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.

Weekly Assignments

12 response essays (3 pages): Write a short response essay that engages any aspect of the week’s readings. You might provide a critical summary of one or all readings, evaluate the readings’ arguments and conclusions, draw connections with other literature or repertoire, use the readings to analyze a passage of music, or do something else that demonstrates a thoughtful scholarly interaction with the readings. Essays are due by 10 a.m. Tuesday, the day 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 a.m. Wednesday, the morning of our class meeting. Email commentaries to me and to the members of your study group.

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. Double spacing, 12-pt. Times New Roman, and 1-inch margins are the norm.

**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 for this part of the course.

**Final Paper**

**Topic:** Choose a subfield or repertoire not covered in class, and write a critical review of recent theoretical literature on that topic. The syllabus contains a list of suggested topics, but it isn’t exhaustive—you can choose a different topic, or define your own (e.g., recent approaches to a particular genre or composer).

**Bibliography (5–8 items):** Compile a short bibliography of scholarly articles, books, and dissertations, placing the primary emphasis on *recent* literature (year of publication starts with a 2). My list of suggested topics includes authors who have written on each topic. You can include writings by all, or some, or none of these authors. To find items for your bibliography, use RILM, browse recent theory journals, skim citations and lists of works cited, and/or consult me. The bibliography is due on **Wednesday, October 15**. You and I will whittle down the bibliography to form the reading list for your paper (approx. 5 articles or 2 books).

**Presentation (30 minutes):** Teach us about the articles and books you’ve read. Use a handout. Why is the topic important? What are the main issues? How has each author approached the topic? Walk us through examples or analyses drawn from the readings. You can include your own analyses as well. Presentations will take place during the last two weeks of class.

**Final paper (10 pages):** A complete draft of your paper is due on the day of your presentation. I’ll read your paper and respond with feedback. The final draft is due by email on **Monday, December 15**.

Incompletes will not be assigned in this course. Students who have not submitted final papers by Monday, December 15, will receive a grade of F.
August 27
The Discipline of Music Theory
No essay due


September 3
Phrase Rhythm and Meter
Essay #1 due


September 10
Classical Form
Essay #2 due


September 17  
Schema Theory  
Essay #3 due


September 24  
Transformational Theory  
Essay #4 due


October 1  
Neo-Riemannian Theory  
Essay #5 due

October 8
Voice-Leading Spaces
Essay #6 due


October 15
Literary Theory
Essay #7 due
Bibliography due


October 22
Gender and Sexuality
Essay #8 due


**October 29**

**Embodiment and Metaphor**

**Essay #9 due**


**November 5**

**Cognition (Guest lecturer: Steven Cahn)**

**Essay #10 due—send to both Dr. Cahn (cahnsj@ucmail.uc.edu) and myself**


November 12
Approaches to Popular Music
Essay #11 due


November 19
New Music, New Approaches
Essay #12 due


November 26
Student Presentations and Final Papers (I)

December 3
Student Presentations and Final Papers (II)

December 10 (Exam Week)
Make-up Class

If I have to cancel class on November 26 or December 3, we will meet on December 10 for the second round of student presentations. Otherwise, we will not hold class this day.
Suggested Final Paper Topics

Theories and Methodologies

- Chromatic harmony: Richard Bass, David Damschroder, Daniel Harrison, Kevin Swinden
- Cognition: David Huron, Carol Krumhansl, Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis, David Temperley
- Contour: Michael Friedmann, Elizabeth West Marvin, Robert Morris, Rob Schultz
- Counterpoint: Mark Anson-Cartwright, Murray Dineen, Peter Franck, Olli Väisälä
- Critical theory: Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, Adam Krims, Judith Lochhead
- Disability: Jennifer Iverson, Shersten Johnston, Anabel Maler, Joseph Straus
- Form—classical: William Caplin, James Hepokoski, Samuel Ng, Mark Richards
- Form—19th century: Warren Darcy, Seth Monahan, Stephen Rodgers, Steven Vande Moortele
- Gesture: Michael Berry, Robert Hatten, Eugene Montague, Alexandra Pierce
- History of set theory: Jonathan Bernard, Michiel Schuijer
- Intertextuality: Michael Klein, Kevin Korsyn, Wayne Petty, René Rusch
- Klumpenhouwer networks: Michael Buchler, Philip Lambert, David Lewin, Shaugn O’Donnell
- Narrative: Bryon Almén, Gregory Karl, Michael Klein, Fred Everett Maus
- Performance and analysis: Mitchell Ohriner, John Rink, William Rothstein, Janet Schmalfeldt
- Scale theory: David Clampitt, John Clough, Norman Carey, Gerald Myerson
- Schenkerian analysis: Poundie Burstein, Frank Samarotto, Carl Schachter, Lauri Suurpää
- Schenkerian thought: Matthew Brown, Nicholas Cook, Joseph Dubiel, Robert Snarrenberg
- Semiotics: Kofi Agawu, Robert Hatten, Raymond Monelle, Jenefer Robinson
- Similarity: Michael Buchler, Marcus Castrén, Eric Isaacson, Ian Quinn
- Transformation: Julian Hook, David Lewin, John Roeder, Steven Rings

Repertoires

- 18th-century music: Gregory Decker, Roman Ivanovitch, Danuta Mirka, Channan Willner
- 19th-century music: Suzannah Clark, Yonatan Malin, Peter Smith, Deborah Stein
- 20th-century music (early): Edward Gollin, Gretchen Horlacher, Rebecca Leydon, Dmitri Tymoczko
- 20th-century music (post-war): Dora Hanninen, Daniel Jenkins, Benjamin Levy, Catherine Losada
- Early American popular music: David Berry, Michael Buchler, Michael Callahan, Nicholas Stoia
- Early music: Jennifer Bain, Cristle Collins Judd, Elizabeth Eva Leach, Jonathan Wild
- Film music: James Buhler, Frank Lehman, Scott Murphy, David Neumeyer
- Jazz: Steve Larson, Stefan Caris Love, Henry Martin, Keith Waters
- Pop/rock music—form: John Covach, Brad Osborn, Mark Spicer, David Temperley
- Pop/rock music—harmony: Nicole Biamonte, Guy Capuzzo, Allan Moore, Ken Stephenson
- Pop/rock music—rhythm: Robin Attas, Mark Butler, Gregory McCandless, Jonathan Pieslak
• Pop/rock music—timbre: Lori Burns, David Blake, David Heetderks, Mark Slater
• Pop/rock music—voice leading: Walter Everett, Timothy Koozin, Drew Nobile, Shaughn O’Donnell
• Postmodernism: Jennifer Iverson, Blair Johnston, Catherine Losada, Yayoi Uno Everett
• Rap: Kyle Adams, Adam Krims, Noriko Manabe, Justin Williams
• Video game music: Brent Auerbach, William Cheng, Elizabeth Medina-Gray, Steven Beverburg Reale
• World music: Marc Perlman, Martin Scherzinger, Sami Abu Shumays, Michael Tenzer