MUS 501, Compositional Skills of Tonal Music
Instructor: Prof. Daniel Weymouth
Tuesdays, 1-4pm, Staller Center 2318

An intensive study in tonal progression and the balancing of vertical and horizontal musical structures, otherwise known as “counterpoint.” Our focus will be on tonal music, as it has an established vocabulary. However, the principles learned, and the skill acquired will be useful in any compositional language. This is very much a hands-on course; there will be a lot of writing. This course is primarily intended for composers, but is suitable for anyone with a keen interest in the nuts-and-bolts workings of tonal gravity and motion. Any non-composers interested in taking 501 should contact Prof. Weymouth.

PLEASE NOTE: This course is NOT designed to fulfill the DMA Theory Requirement.

3 credits

MUS 502, Proseminar in Tonal Analysis
Instructor: TBD
Thursdays, 1-4pm, Staller Center 2318

The application of various techniques of analysis to tonal works. Rhythmic, harmonic, linear, thematic, and other elements of musical structure are considered. 

This counts as a "theory" course for performers, and is intended for all graduate students.

3 credits

MUS 504, Analysis of 20/21st-Century Music
Instructor: Prof. Judith Lochhead
Tuesdays, 1-4pm, Staller Center 2310

The course will be devoted to the analysis of four recently composed works (i.e., composed after 2000). I will choose two works and the other two will be chosen by the seminar. In addition to analyzing particular works, we will consider larger questions about how analysis contributes to musical understanding generally and how it contributes to the practices of composition and performance. 

As a class, we will examine the music from a variety of perspectives, with particular emphasis on how the sounding domains of timbre, texture, rhythm and pitch articulate formal organization. We will use existing methodologies for the description of pitch and rhythm and develop new methods for taking account of timbre and texture. 

Class participants will be required to complete weekly reading and analysis projects, one short mid-term paper on an assigned topic, and a larger, semester-end project on a 21st century piece that each participant chooses. 

Attendance is mandatory and only one absence is allowed (exceptional circumstances will be considered). Unexcused absences will lower your grade. 

Grading is based on weekly assignments, one short paper, and the semester project.

This counts as a “theory” course for performers, and is intended for all graduate students.

3 credits

MUS 507, Studies in Music History: New Vocalities in 20th- and 21st-Century Music
Instructor: Katherine Kaiser
Mondays, 1-4pm, Staller Center 2318

“In recent years, [composers] have turned more and more to vocal music. In their hands, one sees a new style of singing developing that attempts to break from tradition as much as it is developing a new ideal of espressivo.” - H. H. Stuckenschmidt (1959)
In this course, we will explore the extended techniques and "new expressivo" of mid-century vocal works for voice or voices, centered around the "New Vocality" of singer/composer Cathy Berberian, and composers Luciano Berio, Mauricio Kagel, John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Dieter Schnebel, Luigi Nono, Meredith Monk, Peter Maxwell Davies, and Pauline Oliveros. We will trace their origins in earlier modernist works by Arnold Schoenberg, Ernst Toch, and Pierre Schaeffer and their legacies in works by Laurie Anderson, Pamela Z, Peter Ablinger, and Juliana Snapper. What cultural and historical phenomena of the 1950s and 1960s led to this experimentation? How did new music technologies, such as oscillators and tape, influence this movement? What are the ramifications for the relationships between singers and composers? How does one notate new vocal sounds?

Weekly readings will be taken from primary sources and recent scholarship. Students will be evaluated on weekly writing assignments, in-class presentations and discussions, and a final research project.

This counts as a "history" course for performers, and is primarily intended for MM/DMA students.

3 credits

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MUS 515, Fundamentals of Electronic Music
Instructor: Professor Daria Semegen
Tuesdays, 7-10pm, Staller Center 3343

A technical or scientific background is not required. Graduate student composers, performers, scholars expand their observation, analysis of sonic components through systematic parametric listening (hear what you’ve been missing!). We observe how our individual defense reactions and tendencies affect our perception, intuitive feedback and consequent choices. Learn to observe, compare and understand how sounds behave in different contexts, their effect on perception, aesthetic and technical outcomes.

A brief historical survey of electronic music and audio technology includes discussion of a few landmark musique concrète and electroacoustic works, aesthetic concepts, creative approaches and combinations with other media, arts and technologies. We consider the uses of pitch, noise works, mixed media works, the artists’ methods, thinking-tools and the results. Included are basic studio engineering skills, analysis of sounds/timbres and textures, recognition/description/analysis of formal structures in electronic music works with/without scores; composition strategies, improvisation methods, editing techniques and sound-art composition.

Hands-on studio work includes sound generation, recording, methods of working with registral/speed/spatial modification, mixing, volume definition, timbral/textural design, structures, sonic persona, editing techniques; evaluation/modification/mixing/editing in post-production. Experimentation is integral to this genre: we design strategies for experiments and improvisation-play to generate new material, modify existing material and apply degrees of random to yield unexpected new results in creative studio work. Lastly, mastering and refining editing techniques (where/why/how to hear and choose) is of paramount importance in creating work that rises above the ordinary demo. In class we also hear and discuss students’ hands-on technical practice and creative assignments. (This evening class has a midpoint refreshment break.)

The one-of-a-kind analog classic electronic music studio has a custom array of sound generation and modification devices, and analog voltage-controlled synths including vintage Buchla, Moog and Arp. Unique modification units include pioneering German engineer Harald Bode’s Klangumwander and Bode Ring-Modulator, used by K. Stockhausen. Included are EMT Electronic Reverberation unit (Elektromesstechnik), many band-pass, graphic, parametric analog filters/equalizers, TSM flanger and others.

