

# COMPOSING A COMMUNITY

Honors 2850-001/002

Fall 2019: Mon/Weds, 1:25-2:45pm (001) or 3:00-4:20pm (002)

Marriott Honors Community 1205 (Big Ideas Room)

Phillip Bimstein: Office hours by appointment before or after class

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## Course description and objectives

In this student-centered, community-cultivating course we engage and critically assess music as a socially-reflective art. Music is our vehicle for a journey into multiple dimensions of human behavior, with side-trips through rhetoric, political theory, sociology, narrative, improvisation, ideology and identity.

Flowing from a wide variety of cultural texts and a pan-historic genre-busting playlist, students will correlate musical forms, processes and expressions with the societies from which they spring—including their own. Cross-cutting themes include: music as dialogue; music as thought; music as identity; music as ideology; music as a mirror of government; music and social movements; and music's evolutionary role in human development.

Students are expected to have intellectually rigorous and personally meaningful discussions about music, dialogue and community. The goals are for students: (1) to achieve a more articulated experience of music through the filters of other disciplines; and (2) to gain an enriched understanding of community through musical manifestations of participatory democracy.

In addition, students will develop community-building skills in two ways: (1) drawing upon examples from musical improvisation, students will study and rehearse *listening*, *understanding*, and creatively *responding* as both musical and dialogical skills; and (2) students will develop their potential to heal the body politic and transform their communities through the formal practices of mindfulness and loving-kindness.

A touchstone for the course is the Navajo *songdog* myth (about a coyote who “sings” the world into existence) coupled with Benjamin Barber's conception of citizens as “makers” who “create a common future.” At the end of the course, the students will be able to develop, combine and apply their musical and political potential to metaphorically “sing” their world into existence.

The first phase of the course is devoted to musical ***Voices*** and rhetorical forms, as we explore both ***The Dialogue of Music*** and ***The Music of Dialogue***.

The middle phase of the course examines ***Our Musical Selves***, both by “listening” to ourselves (through the music of many cultures and genres) and by “articulating” ourselves (by applying musical processes and analyses to our own lives and identities).

In the third and culminating phase of the course we will explore the ways students can “act in concert” to orchestrate our *Voices* and *Selves* together, as we collaboratively—and mindfully—***Compose our Community***.

# SCHEDULE

The schedule is subject to modification (with advance notification). Always check Canvas.

## *Voices: The Dialogue of Music*

- Aug 19 Overture: *Citizenship in Concert*  
☛ Hand in: Self-portrait and initial thoughts on music/community
- Aug 21 Composing a Community: Collaborative Performance of a New Democracy  
How to Practice Politics with Music in Mind
- Aug 26 Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening
- Aug 28 Healing the Body Politic–Mindfully  
The Art of Is: Improvising as a Way of Life (pp1-35)
- Aug 29 20-minute Central Practice of Mindfulness
- Sept 4 The Art of Is: Improvising as a Way of Life (pp36-101)
- Sept 9 Listening as Thinking: From Rhetoric to Philosophy to Formal Development  
☛ Hand in: Think Piece 1 (free choice: any course-related topic)
- Sept 11 Sonata Form and its Rhetorical Implications
- Sept 12 20-minute Central Practice of Mindfulness
- Sept 16 The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: Being Musical with the Other
- Sept 18 How to Truly Listen + Music and Passion
- Sept 23 The Art of Is: Improvising as a Way of Life (pp105-135)
- Sept 25 The Art of Is: Improvising as a Way of Life (pp136-162)  
🎵 *Musical Workshop: Maria Correa (vocal group improvisation)*
- Sept 26 20-minute Central Practice of Mindfulness
- Sept 30 ☛ Hand in: Think Piece 2 (Music and Dialogue)

