Readings in Music Theory
Fall 2016

W 2:00–4:45
MEH 3244

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Segall
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Office: MEH 4238
Office hours: By appointment

Course Description

The discipline of music theory has evolved considerably over the past few decades. We’ll look at some of the main trends, surveying the influential and cutting-edge writings that have shaped and continue to shape our field. Through weekly writing assignments, seminar discussion, and individualized research, students will engage critically with the major issues, methodologies, and debates of contemporary music theory.

Blackboard

PDFs of all assigned readings will be available on Blackboard (canopy.uc.edu).

Study Groups

Students will be placed into study groups of three members. You’ll share weekly response essays with the members of your group, and you’ll write commentaries on the essays you receive. Group membership will rotate throughout the semester.

Course Requirements

12 response essays (3 pages): Write a short response essay that critically engages any aspect of the week’s readings. Consider the readings individually (what contribution does each make? is its argument convincing or interesting or problematic?) and as a group (what are the main concerns of this area of scholarship? how have these concerns been addressed?). You may include diagrams, examples, or original analyses. Essays are due by 10 p.m. Monday, two days before our class meeting. Email essays to me and to the members of your study group.

24 commentaries (1 page): Write a short commentary in response to each essay in your study group. Address the commentary to the essay’s author. Be collegial, thoughtful, and professional in your response. Commentaries are due by 10 p.m. Tuesday, the night before our class meeting. Email commentaries to me and to the members of your study group.

Book review (6–10 pages): Select any academic book in the field of music theory. The book may be a monograph or edited collection; it may be a book from which we’ll read an excerpt in this course; it may be listed or not listed in the course bibliography. No two students can select
the same book, and I must approve your choice. Write a critical assessment that discusses its contribution to the field, the strength of its argument and analysis, the style of its prose, or any other aspects worthy of mention. On October 26, you’ll give a 10–15-minute presentation that summarizes your review; provide a handout that includes analyses or diagrams to be discussed. The written review is due at 10 p.m. the same evening.

Review of recent scholarship (10 pages): Write a critical review that assesses recent scholarship in a research area of your choice. Select five articles or book chapters. I must approve both your topic and your readings. Discuss the state of research in the area, including its primary goals and methods, and the contributions that have been made. Also identify issues in the scholarship that have not been adequately addressed. On December 7, you’ll give a 10–15-minute presentation summarizing your review; provide a handout to accompany the presentation. The written review is due at 10 p.m. the same evening.

Formatting and length: Your name should appear in the text of your document (for example, in a header). Titles are fine, whether generic (e.g., “Essay #1”) or specific (e.g., “Readings on Rhythm and Meter”), but leave out the other junk that can clog up the header (course name, course code, student number, etc.). A length of one page means the essay ends on page 2. Standard formatting uses double spacing, 12-pt. Times New Roman, and 1-inch margins, yielding about 300 words per page. If you use any other formatting you must adjust the page length accordingly. Word documents are preferred for reviews.

Grading: I won’t provide feedback or assign grades to the essays. You’ll receive commentaries from the members of your study group, and the essays will form the basis of our class discussion. As long as your essays are completed on time and with appropriate seriousness and professionalism, you will receive full credit. Reviews will be returned with comments and suggestions.

Incompletes will not be assigned in this course. Students who have not submitted final papers by Monday, December 12, will receive a final course grade of F.
**Reading Scholarly Writing**

Original scholarship is systematic and comprehensive, and it considers all relevant prior literature on the topic. Each work of scholarship offers a new idea to the field. (A new analysis using existing ideas is not usually sufficient for scholarly publication.)

Read slowly and carefully, sentence by sentence, from beginning to end. Most articles follow a common structure: introduction (which states the main ideas and their importance, and which justifies of the scope of study), literature review (which situates the new ideas with respect to prior scholarship), methodology (which establishes the theoretical approach the article will take), results (which applies the theory through musical analysis), and conclusion (which summarizes the main contributions).

Scholarly writing in music theory contains musical examples and other diagrams, charts, and figures. The musical examples are often annotated with information crucial to the primary argument; their details are often discussed thoroughly in the prose.

