SENIOR SEMINAR: MUSIC AND LITERATURE (LIT 494)

FALL 2017

Wednesdays 3:30-6:20
LA 103B

Professor Eric Reimer
LA 226
Office hours: Tues 11:00-1:00, Wed 2:00-3:00, & by appt.
eric.reimer@umontana.edu

ABOUT THE COURSE

Although “music and literature” has yet to find its footing as a precise mode of inquiry, this course will explore the intuition and the evidence that the two arts meet in significant ways. Part of the struggle of this course will be in determining how we can talk about the intersections without falling into “impressionist twaddle,” and we’re certain to meet with both rewards and frustrations as we do so. Mindful that music was of special importance to the Romantic poets, we will begin the course by examining some of the great odes in the context of Walter Pater’s famous claim that “all art constantly aspires to the condition of music.” The balance of the course will find us traversing an eclectic but exciting reading list with the goal of assessing how music operates as a structuring device, as a metaphor, and as a guiding aesthetic principle in works of poetry and fiction. Our musical contexts will find us visiting the classical, blues, jazz, folk, and popular music traditions.

THE SET LIST

- Chamoiseau, Patrick Solibo Magnificent (1988)
- Kay, Jackie Trumpet (1998)
- Morrison, Toni Jazz (1992)
- Woolf, Virginia The Waves (1931)

There will be additional required readings made available via the course Moodle site.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Class participation .......................... 30%
Formal response papers (2) ............ 30%
Multigenre essay (3500+ words) .... 40%

The response papers (likely 3-4 pages each) will be based on prompts/directives that I supply. These papers must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. Unless otherwise noted, papers must be typed and double-spaced, with 1” margins; to avoid grade reductions, you must meet the minimum page requirement (e.g., 3-4 pages means at least three full pages, not counting the space used for headings, etc.). Additional formatting instructions will be provided when the papers are assigned. Late papers will be marked down one-half letter grade per day (weekends count as one day). To take advantage of revision opportunities (when/if they arise) of formal papers, the original paper will need to have been turned in on time and have met the basic criteria of the assignment.
Your class participation grade will be calculated based on your attendance, on occasional short and informal writing assignments, on stray quizzes, on your contributions to our discussions (both in class and on Moodle's discussion forums), on a 10-12 minute presentation of your semester's research, and generally on your willingness and ability to engage the course texts attentively and critically on a class-to-class basis. If you miss more than two or more class meetings you can expect that your participation grade likely will not be higher than a "C+". I'll expect you to bring the relevant texts to class at all times, and to have comments, observations, and questions at the ready. Please be sure to have all cell phones in silent mode (and, ideally, stowed away) during class; I will assume that any electronic devices (laptops, tablets, phones, et al.) will be used only in the service of class activities (e.g., taking notes, etc).

I have called the major written work of the course a "multigenre" essay because I'm seeking a project that both engages the texts of our course critically and accounts for the diverse and individualized functions of music in our lives. To that end, and in the spirit of jazz improvisation, you will write a paper that melds the cognitive with the emotional, the analytical with the creative. Rather than a linear, single-track argumentative paper, you will assemble a collage of literary analysis, anecdotes, song lyrics, reflections, responses to the music you experience in and out of the class this semester, research-informed commentary, journalism, autobiography, poetry, creative writing, etc. Although probably not suggesting any mandated sense of navigation, the best essays will nevertheless possess a cross-referencing, webbed kind of logic. You will likely need to invest yourself more in this paper than you would in a conventional paper, but the rewards may be greater. It is my hope that you will work on the paper throughout the semester; I will ask you to submit the prelude for this paper in advance of the completed essay. You may format the essay with numerically identified, single-spaced paragraphs, or in any manner you find appropriate, and with double-spaces between paragraphs/sections.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All work that you submit for this class must be your own, and it must be written exclusively for this course. The unacknowledged borrowing of others' words or ideas—whether from books, the internet, or other sources—constitutes the serious academic crime of plagiarism; if you fail to document properly those sources consulted for your writing, you risk an automatic failure for the entire course. If you have any doubts or questions about plagiarism or the University's policies regarding student conduct and academic integrity, please see me.

SPECIAL NEEDS

If you have a documented disability, or otherwise anticipate needing special accommodations in this course, please bring this to my attention as early in the semester as possible so that we have an understanding and can make any necessary arrangements.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

(M=Moodle; HO=Handout)


Read: Selected poems (HO); Woolf “The String Quartet” (HO).
Music: Mozart, Symphony No. 40.

Read: Wordsworth “Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey” (M); Shelley “To a Skylark” (M); Adorno, “Music, Language, and Composition” (M); Poe “The Poetic Principle” (M)

Music: Beethoven, Symphony No. 5.


Read: Keats “Ode to a Nightingale” (w/ Dylan “Mr. Tambourine Man”) and Keats “To Autumn” (w/ R.E.M. “Find the River”) (HO); Adorno “The Radio Symphony” (M); Joyce “The Dead” (M).

Due: Four-part music DNA assignment


Read: Woolf The Waves (7-207).


Read: Woolf The Waves (207-297).


MAR 1: Case study in music as literature. Song lyrics. Music and modernism.

Case Study in Music as Literature: assorted artists and song lyrics.

Read: Eliot The Waste Land (M).

Music: Stravinsky The Rite of Spring.

Due: Response paper #1.


Read: Selected poems: Langston Hughes and Philip Larkin (M); Gilroy “Jewels Brought Back from Bondage: Black Music and the Politics of Authenticity” (M).

Music: Coltrane A Love Supreme.


Read: Morrison Jazz.

MAR 22: Spring Break

NO CLASS


Read: Kay Trumpet.

**Read:** Chamoiseau *Solibo Magnificent*.


**Film:** *The Commitments*
**Due:** Response paper #2


**Read:** Hornby from *Songbook* (M); Sheffield from *Love is a Mix Tape* (M); Lethem “The Beards” (M); Heaney “Casualty” (M).
**Due:** Prelude for multigenre essay.


Presentations.
**Read:** Patchett *Bel Canto* (selections) (M).

MAY 3: Recapitulation and coda.

Presentations. Course evaluations.

MAY 11: Last writes.

**Due:** Multigenre essay, by 5:00 p.m. (under my door in LA 226 or in my box in LA 133)