## *Our Musical Selves*

- Oct 2 Music and Society: Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music

~~~ *Fall Break* ~~~

- Oct 14 Music Fandom & Identity: Headbangers
- Oct 16 Composing a Life: Life as an Improvisatory Art + Discovering Mindfulness  
 🎵 *Musical Presentation: Charlotte Bell (oboe) and Kate MacLeod (fiddle, guitar)*
- Oct 17 20-minute Central Practice of Mindfulness
- Oct 21 Ethical & Gendered Aspects of Music: Music as Influence and Educator
- Oct 23 The Musical Brain: Evolutionary Perspectives on the Individual and Community
- Oct 28 🎵 *Musical Presentation: Hoofless*  
 🖊️ Hand in: Think Piece 3 (Music & Identity)

## *Composing a Community*

- Oct 30 Acting in Concert: Music, Leadership & Civic Participation  
 A Mindful Nation: Discovering Mindfulness
- Oct 31 20-minute Central Practice of Mindfulness (A Mindful Halloween?)
- Nov 4 The Singing Revolution
- Nov 6 Composing Apartheid: Music and Identity in South Africa
- Nov 11 African Rhythm, Values and Sensibility  
 🎵 *Musical Workshop: Steven Waters, Drum/Participation Workshop*
- Nov 13 Orchestrating Community: Music From the Inside Out
- Nov 14 20-minute Central Practice of Mindfulness
- Nov 18 🎵 *Musical Presentation: John Flanders, Jazz as Participatory Dialogue*  
 🖊️ Hand in: Think Piece 4
- Nov 20 The Noise of Political Animals + Voices of the Natural World & Sound Health
- Nov 25 The Art of Is: Improvising as a Way of Life (pp163-197)
- Nov 27 The Art of Is: Improvising as a Way of Life (pp201-241)
- Nov 28 20-minute Central Practice of Mindfulness
- Dec 2 TBD
- Dec 4 🖊️ Hand in: Final paper: Composing a Community

Please note: class dates will not change, but topics may be shifted or modified to respond to the needs and interests of the students. Notice of any such changes will be by announcement in class and/or by email.

If a particular reading or topic above especially interests you, you can request permission to further delve into it—as a possible substitute assignment—and report on it to the class.  
Discuss with me first.

## POLICIES AND STATEMENTS

### Teaching and learning methods

The course includes lectures, performances, demonstrations, discussions, and assignments: **Readings** (pdfs on e-reserve), **Listenings** (sound files online) and **Viewings** (videos and films online). Most will be assigned; others may be proposed or selected by the student with my approval. The content and materials may be modified to match the flow of the class and to respond to the needs/interests of individual students.

Students are graded on class preparation/participation, four Think Pieces, and one paper:

|                                                                           |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Attendance, engagement, discussion and/or written response to assignments | 33% |
| Four Think Pieces                                                         | 33% |
| Paper/presentation (based on course sources) on collaborative community   | 33% |

Students will be graded on standards rather than a curve. Specific criteria will be given for the final paper. Every student will have the opportunity to successfully meet the criteria in their own way. Collaborative, oral, performed and PowerPoint presentations may be occasionally substituted by the student (with advance permission) for the (otherwise written) Think Pieces, and are also possible as an accompaniment to—or elaboration upon—the final paper (subject to my advance approval). Pre-discussion of formats and topics is encouraged; I am pleased to respond to outlines and early drafts.

Although specific criteria will be given for the final paper, the following is the general grading rubric that applies to all assignments, class work and participation in this course:

### **A**

Outstanding achievement. Student performance demonstrates full command of the course materials—including thorough reflection, thoughtful critique, insightful interpretation, and meaningful application of the substantive knowledge gained in the course to a variety of topics, disciplines or situations. Student superbly communicates her or his ideas and interpretations in multiple class sessions and online discussions, and comments on, counterpoints or develops the thoughts of other students. Student also evinces a high level of imagination, originality and/or creativity that far surpasses course expectations.

### **A-**

Excellent achievement. Student performance demonstrates thorough knowledge of the course materials and exceeds course expectations by completing all requirements in a

superior manner. Student effectively communicates his or her ideas and interpretations in multiple class sessions and online discussions, and comments on, counterpoints or develops the thoughts of other students.

**B+**

Very good work. Student performance demonstrates above-average comprehension of the course materials and exceeds course expectations in all areas as described in the course syllabus. Student clearly communicates his or her ideas and interpretations in multiple class sessions and online discussions.

**B**

Good work. Student performance meets designated course expectations and demonstrates understanding of the course materials at an acceptable level. Student participates adequately in class sessions and online discussions.

**B-**

Marginal work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete understanding of course materials. Student participation in class and online discussions is minimal, unengaged and unenlightening.

**C**

Unsatisfactory work. Student performance demonstrates incomplete and inadequate understanding of course materials. Student participation in class and online discussions is weak.

**D**

Unacceptable work.

All of the evaluations above are also affected by the student's demonstrated effort and investment, and by what the student both puts into and takes out of the course—as evidenced by papers, Think Pieces and class participation. All higher grade levels also require that work be submitted on time

Faculty and student responsibilities