Mus 515 fulfills the music theory requirements of MM students in performance. It is not intended to generate a DMA essay except with previous permission. MUS 515 is required for MA, PhD composition students. It is a listed prerequisite for Mus 516 Electronic Music Workshop, and for Mus 517 Computer Music.

Undergraduates enroll with a special permission form: https://www.grad.stonybrook.edu/forms/. Send questions to Daria.Semegen@stonybrook.edu

This counts as a "theory" course only for performers in the MM program.

3 credits

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MUS 536, Area Studies in Ethnomusicology: Bodies and Sex in Electronic Music
Instructor: Prof. Benjamin Tausig
Thursdays, 1-4pm, Staller Center 2310

The category of "electronic music" describes at least a century of genres and sonic practices. Both in possession of and possessed by instruments that function as mighty totems of modernity, human actors have discovered in electronic music a means of refiguring identity, sexuality, and even the human itself. This course is an empirically-focused examination of bodies and sex in a variety of electronic music cultures, from early 20th-century South India to 1980s Paisley Park, from the hypermodernity of South African studios to the BBC Radiophonic Workshop.
There will be weekly readings and brief written responses, in addition to a final paper or project. This course is open primarily to graduate students including DMA, MM, and PhD level. Undergraduates may be accepted under specific circumstances. Some familiarity with musical analysis is expected, although no specific experience with electronic music is required.

This counts as a “history” course for performers, and is primarily intended for MM/DMA students. MA/PhD students considering enrolling must confer first with Prof. Tausig.

3 credits

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MUS 539, Proseminar in Ethnomusicology
Instructor: Prof. Margarethe Adams
Wednesdays, 2:30-5:30pm, Melville Library W1531

An introduction to the field of ethnomusicology as practiced in Europe and North America over the past century. Theoretical and methodological approaches in ethnomusicology are examined as they relate to major periods in the history of ethnographic disciplines. Students will be introduced to important ethnomusicological scholarship, especially those scholars representing particular trajectories and developments in the history of the discipline. Designed as the first course in the Ethnomusicology series, this proseminar is required for Ethnomusicology MA and PhD students.

This seminar is primarily intended for MA/PhD students. Though it counts as a “history” course for performers, any MM/DMA students considering enrolling must confer first with Prof. Adams.

3 credits

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MUS 555, Topics in 20th-Century Music: Music and Sound: Nature, Romanticism, Modernism
Instructor: Prof. Stephen Smith
Tuesdays, 1-4pm, Melville Library W1531

The Romanticism of the 19th century, and its echoes in the 20th, are often characterized in terms of when and where they locate nature. For the moderns of these epochs, such stories often go, a nature that is harmonious in itself appears as a primordial past or a distant elsewhere, from which modernity in all its dissonance is painfully separated, either by vast expanses of space and time, or by limitations of knowledge and experience. This seminar, though, will examine a countercurrent running through 19th and 20th century music and musical thought (including thought on sound), according to which these scissions of nature and history are grasped from the start as the spreading echo of a scission within nature. For such thought, nature is not the other modernity; instead, nature is modern in itself. We will test the hypothesis that following these threads can present us with a richly reconfigured picture of musical Romanticism and Modernism alike. Leonard Meyer famously characterized certain strains of musical Modernism as late, late Romanticism; we will look, in the beginnings of the 19th century, for the opening of an early, early musical modernism, rooted in what it frames the modernity of nature; and we will work to track this modernism of nature as it unfolds through the twentieth century as well.

Telling this story will entail examining work in music history, music theory, ethnomusicology, art history, ecocriticism, and philosophy. Though our focus will be principally on the 19th and 20th centuries, we will also devote some time to broader histories of concepts of nature, as these entwine with histories of music and musical thought. Student grades will be based upon attendance and participation, in-class presentations, and a substantial research paper.

This seminar is primarily intended for MA/PhD students. Though it counts as a “history” course for performers, any MM/DMA students considering enrolling must confer first with Prof. Smith.

3 credits

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MUS 557, Topics in Theory: The Politics of Musical Form
Instructor: Prof. August Sheehy
Mondays, 1-4pm, Staller Center 2314

It is perhaps only a slight exaggeration to say that modern music theory is the study of musical form(s). No topic has so persistently exercised the minds of music theorists and analysts in the past two centuries. Indeed, it continues to generate weighty monographs, e.g., Hepokoski and Darcy’s Elements of Sonata Theory (2006), Janet Schmalfeldt’s in the Process of Becoming (2011), and Steven Vande Moortele’s Two-Dimensional Sonata Form (2012). Yet form is hardly the exclusive purview of music. As literary theorist Caroline Levine has recently written, “It is the work of form to make order. This means that forms are the stuff of politics.” Following Levine’s suggestion and recent conferences on the topic (e.g., “Formalism and its Discontents” at Rutgers University, “The Politics of Form: What Does Art Know about Society?” at the Center for Literature and Cultural Research in Berlin), we will seek to discover what politics are at play when we talk about musical form.
The texts in the seminar will stretch from Plato’s *Republic* to Kanye West’s deconstruction of the “album-as-form” with *The Life of Pablo*, but a consistent thread through the seminar will be “sonata form.” As the epitome of formal discourse in Western classical music, “sonata form” provides a rich case study in the potential of music to engage contemporary politics. For A. B. Marx, the first theorist to codify sonata form, it signified “freedom” in the Age of Jewish Emancipation; a century and half later, Susan McClary argued that sonata form perpetuates patriarchal values. Ultimately, our task will be not only to listen for and to analyze the politics in musical form, but to understand the ways in which our own analyses of music are political.

All readings will be in English, but students with the ability to do so will be encouraged to engage with primary sources in the original languages.

*This seminar is primarily intended for MA/PhD students. Though it counts as a “theory” course for performers, any MM/DMA students considering enrolling must confer first with Prof. Sheehy.*

3 credits