

SGBH 102: Music, Verse, and Drama
Spring 2022
MWF 10:40-11:45, Goldspohn 35

Professor: Professor: Adam Kotsko, akotsko@noctrl.edu
Office: Seybert 102 (former dorm across the street from the chapel, floor below advisors)
Office Hours: MWF 9:15-10:30, 12:00-12:30, or by appointment (in person or Zoom)

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, *Macbeth* (Folger). ISBN: 9780743477109

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**.

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 physical presence in class. Absences not only affect the individual student, but the entire group, and the same is true of habitual lateness. Punctual attendance should be regarded as mandatory. Lateness will count against a student's participation for that session, and in extreme cases will be treated as the equivalent of an absence. An increasing number of absences carries with it increasing consequences, which are as follows:

1-2 absences No grade penalty, in recognition of our shared human frailties. (If students miss fewer than two classes, however, then in cases where a student is at the threshold between two grades, the professor will go with the higher one.)

3-5 absences A half letter grade is deducted from the student's final grade for each absence; this penalty may be lifted by doing an absence make-up for each missed class.

6-8 absences For each absence, the student *must* complete an absence make-up (described below) to avoid failing the course, and a half letter grade penalty is imposed on the student's final grade which *cannot* be made up.

9 absences Automatic failure of the course.

In order to make up for an absence, students must write a paper summarizing and reflecting on the day's reading (2 *full* pages, double spaced) or schedule a meeting of at least 15 minutes to discuss the reading with the professor. Absence make-ups must be completed **within two weeks** of the absence being made up, though I strongly urge you to do so earlier.

In particular, for any students who are isolating but either asymptomatic or suffering manageable symptoms, I encourage you to meet with me via Zoom immediately following our usual class time. In the event that I need to isolate but can still conduct class, or there is a broader institutional move to online learning, we will hold class via Zoom in as close to our normal discussion format as possible.

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 reading or listening journals, two short essays, and a longer final essay. The reading or listening journals will vary in the points available for each one but, taken together, will account for 10% of your final grade. The two short essays will treat music and poetry, respectively, and be worth 10% of your final grade or 20% 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 assignment via email for the sake of meeting the deadline, but it must be posted on Blackboard as soon as possible in order to receive comments and a grade. Students submit ***all essays*** 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 format 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 for rewrites or late submission of reading or 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 10	Course intro and syllabus; original songs vs. cover versions (in-class playlist)
Wednesday	January 12	Levitin, "What is Music" (**); Your Brain on Music playlist (**)
Friday	January 14	Levitin, "Foot Tapping" (**); Rhythmic Patterns playlist (**)
Monday	January 17	Martin Luther King Day—NO CLASSES
Wednesday	January 19	Theme and Variation playlist (**)