All students are expected to maintain professional behavior in the classroom setting, according to the Student Code, spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students have specific rights in the classroom as detailed in Article III of the Code. The Code also specifies proscribed conduct (Article XI) that involves cheating on tests, plagiarism, and/or collusion, as well as fraud, theft, etc. Students should read the Code carefully and know they are responsible for the content. According to Faculty Rules and Regulations, it is the faculty responsibility to enforce responsible classroom behaviors, beginning with verbal warnings and progressing to dismissal from class and a failing grade. Students have the right to appeal such action to the Student Behavior Committee.

## Classroom policies

This course is designed to cultivate a community of learning that is productive, hospitable and fair to all. To support our community of learning, all students are expected to abide by the following policies:

- The use of cell phones or other communication devices, whether for calling, checking news or messages, texting, social networking or any other purpose, is prohibited during class, except for a medical emergency. Students are expected to turn off such devices during class. Students using such devices will be required to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period.
- Students are permitted to use computers during class for note taking, discussing assigned pdfs and other class-related work ONLY. Students using computers for any purpose not related to our class will be required to leave the classroom for the remainder of the class period.
- iPods or mp3 players and the wearing of headphones are prohibited during class.
- Class participation is important and required. Some material is presented only in class, and student participation is key to achieving the course goals. Therefore, all students are expected to attend and participate in all classes including the *Musical Presentations*. In rare cases where class participation is not possible due to an unavoidable absence, an explanation is expected (preferably in advance) and makeup work will be required. In any event, lack of student participation can affect the final grade.
- Students are expected to arrive before class begins and remain until class ends. Coming to class significantly late or leaving significantly early may be factored into attendance.
- Late submissions of Think Pieces and the final paper may cost one letter grade per day.

## University of Utah Safety Statement

The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit [safeu.utah.edu](http://safeu.utah.edu).

## Students with Disabilities (ADA Statement)

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Union Building, (801) 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

## Student Names & Personal Pronouns

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name as well as "Preferred first name" (if previously entered by you in the Student Profile section of your CIS account, which managed can be managed at any time). While CIS refers to this as merely a preference, I will honor you by referring to you with the name and pronoun that feels best for you in class or on assignments. Please advise me of any name or pronoun changes so I can

help create a learning environment in which you, your name, and your pronoun are respected. If you need any assistance or support, please reach out to the LGBT Resource Center. [https://lgbt.utah.edu/campus/faculty\\_resources.php](https://lgbt.utah.edu/campus/faculty_resources.php)

### LGBT Resource Center

If you are a member of the LGBTQ+ community, I want you to know that my classroom is a safe zone. Additionally, please know that the University of Utah has an LGBT Resource Center on campus. They are located in Room 409 in the Olpin Union Building. Hours: M-F 8-5pm. You can visit their website to find more information about the support they can offer, a list of events through the center and links to additional resources: <http://lgbt.utah.edu/>. Please also let me know if there is any additional support you need in this class.

### Diversity / Inclusivity Statement

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

### Undocumented Student Support Statement

Immigration is a complex phenomenon with broad impact on those who are directly affected by it, as well as those who are indirectly affected by their relationships with family members, friends, and loved ones. If your immigration status presents obstacles to engaging in specific activities or fulfilling specific course criteria, confidential arrangements may be requested from the Dream Center. Arrangements with the Dream Center will not jeopardize your student status, your financial aid, or any other part of your residence. The Dream Center offers a wide range of resources to support undocumented students (with and without DACA) as well as students from mixed-status families. To learn more, please contact the Dream Center at 801.213.3697 or visit [dream.utah.edu](http://dream.utah.edu).

### Wellness Statement

Personal concerns such as stress, anxiety, relationship difficulties, depression, cross-cultural differences, etc., can interfere with a student's ability to succeed and thrive at the University of Utah. For helpful resources contact the Center for Student Wellness at [www.wellness.utah.edu](http://www.wellness.utah.edu) or 801.581.7776. I also highly recommend The Mindfulness Center at the University Counseling Center, 201 SOUTH 1460 EAST, ROOM 344 STUDENT SERVICES BUILDING, 801.581.6826, <https://mindfulnesscenter.utah.edu/>

### Modifications

The standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus may be modified at any time by the course instructor. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class.

### Coda (final notes)

I really look forward to our explorations and discussions of music, dialogue and community. As a musician and former mayor I am attuned to the flow of a meeting. I encourage us all to listen and respond to each other. We will mindfully compose our community of learning together. Content may be shaped or altered to fit students' needs and interests. It is my hope that we will all leave this course having a richer understanding of music and knowing more about ourselves, our communities and our world.