

## **MUCO 371g: Musical Genre-Bending**

**MUS 204**

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### **Course Description**

The aesthetic and ethical issues of genre-bending music in 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century rock, classical, jazz, and folk music.

### **Course Details**

From prog rock, to indie classical, to Babymetal, the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have seen an explosion of music that exists between the cracks of our typical genre distinctions. Though it is easy enough to invent new genre labels to categorize the music we hear, it is often difficult to articulate what specifically about the music makes it belong to one genre over another. Through listening to, reading about, and analyzing cross-genre music from the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, this course will explore questions including:

How do we define genres like rock, jazz, classical, and folk music? Are those definitions purely musical, or are the social functions and cultural values genres just as essential to their identities? How do labels affect our listening experience, and how do we listen differently when there is no familiar genre lens through which to view the music? Can all genres be combined, or are some mutually exclusive? What are the ethical concerns with combining genres from different cultures – is there a difference between authentic genre-bending and appropriation?

### **Learning Objectives**

- To understand the basic musical, aesthetic, and cultural features of major musical genres (rock, jazz, classical, folk) and to become familiar with seminal works from each of them.
- To become acquainted with a wide variety of recent and contemporary music that tugs at the seams of traditional genre boundaries, and to learn to discuss/critique that music with an appropriate and robust musical vocabulary.
- To gain insight into how music is made through readings, analysis, and lectures from visiting guest musicians.
- To become engaged in Los Angeles' rich musical culture by attending concerts relevant to the course topic.
- To consider how globalization and recent technological developments has changed the landscape of music. In an age when all music is instantly accessible on the internet and most music is made for recording rather than live performance, what is the role of music from largely unwritten and unrecorded traditions?

### **Prerequisites**

Though this course will necessarily discuss music in detail (melody, harmony, rhythm, instrumentation, improvisation, notation), it does not require any formal musical education or musical ability. The ability to read musical notation is not necessary. The course will, however, require an open and inquisitive mind and a willingness to think critically about an exceptionally wide variety of music. This course requires you to devote 1-2 hours each week to listening. While some of the music may be familiar to you already, much of it will not be and it is not expected that students will enter the course knowing much – or any – of the music.

### **Assignments**

Listening and/or reading assignments will be given each class session. For listening assignments, you will be asked to listen to music related to our previous topic of discussion in class and answer short free-response questions designed to help you engage deeply with the music. Readings from articles and books will also be assigned, usually accompanied with set of short questions. All materials will be distributed through Blackboard.

### **Concert Attendance/Paper**

During the semester, students must attend at least one approved concert and write a short analytical paper about it. The professor will suggest concerts throughout the semester, but students may also propose concerts for the professor's approval.

### **Final Paper**

A final paper on a subject agreed upon by the student and professor will be due on the day of the scheduled final exam (this course has no final). Students will have a wide degree of latitude in choosing their topic, and are encouraged to use this as an opportunity to explore genre-bending music that they have an interest in. Papers should be 10-15 pages, double-spaced, and must cite external sources.

### **Grading**

Midterm Exam	15%
Weekly reading/assignments	40%
Concert Paper	10%
Final Paper	35%

### **SCHEDULE** (subject to modification)

#### **Week 1 (August 23, 25)**

Overview, introduction; genre theory; brief background of the development of classical, rock, and jazz.

**Reading:** Chandler, Daniel. *An Introduction to Genre Theory*.

#### **Week 2 (August 30, September 1)**

Nuts and bolts: the key musical parameters (melody, harmony, rhythm, meter, timbre, form); introduction to acoustics; live music versus the studio.

**Reading:** Ross, Alex. *Listen to This*. Chapter 3, *Infernal Machines: How Recordings Changed Music*.

**Listening:** The Beatles, *Abbey Road*; Maurice Ravel, *String Quartet in F*; Gerard Grisey, *Partiels* (selections).

#### **Week 3 (September 6, 8)**

Rock and folk music: its musical and cultural values; the importance of the "hook," composer or performer: who "owns" the song; the studio as instrument; the primacy of the recording over the score.

**Reading:** Frith, Simon. *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'n'Roll*. Chapters 2 and 3.

Middleton, Richard. *Studying Popular Music* (excerpts)

**Listening:** Bob Dylan, *Highway 61 Revisited*; The Beach Boys, *Pet Sounds*; The Jimi Hendrix Experience, *Are You Experienced?*; Georgian (Republic of), Mongolian, Pygmy, and Appalachian folk music.

#### **Week 4 (September 13, 15)**

Classical music: its musical and cultural values; the roles of the composer and performer; what is notated and what is not; the difference between "Classical" and "classical."

**Reading:** Levinson, Jerrold. *Musical Concerns: Essays in Philosophy of Music*. Chapters 5 and 6.

Gelbart, Matthew. *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music."* Introduction.

Mackey, Steven. *Music as an Action Sport*.