Take notes as you read, writing in your own words. Summarize the main points of each section. What new argument is the author advancing? How does it respond to existing scholarship? What evidence does the author provide to support the argument?

Ask questions of the author. Is the argument convincing? Is it problematic? Is anything unclear? Does the evidence support the argument? Is the author being too selective, or misinterpreting results, in order to advance a particular viewpoint? How does the author address potential pitfalls or criticisms?

Study the musical analyses closely. How does each musical example advance the argument? Can you hear the author’s analysis? Does it describe how you already hear the music, or does it guide you to hear the music in new ways? Could the analytical method apply to other works or repertoires? Would it have to be modified in that case?

Reflect on the reading’s contribution to the field. How does it address the larger concerns of the field or a particular subfield? How does the reading connect to other scholarly works you have read? What gaps in knowledge does it leave open? What further work is needed?
August 24
The Discipline of Music Theory
No essay due


August 31
Phrase Rhythm and Meter
Essay #1 due


September 7
Classical Form
Essay #2 due


September 14
Cadence
Essay #3 due


September 21
Schema Theory
Essay #4 due


September 28
Transformational Theory
Essay #5 due


October 5
Neo-Riemannian Theory
Essay #6 due


October 12
Voice-Leading Spaces
Essay #7 due


October 19
Embodied Cognition (Guest lecturer: Arnie Cox)
Essay #8 due—send to both Dr. Cox (arnie.cox@oberlin.edu) and myself


October 26
Student Presentations
Book Review due

November 2
No Class (SMT)

November 9
Early Music (Guest lecturer: Miguel Roig-Francolí)
Essay #9 due—send to both Dr. Roig-Francolí (roigfrma@ucmail.uc.edu) and myself

Main reading:

Additional background reading:


November 16
Literary Theory
Essay #10 due


November 23
Gender and Sexuality
Essay #11 due


November 30
Jazz
Essay #12 due


December 7 (exam week)
Student Presentations
Final Paper due
Readings in Music Theory—Bibliography (Fall 2016)

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The Discipline of Music Theory


Schenkerian Theory

(a) Schenkerian Analysis


*(b) Schenkerian Thought*


**Form**

*(a) Classical Era*


(b) 19th/Early 20th Centuries


**Rhythm, Meter, Temporality**


**Schema Theory and Partimento**


**Performance Studies**


**Chromatic Harmony**


**Transformational Theory**


Special Issue: Animating the “Inside.” *Music Theory Online* 15/1 (2009).

**Klumpenhouwer Networks**


Special Issue: On Michael Buchler’s “Reconsidering Klumpenhouwer Networks.” *Music Theory Online* 13/3 (2007).

**Neo-Riemannian Theory**


**Generalized Voice Leading**


**Set Theory (Analysis of Twentieth-Century Music)**


**Twelve-Tone and Serial Technique**


**Contour**


Scale Theory


Clampitt, David, and Thomas Noll. “Modes, the Height-Width Duality, and Handschin’s Tone Character.” Music Theory Online 17/1 (2011).


**Similarity**


**Approaches to Musical Meaning**

(a) **Philosophy**


(b) **Semiotics**


g) Narrative


(d) Intertextuality


Krim, Adam P. “Bloom, Post-Structuralism(s), and Music Theory.” *Music Theory Online* 0/11 (1994).


**Embodyment**


**Music Cognition and Perception**


**Gender and Sexuality**


**Disability**


Special Issue: *Music Theory Online* 15/3–4 (2009).

**Russian Music Theory**


**History of Music Theory**


(a) Antiquity to Renaissance


(*b* 18th and 19th Centuries)


(*c* History of Set Theory)


**Early Music**


**Popular Music: General**


**Popular Music: Harmony and Voice Leading**


**Popular Music: Form**


Special Issue: (Per)Form in(g) Rock. *Music Theory Online* 17/3 (2011).

**Popular Music: Rhythm and Meter**


### Popular Music: Gender and Sexuality


### Jazz


Special Issue: Journal of Music Theory 49/2 (2005).

**Film Music**


**Contemporary Music**


