

SGBH 102: Music and Verse
Spring 2021
MWF 12:15-1:25, Online

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Office: Virtual office hours, by appointment only

Course Description

Music, verse, and drama all create heightened, focused experiences through performances, though in distinct ways. With words and sounds, verse and music create unique emotional experiences through elements such as meter, rhythm, tone, duration, and silence, while drama provides a window into an alternate world. Through poems, classical music, jazz, plays, operas, and musicals from a wide range of cultural traditions, as well as exercises in making both verse and music, we investigate the interplay of formal constraint and freedom in the arts of performance.

Course Readings

Matsuo Basho, *On Love and Barley: Haiku of Basho* (Penguin). ISBN: 9780140444599
Classical Literary Criticism (Penguin). ISBN: 9780140446517
The Greek Plays (Modern Library). ISBN: 9780812983098
Ellison, *Living with Music* (Modern Library). ISBN: 9780375760235
Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*, trans. Kaufman (Vintage). ISBN: 9780394703695
Sells, ed. and trans., *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations*, 2nd ed. (White Cloud). ISBN: 9781883991692
Shakespeare, *Othello* (Folger). ISBN: 9781501146299

Other texts and materials will be distributed via Blackboard and are marked on the schedule as follows: (**)

Course Objectives

Course-Specific

- Show understanding of how literary and musical criticism can assist and increase comprehension of literary and musical works.
- Join in-class discussions spontaneously with evident attention to both classmates and course materials.

Gen Ed Area: Arts

- Demonstrate comprehension of contexts, theories, principles, and production processes in an arts discipline.
- Evaluate works of art using methods common to the arts.

Gen Ed Area: Ethics

- Evaluate the ethical dimensions of life and work across multiple cultural, philosophic and/or historical traditions.
- Identify characteristics of major ethical traditions.
- Apply ethical principles in decision-making.

Gen Ed Area: Global Understanding

- Explain local, national and global identities and commitments with increasing awareness of their environment.
- Explain how various cultures contribute to the development of a multicultural world.
- Describe the implications of global interdependence including its effects.

Assignments and Grading

Courses in the Shimer Great Books Program are heavily discussion-based and student-driven. Accordingly, class participation counts for a much higher proportion of student grades than in most courses: 50%. A series of written assignments will make up the other 50%.

Class participation presupposes careful and thorough preparation and serious intellectual involvement in class discussion. Students should come to class not only having read the text through, but having underlined, taken notes, and scanned over the marked text at least one additional time after the initial reading. On the basis of such preparation, students should be prepared for an intensive discussion focused on the texts or artworks assigned for that day.

You must also come prepared to class, and that means having the course text in front of you, along with annotations or notes. Hard copies are strongly preferred, especially for assigned books available from the college bookstore, but if electronic copies are used, you should plan to mark them and/or take notes as you read.

My expectation for class participation is that every member of class will be able to contribute with remarks and citations that are on-topic and reflect solid preparation for class. A student who meets that baseline will receive a grade in the **B range** for their participation portion. Students whose contribution is notably lacking—for instance, those who speak very little, who give no evidence of having done the reading carefully, who consistently change the topic in a disruptive way, or whose primary contributions are jokes or personal anecdotes—will receive a participation grade in the **C or D range**. Students who distinguish themselves through some particular service—such as consistently contributing new topics that shape the discussion, serving as a resource for navigating the text, or making a special effort to draw in quieter classmates—will qualify themselves for a participation grade in the **A range**.

Given the limitations of the online format, the professor reserves the right, in dialogue with students, to vary the format of class with the goal of building up the group's rapport or comfort level with the software interface. If such experiments deviate significantly from the norm of open-ended group discussion, the expectations will be specified ahead of time, in consultation with students.

All students will be required to have a one-on-one meeting with the professor around the middle of the semester. The purpose of this conference will be an open-ended discussion of the student's performance and any ways that their experience in class can be improved. Failure to schedule and attend this meeting by the deadline specified below will result in a penalty to class participation points.

The baseline condition for class participation is of course attendance at our meetings. Absences not only affect the individual student, but the entire group, and the same is true of habitual lateness. Lateness will count against a student's participation for that session, and in extreme cases will be treated as the equivalent of an absence. During a normal semester, absences would result in a series of increasing grade penalties, and absences equaling more than 20% of class sessions would be grounds for failing the course. Given the realities of the pandemic, I am

loosening that policy to the extent that all excess absences can be made up and there is no automatic trigger of failure.