**Listening:** Ockeghem, *Missa Prolationum*; Beethoven, *Symphony No. 5*; Igor Stravinsky, *The Rite of Spring*; Luciano Berio, *Sinfonia* (3<sup>rd</sup> mvmt.).

#### **Week 5 (September 20, 22)**

Jazz music: its musical and cultural values; what is notated and what is not; improvisation; microrhythm and swing.

**Reading:** Hodeir, André. *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence*

Levinson, Jerrold. *Musical Concerns: Essays in Philosophy of Music*. Chapters 10 and 11.

Benadon, Fernando. *Time Warps in Early Jazz* (excerpts)

**Listening:** Bill Evans, selections from *Everybody Loves Bill Evans*; Thelonious Monk, selections from *The Complete Riverside Recordings*; Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue*.

### **Week 6 (September 27, 29)**

Taste, familiarity, and the role of listener expertise in evaluating and enjoying music.

**Reading:** Levinson, Jerrold. *Musical Concerns: Essays in Philosophy of Music*. Chapter 2.

Levinson, Jerrold. *Hume's Standard of Taste: The Real Problem*.

Babbitt, Milton. *Who Cares if You Listen?*

### **Week 7 (October 4, 6)**

How different can the "same music" be? Comparing recordings of the same pieces by performers from different genres.

**Listening:** Igor Stravinsky, *Ebony Concerto* (Columbia Jazz Ensemble and Ensemble Intercontemporain); Art Tatum, selected piano works (Art Tatum and Yuja Wang); Bach preludes and fugues performed (Glenn Gould and Jacques Loussier), Tchaikovsky's and Duke Ellington's *The Nutcracker Suite*; selected cover songs by The Bad Plus.

### **Week 8 (October 11, 13)**

Spillover day/guest artist buffer; midterm review.

## **OCTOBER 13 MIDTERM EXAM**

### **Week 9 (October 18, 20)**

On the edges of rock: Progressive and experimental rock, concept albums.

**Reading:** Walser, Robert. *Eruptions: heavy metal appropriations of classical virtuosity*

Ross, Alex. *Listen to This*. Chapter 13. *Edges of Pop*.

**Listening:** The Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*; Brian Wilson, *Smile*; Pink Floyd, *Dark Side of the Moon*; Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention, *One Size Fits All*; David Bowie, *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars*.

### **Week 10 (October 25, 27)**

On the edges of jazz; jazz without jazz form; notated jazz; "spectral" jazz.

**Reading:** Hodeir, André. The André Hodeir Jazz Reader (excerpts)

**Listening:** Andre Hodeir, *Flautando*; Ambrose Akinmusire, *The Imagined Savior is Far Easier to Paint*; Steve Lehman Octet, *Mise en Abîme*; Anthony Braxton, selections.

### **Week 11 (November 1, 3)**

Aestheticizing authenticity: "Authentic" folk music, "art" folk, and commercial folk.

**Reading:** Bartók, Béla. *The Influence of Peasant Music on Modern Music*

Gelbart, Matthew. *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music."* Chapters 6 and 8.

Ross, Alex. *Listen to This*. Chapter 18. *I Saw the Light: Following Bob Dylan*.

**Listening:** Traditional Irish Sean-nós songs, and Donnacha Dennehy's *Gra Agus Bas* and *Aisling Gheal*; Iva Bittova, selections; folk metal (Finntroll, Eluveitie) and medieval dance music (New York Early Music Ensemble, *Istanpitta*), traditional Norwegian and Irish fiddle music, and Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh and Dan Trueman's *Laghdú*.

### **Week 12 (November 8, 10)**

Conflicts of values and the ethical concerns of genre-bending; genuine borrowing versus appropriation, and the composer's intentions; case studies of successful and unsuccessful genre-bending pieces.

**Reading:** Dennehy, Donnacha, *Composition as Vandalism*

Born, Georgina; Hesmondhalgh, David [eds]. *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation and Appropriation in Music* (excerpts)

Williams, Bernard. "Conflicts of Values", in *Moral Luck*

Young, James O. *Art, Authenticity and Appropriation*

Ziff, Bruce; Rao, Pratima V. *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation* (excerpts)

### **Week 13 (November 15, 17)**

Continuation of Week 12 topics.

**Week 14 (November 22, 24)**

Spillover day/guest artist buffer.  
Thanksgiving holiday

**Week 15:**

Genre-less-ness in today's music; when labels help and hurt; how the loosening of genre boundaries affects music education.

**Listening:** Koenjihyakkei, *Angherr Shispa*; Sarah Kirkland Snider, *Unremembered*; Tin Hat, *The Rain is a Handsome Animal*.

**FINAL EXAM DATE TBD – FINAL PAPER DUE BY EMAIL****Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems****Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/departments/departments-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> describes reporting options and other resources.

**Support Systems**

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali> which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.