

Honors 4473

## Composing a Community

Fulfills Fine Arts Exploration

Spring Semester 2011

Monday & Wednesday, 11:50am-1:10pm

Honors Center 150

(*Musical Interludes* will meet at the Heritage Center in a room to be announced)

Phillip Bimstein

Office hours Monday & Wednesday

by appointment before or after class.

email [phillip@bimstein.com](mailto:phillip@bimstein.com)

Phone 801.519.2583

### Course description and objectives

In this student-centered, community-cultivating course we will engage and critically assess music as a socially-reflective art. Music will be our vehicle for a journey into multiple dimensions of human behavior, with side-trips through rhetoric, political theory, sociology, narrative, 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 will include: music as dialogue; music as thought; 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.

A touchstone for the course is the Navajo “songdog” myth that we all “sing” our 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 and rhetorical *Voices* and forms as we engage both *The Dialogue of Music* and the music of dialogue.

The second phase of the course examines *Our Musical Selves*, first by “listening” to ourselves (through the music of many cultures and genres) and then 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 citizens can “act in concert” to orchestrate our *Voices* and *Selves* together, as we collaboratively *Compose a Community*.

Schedule (subject to modification\*)

*Voices: The Dialogue of Music*

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| January 10  | Overture: <i>The Rite of Springdale</i>   |
| January 12  | Composing a Community: Collaborative Performance of a New Democracy                     |
| January 19  | Musicking & Meditations   |
| January 24  | The Dialogue of Music   |
| January 26  | Listening as Thinking: From Rhetoric to Philosophy to Formal Development                |
| January 31  | The Music of Dialogue (self-directed class)   |
| February 2  | Expressing Human Experience Through Music   |
| February 7  | Improvisation: Composing in the Moment ( <i>Musical Interlude I</i> )                   |
| February 9  | Evolutionary Perspectives, and the Individual vs. the Community                         |
| February 14 | Musical Languages: Celtic, Latin, Classical and Silence ( <i>Musical Interlude II</i> ) |
|             | 1 <sup>st</sup> paper due – on music and dialogue                                       |

*Our Musical Selves*

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| February 16 | The Delights and Dangers of Ambiguity   |
| February 23 | Composing a Life & Sonic Social Networks  |
| February 28 | The Twentieth Century Crisis  |
| March 2     | Progressive Music for a Populist America  |
| March 7     | The Golden Duel: Conflict & Resolution in Music ( <i>Musical Interlude III</i> )  |
| March 9     | The Cultural Study of Popular Music: Musical Identities and Feminist Perspectives |
| March 14    | Masculinity and Heavy Metal   |
| March 16    | Themes and Variations: Review of Course to Date; Insights & Inquiries             |
|             | Preview of the Utah Civility & Community Initiative                               |
|             | 2 <sup>nd</sup> paper due – on music and identity                                 |

*Composing a Community*

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| March 28 | The Mayoral Minuet & the Civility Concerto ( <i>Dialogue with SLC Mayor Ralph Becker</i> )  |
| March 30 | Estonia and the Singing Revolution  |
| April 4  | Composing Apartheid: Music and Identity in South Africa   |
| April 6  | African Rhythm, Values and Sensibility  |
| April 11 | Soundly Organized Humanity  |
| April 13 | Acting in Concert: Music, Community and Political Action  |
| April 18 | Orchestrating Community: Music From the Inside Out  |
| April 20 | Class Town Meeting: Findings/Proposals for the Utah Civility & Community Initiative<br>(Possibly including Utah Lt. Governor Greg Bell) |
| April 26 | Songdogs and Strong Democracy: Composing as Participatory Politics  |
| April 28 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> paper due – on composing a community  |

\*Note regarding the schedule: class dates will not change, but topics may be shifted or modified. Notice of any such changes will be by announcement in class. Readings, listenings and viewings will be assigned 1-2 weeks in advance.

The three *Musical Interludes* will be held in at the Heritage Center in a room to be announced.

## Teaching and learning methods

The course includes lectures, demonstrations, discussions, readings (pdfs on e-reserve), listenings (soundfiles online) and viewings (videos and films online). Some 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 will be graded on class preparation/participation and three papers (and/or presentations) corresponding to the 3 phases of the course:

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Class attendance, preparation and participation | 25% |
| Paper/presentation on music and dialogue        | 25% |
| Paper/presentation on musical identity          | 25% |
| Paper/presentation on collaborative community   | 25% |

Students will be graded on standards rather than a curve; specific criteria will be given for each of the assignments. Every student will have the opportunity to successfully meet the criteria in her or his own way. Collaborative, oral, performed and powerpoint presentations are possible, subject to my advance approval. Pre-discussion of formats and topics is encouraged; I am pleased to respond to outlines and early drafts. I will make assignments as clear and far in advance as possible.

## 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.
- The use of radios, iPods or similar mp3 players and the wearing of headphones is prohibited during class.
- Students are expected to attend all classes including the *Musical Interludes*; absences 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 papers will cost one letter grade per day.

### 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, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. 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, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations

### 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 compose our community of learning together. Content may be shaped 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.