nostri Jesu Christi secundum Joannem* (St John Passion, 1982)

- **Texts:**
  
  Paul Hillier. *Arvo Pärt. Chapter 7* (122-139)


Monday, October 23

**Sacred spaces**

- **Texts:**
  

More texts TBD

Wednesday October 25

**Spiritual but not religious? Galina Ustvolskaya**

- **Texts:**
  

Jeremiah-Foulds, Rachel. “Spiritual independence, or a cultural norm? Galina Ustvolskaya and the znamenny raspev.” *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Orthodox Church Music*, 314-326

- **Music:**
  
  Galina Ustvolskaya, *Composition No. 1* ‘Dona Nobis Pacem,’ for piccolo, tuba and piano (1971), Composition No. 2 *Dies Irae*, for eight double basses, piano and wooden cube (1973), Composition No. 3 *Benedictus, Qui Venit*, for four flutes, four bassoons and piano (1975)

Monday, October 30

**Meredith Monk**

- **Texts:**
  


  Interview Meredith Monk from Dimitri Ehrlich, *Inside the music: conversations with contemporary musicians about spirituality, creativity, and consciousness.*
Music:

**Wednesday, November 1**

*Valentin Silvestrov: Zen Buddhism in the USSR*

- Texts:

- Music:

**Monday, November 6**

**RESEARCH TOPICS ARE DUE (TO BE PRESENTED IN CLASS)**

*Pauline Oliveros: early works*

- Texts:

- Music:

**Wednesday, November 8**

*Pauline Oliveros: Deep Listening*

- Music:

- Texts:

**Monday, November 13**

*Introduction to minimalism, Terry Riley*

- Texts:

- Music:
Wednesday, November 15

*Steve Reich*

- **Texts:**
  Steve Reich, “Music as a Gradual Process (1968),” *Writings on Music*

- **Music:**

Monday, November 20

*Catch-up Day and special requests (Morton Feldman, Karlheinz Stokhausen, etc)*

*update on projects*

Wednesday, November 22

*No class (Thanksgiving break)*

Monday, November 27

*John Zorn, introduction*

- **Texts:**

- **Music:**

Wednesday, November 29

*John Zorn, Radical Jewish Culture*

- **Texts:**

- **Music:**
Monday, December 4

Jonathan Harvey

➢ Texts:


➢ Music:

Jonathan Harvey, “Ritual Melodies” (1990)

Wednesday, December 6

Conclusions, summaries, discussion of projects, feedback.

FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8
STATEMENT ON DISABILITIES

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, 128 ECC Building (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. I can only respond to requests for disability accommodation if they have gone through the DSS Office. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to http://www.ehs.sunysb.edu and search Fire Safety and Evacuation and Disabilities.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic standards and intellectual integrity require that all work you submit for any course represents your own efforts for that course. Only by doing your own work (which includes serious thinking) and receiving a response to it will you actually grow intellectually. One of the most common forms of academic dishonesty is plagiarism. It is normal to consult secondary literature in preparation for writing, but any appropriation in a paper of someone else's work, ideas, or language—whether quoted or paraphrased—must be openly acknowledged through use of quotation marks or other standard indications and appropriate footnotes or endnotes specifying precisely where the information was obtained and where it can be found. For a paper, you should also regularly supply a bibliography to indicate any sources you have consulted or used.

You may seek help with papers at the Writing Center, or from the instructors in this course, or may discuss projects with other students in the course but the final product must be distinctively your own. Excessive outside intervention is inappropriate, and quotation without acknowledgement—so that someone else’s words or ideas appear to be your own—falls in the category of academic dishonesty. Your work is also expected to be specific to each particular course taken. It is unacceptable to submit the same or largely similar papers for different classes, to model your own paper on that of another student, or to make your paper accessible to someone else in the class before submission.

Be sure to come see me before you submit a paper if you have any questions about use of someone else's work in a paper or about the level of outside help you are receiving. Check the Policies of the University Academic Judiciary Committee (on the USB website) for policies about academic dishonesty such as plagiarism or improper consultation on examinations or papers. Every student must become familiar with these university policies and needs to respect the principles of academic integrity. Any plagiarism, cheating on examinations, submission of work that is not your own, or other failure to observe academic integrity in this class will be reported to the Academic Judiciary Committee.