There is no need to make up your first two absences. (If students miss fewer than three classes, however, then in cases where a student is at the threshold between two grades, the professor will go with the higher one.) After that point, students must carry out a make-up activity per absence in order to get the participation points corresponding to that session. Absences will normally require watching a recording of the class session in question and either (1) writing a half-page, double-spaced response addressing at least two specific lines of conversation from the class or (2) scheduling a meeting of at least ten minutes with the professor to discuss the reading in light of the recorded session.

Students who do a make-up will receive participation points proportionate to their average participation grade for the two weeks leading up to the missed class—this is to make sure that you cannot actually improve your grade by skipping class and doing individual make-ups.

If multiple students miss the same class, I encourage them to schedule a group make-up discussion with the professor in order to better approximate the experience they missed. If the format of the class missed differs significantly from an open discussion, please check with the professor on how best to make up that session.

Summaries must be completed and emailed to the professor **within one week** of the absence being made up, by class time. In-person meetings must be scheduled **within two weeks** of the absence being made up. In emergency circumstances (such as extended illness), these deadlines may be extended. Grades of incomplete (“I”) are also possible in such cases.

Students requiring additional accommodations are urged to discuss this matter with the professor as early as possible in the semester and to devise a formal written plan in consultation with the relevant institutional offices. In line with the Shimer School’s policies on attendance, accommodations will be made with the aim of allowing a student to attend at least 80% of class sessions synchronously and without placing undue burdens on either the accommodated student or the faculty member.

Written work will consist of two short essays, five music listening journals, and a longer final essay. The two short essays will treat poetry, music, and drama respectively, and will each be worth 10% of your final grade or 20% total. The five music listening journals will be due before selected class period where listening to music is assigned, and they will each be worth 2% of your final grade or 10% total. The longer essay will discuss a topic related to tragic drama and be worth 20% of your final grade. More details on these assignments will be provided closer to the time they are due.

All written assignments must be turned in on Blackboard by the due date listed on the course schedule below; in case of technical difficulties with Blackboard, you may submit the paper via email for the sake of meeting the deadline, but the paper must be posted on Blackboard as soon as possible in order to receive comments and a grade. Students submit ***all written work*** in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) format; in case of technical difficulties submitting in the required

format, you may use another format for the sake of meeting the deadline, but must resubmit in the required in order to receive comments and a grade. **Unless otherwise stated, the deadline is always the beginning of class time on the date in question.** Papers turned in within 24 hours of the deadline will receive a 5% grade penalty on the assignment; papers turned in within a week of the deadline will receive a 10% grade penalty, with an additional 10% penalty for each additional week (or portion of a week) the paper is late.

Students may rewrite all essays, provided that a draft of some form is submitted by the stated deadline. Rewrites of the midterm essay are due within *two weeks* of the time the professor posts grades and comments on Blackboard (which will be established via the Announcements feature). The final essay may be rewritten if an early draft is turned in by the deadline listed below. In emergency scenarios such as protracted illness, all submission and rewrite deadlines may be extended; as noted above, a grade of incomplete may also be possible depending on the exact circumstances. (There is no opportunity to rewrite listening journals.)

Grading Criteria for Essays

A: The paper demonstrates excellent competence in all areas: imaginative choice of material; excellent thesis clearly stated and supported with persuasive evidence and reasoning; well-organized ideas that unify the paper; good transitions between ideas and between paragraphs; clear and logical development of discussion; the paper is virtually free of errors in usage, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

B: The paper demonstrates above-average competence in all areas: appropriate choice of material; good thesis clearly stated and supported with good evidence and reasons; overall unity but some disjointed paragraphs and vague transitions; ideas sometimes out of sequence, and discussion occasionally hard to follow; clear and readable language that may at times be too general, vague, or inappropriate. It is comparatively free of errors in the use of English.

C: The paper demonstrates average competence in all areas: predictable, overly general, trite or obvious thesis supported with some irrelevant material; basic organization showing that the paper follows a logical plan; some paragraphs may be disunified or misplaced, containing abrupt shifts in ideas; wander off topic at times, becoming difficult to follow; sentences sometimes awkwardly constructed with wordy, imprecise, or trite language; mechanical errors that are distracting.

D: The paper demonstrates below-average competence in all areas: vague or carelessly thought-out thesis supported with inappropriate material; lack of overall unity, poor organization and development of ideas with some illogical transitions and weak conclusions; confusing sentences or passages whose meaning is unclear; poorly chosen language with numerous mechanical errors.

F: The F paper usually indicates failure to state and develop a main idea. It may also contain serious errors in logic, grammar, spelling, punctuation, documentation, and sentence structure.