Friday	January 21	Pictures at an Exhibition playlist (**)
Monday	January 24	Nietzsche, <i>Birth of Tragedy</i> , section 1 (pp. 33-38), section 6 (pp. 53-56), and first indentation on pg. 141; Music for Nietzsche playlist (**)
Wednesday	January 26	Ellison, <i>Living with Music</i> , “Living with Music,” “The Charlie Christian Story” (pp. 3-14, 34-42); Living With Music Playlist 1 (**)
Friday	January 28	Ellison, <i>Living with Music</i> , “The Golden Age, Time Past” and “On Bird, Bird-Watching, and Jazz” (pp. 50-76); Living With Music Playlist 2 (**)
Monday	January 31	Ellison, <i>Living with Music</i> , “Homage to Duke Ellington on his Birthday,” “As the Spirit Moves Mahalia,” and “Flamenco” (pp. 77-100); Living With Music Playlist 3 (**)
Wednesday	February 2	Diverse Traditions playlist (**)
Friday	February 4	Plato, “Ion” (in <i>Classical Literary Criticism</i> , pp. 1-14)
Monday	February 7	Sells, <i>Approaching the Qur’an</i> , pp. 42-76 and 172-179, recordings for Surat al-Fatiha (1) and Surat al-Infitar (82) (**)
Wednesday	February 9	Sells, <i>Approaching the Qur’an</i> , pp. 78-103 and 180-188, recordings for Surat ash-Shams (91) and Surat al-Qadr (97) (**)
Friday	February 11	Sells, <i>Approaching the Qur’an</i> , pp. 104-141 and 189-195, recordings for Surat Az-Zalzala (99) and Surat al-Qari’a (101) (**)
Monday	February 14	Music Paper Due Sunday, February 13 at noon “Versification” and “Very Short Poems” (**)
Wednesday	February 16	“Shakespeare Sonnets” (**)
Friday	February 18	NO CLASS—Professor travelling
Monday	February 21	“Modern Sonnets” (**)
Wednesday	February 23	Basho, <i>On Love and Barley</i> , Introduction, haiku 1-90 (pp. 9-45, see also notes pp. 85-89)
Friday	February 25	Basho, <i>On Love and Barley</i> , haiku 91-253 (pp. 46-81, see also notes pp. 89-92)
Monday	February 28	“Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Richard Wright” (**)
Wednesday	March 2	Modernist poetry (**)
Friday	March 4	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> , Introduction, chs. 1-8 (in <i>Classical Literary Criticism</i> , pp. 57-68)
Monday	March 7	Aeschylus, <i>Prometheus Bound</i> (in <i>The Greek Plays</i> , pp. 183-217; optional intro on 179-182)
Wednesday	March 9	Sophocles, <i>Oedipus the King</i> (in <i>The Greek Plays</i> , pp. 225-274; optional intro on 221-224)

Friday	March 11	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> , chs. 9-18 (in <i>Classical Literary Criticism</i> , pp. 68-82); Deadline for individual conference
Monday	March 14	Poetry Paper due by noon
Wednesday	March 16	Spring Break—NO CLASSES
Friday	March 18	Spring Break—NO CLASSES
Monday	March 21	Euripides, <i>Medea</i> (in <i>The Greek Plays</i> , pp. 487-532; optional intro on 483-486)
Wednesday	March 23	Euripides, <i>Bacchae</i> (in <i>The Greek Plays</i> , pp. 741-785; optional intro on 737-740)
Friday	March 25	Review of choral odes from all Greek plays read (see Blackboard announcement for details)
Monday	March 28	Nietzsche, <i>Birth of Tragedy</i> , sections 2-5 (pp. 38-52); review notes from sections 1 and 6
Wednesday	March 30	Nietzsche, <i>Birth of Tragedy</i> , sections 7-9 (pp. 56-72)
Friday	April 1	Nietzsche, <i>Birth of Tragedy</i> , sections 10-12 (pp. 73-86)
Monday	April 4	Monteverdi, <i>L'Orfeo</i> (**)
Wednesday	April 6	Glück, selections from <i>Orfeo ed Euridice</i> (**)
Friday	April 8	Shakespeare, <i>Macbeth</i> , Act 1
Monday	April 11	Shakespeare, <i>Macbeth</i> , Acts 2-3
Wednesday	April 13	Shakespeare, <i>Macbeth</i> , Acts 4-5
Friday	April 15	Good Friday—NO CLASS
Monday	April 18	Verdi, <i>Macbeth</i> (**)
Wednesday	April 20	<i>Hamilton</i> , first half (**)
Friday	April 22	<i>Hamilton</i> , second half (**)
Monday	April 25	Optional draft of Tragedy Paper due Sunday, April 24, by noon (if rewriting)
		Film: <i>Black Orpheus</i> (**)
Wednesday	April 27	Janelle Monae Storyworld playlist (**)
Friday	April 29	Janelle Monae, "Dirty Computer" (**)
Monday	May 2	Tragedy Paper due by 12:30pm (i.e., end of our stated final exam session)