Note on Institutional Policies

Please note that the college-wide policy on plagiarism holds for this class and that student assignments may be run through plagiarism-detection software at the professor's discretion. Plagiarism is a very serious academic and ethical offense that can lead to failure of the assignment or course—or, after multiple instances, expulsion from college. Please consult the Student Handbook for more details of the plagiarism policy. All other institutional policies apply

equally, including those related to accommodations for students with learning disabilities or differences and Title IX protections. More details on those policies are available in the Student Handbook, and students are encouraged to approach the professor with any questions or concerns they may have.

Class Schedule and Readings

*This calendar provides the schedule for assignments and readings for our time together this semester. Students should be aware that the schedule may change. All students will be alerted as soon as possible via email and Blackboard announcement. **Failure to check email regularly is no excuse for missing these updates.***

Monday	January 25	Very short poems (virtual hand-out)
Wednesday	January 27	Shakespeare sonnets (**)
Friday	January 29	Modern sonnets (**)
Monday	February 1	Basho, <i>On Love and Barley</i> , Introduction, haiku 1-120 (pp. 9-50)
Wednesday	February 3	Basho, <i>On Love and Barley</i> , haiku 121-253 (pp. 51-92)
Friday	February 5	Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Richard Wright (**)
Monday	February 8	Modernist poetry (**)
Wednesday	February 10	Biblical Poetry (**)
Friday	February 12	Sells, <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i> , pp. 42-76 (35-39 recommended)
Monday	February 15	Sells, <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i> , pp. 78-103
Wednesday	February 17	Sells, <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i> , pp. 104-141, 154-157
Friday	February 19	Sells, <i>Approaching the Qur'an</i> , “Hearing the Qur'an” (pp.161-196)—also download audio files and listen to at least one sura until you feel you can follow along
Monday	February 22	NO CLASS—Poetry Paper due by noon
Wednesday	February 24	Levitin, “What is Music” (**)
Friday	February 26	“Your Brain on Music” playlist (**); Listening Journal #1
Monday	March 1	“Rhythmic Patterns” playlist (**); Listening Journal #2
Wednesday	March 3	“Theme and Variation” playlist (**); Listening Journal #3
Friday	March 5	“Pictures at an Exhibition” playlist (**); Listening Journal #4
Monday	March 8	Ellison, <i>Living with Music</i> , “Living with Music,” “The Charlie Christian Story” (pp. 3-14, 34-42); listen to songs mentioned on “Living With Music Playlist” (**) for this and subsequent Ellison readings

Wednesday	March 10	Ellison, <i>Living with Music</i> , “The Golden Age, Time Past” and “On Bird, Bird-Watching, and Jazz” (pp. 50-76)
Friday	March 12	NO CLASS—Spring Break; Deadline for mid-semester conference with professor
Monday	March 15	Ellison, <i>Living with Music</i> , “Homage to Duke Ellington on his Birthday,” “As the Spirit Moves Mahalia,” and “Flamenco” (pp. 77-100)
Wednesday	March 17	Ovid, selections on Orpheus (**); Glück, <i>Orfeo ed Euridice</i> , first half (**)
Friday	March 19	Glück, <i>Orfeo ed Euridice</i> , second half (**)
Monday	March 22	Monteverdi, <i>L’Orfeo</i> , whole opera (**)
Wednesday	March 24	“Diverse Traditions” playlist; Listening Journal #5
Friday	March 26	Sophocles, <i>Oedipus the King</i> (in <i>The Greek Plays</i>)
Monday	March 29	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> , intro, chs. 1-15 (in <i>Classical Literary Criticism</i> , pp. 57-76)
Wednesday	March 31	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> , intro, chs. 16-26 (in <i>Classical Literary Criticism</i> , pp. 77-97)
Friday	April 2	NO AFTERNOON CLASS—Good Friday Music Paper due by noon
Monday	April 5	Aeschylus, <i>Prometheus Bound</i> (in <i>The Greek Plays</i>)
Wednesday	April 7	Euripides, <i>The Bacchae</i> (in <i>The Greek Plays</i>)
Friday	April 9	Euripides, <i>Medea</i> (in <i>The Greek Plays</i>)
Monday	April 12	Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , pp. 31-52
Wednesday	April 14	Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , pp. 52-76
Friday	April 16	Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , pp. 76-98, first indentation on pg. 141; Nietzsche music (**)
Monday	April 19	Shakespeare, <i>Othello</i> , Acts 1-2
Wednesday	April 21	Shakespeare, <i>Othello</i> , Acts 3-5
Friday	April 23	Verdi, <i>Othello</i> , first half (**)
Monday	April 26	Verdi, <i>Othello</i> , second half (**)
Wednesday	April 28	<i>Hamilton</i> , first half (**)
Friday	April 30	<i>Hamilton</i> , second half (**) Final paper due by Sunday, April 2, at noon
Friday	May 7	NO EXAM SESSION—Optional rewrite of Tragedy Paper due by noon