

**SGBH 102: Music, Verse, and Drama**  
Spring 2022  
MWF 10:40-11:45, Goldspohn 22

Professor: Professor: Adam Kotsko, akotsko@noctrl.edu  
Office: In flux—confirm with professor  
Office Hours: MWF 11:50-1:10 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  
Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (Vintage). ISBN: 9780679755333  
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**.

Your participation grades will be posted on Blackboard roughly every two weeks. Normal day-to-day participation for each class session is worth approximately 1% of your final grade. In addition, there will be four sessions designated on the class schedule as “**discussion assessments**,” which will be worth **triple the usual amount**. For these sessions, the professor will play a primarily observational role in order to assess how well students are developing their discussion skills. A rubric for discussion skills will be posted on Blackboard for your reference.

Students may make up two discussion assessment sessions in the case of absences. For the first, they must complete the absence policy below, and their individual contribution in the next regular class session they attend will count toward their discussion assessment grade. For the second, a make-up discussion assessment session will be made available during finals week, requiring students to do an additional reading. For any further discussion assessment absences, students may make up the absence, but not regain the discussion assessment points.

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 (at least one *full* page, double spaced) or schedule a meeting of at least 10 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 and listening journals, two short essays, and one longer essay. Reading and listening journals will be announced prior to the class in which they are due and may be worth varying point totals, for a total of 10% of your grade. The short essays will be on music and poetry, respectively, and will be worth 10% each, or 20% together. The final essay will be on a topic related to tragic drama and will be worth 20% of your 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 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 offence 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. Note that the professor considers the use of AI text-generation software as a form of plagiarism. 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 9	Course intro and syllabus; original songs vs. cover versions (in-class playlist)
Wednesday	January 11	Levitin, "What is Music" (**); Your Brain on Music playlist (**)
Friday	January 13	Levitin, "Foot Tapping" (**), read only up through pg. 69; Rhythmic Patterns playlist (**)
Monday	January 16	<b>Martin Luther King Day—NO CLASS</b>
Wednesday	January 18	Theme and Variation playlist (**)
Friday	January 20	Pictures at an Exhibition playlist (**)
Monday	January 23	Nietzsche, selections from <i>Birth of Tragedy</i> (**); Music for Nietzsche Playlist (**)
Wednesday	January 25	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 27	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 30	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 1	Diverse Traditions playlist (**)
Friday	February 3	<b>Discussion Assessment Session</b> Plato, "Ion" (in <i>Classical Literary Criticism</i> , pp. 1-14)
Monday	February 6	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 8	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 10	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 13	<b>Music Paper Due by Class Time—NO CLASS</b> “Versification” and “Very Short Poems” (**) “Shakespeare Sonnets” (**)
Wednesday	February 15	
Friday	February 17	
Monday	February 20	“Modern Sonnets” (**)
Wednesday	February 22	Basho, <i>On Love and Barley</i> , Introduction, haiku 1-90 (pp. 9-45, see also notes pp. 85-89)
Friday	February 24	Basho, <i>On Love and Barley</i> , haiku 91-253 (pp. 46-81, see also notes pp. 89-92)
Monday	February 27	“Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Richard Wright” (**) <b>Discussion Assessment Session</b>
Wednesday	March 1	Modernist poetry (**)
Friday	March 3	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> , Introduction, chs. 1-8 (in <i>Classical Literary Criticism</i> , pp. 57-68)
Monday	March 6	Aeschylus, <i>Prometheus Bound</i> (in <i>The Greek Plays</i> , pp. 183-217; optional intro on 179-182)
Wednesday	March 8	Sophocles, <i>Oedipus the King</i> (in <i>The Greek Plays</i> , pp. 225-274; optional intro on 221-224)
Friday	March 10	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> , chs. 9-18 (in <i>Classical Literary Criticism</i> , pp. 68-82) <b>Deadline for individual conference</b>
Monday	March 13	<b>Poetry Paper due by noon</b> <b>Spring Break—NO CLASS</b>
Wednesday	March 15	<b>Spring Break—NO CLASS</b>
Friday	March 17	<b>Spring Break—NO CLASS</b>
Monday	March 20	Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i> (in <i>The Greek Plays</i> , pp. 279-326, optional intro on 275-278)
Wednesday	March 22	Euripides, <i>Medea</i> (in <i>The Greek Plays</i> , pp. 487-532; optional intro on 483-486)
Friday	March 24	In-class listening: Barber, <i>Medea's Meditation and Dance of Vengeance</i> <b>Discussion Assessment Day</b>
Monday	March 27	Bizet, <i>Carmen</i> (**)

Wednesday	March 29	Shakespeare, <i>Macbeth</i> , Act 1
Friday	March 31	Shakespeare, <i>Macbeth</i> , Acts 2-3
Monday	April 3	Shakespeare, <i>Macbeth</i> , Acts 4-5
Wednesday	April 5	Verdi, <i>Macbeth</i> (**)
Friday	April 7	<b>Good Friday—NO CLASS</b>
Monday	April 10	Hansberry, <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , Act I, Scene 1 (pp. 23-53)
Wednesday	April 12	Hansberry, <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , Act I, Scene 2 (pp. 54-75)
Friday	April 14	Hansberry, <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , Act II, Scene 1 (76-95)
Monday	April 17	<b>Professor traveling—NO CLASS</b>
Wednesday	April 19	Hansberry, <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , Act II, Scenes 2 and 3 (pp. 96-130)
Friday	April 21	Hansberry, <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> , Act III (131-151) <b>Discussion Assessment Day</b>
Monday	April 24	<b>Optional draft of Tragedy Paper due via email by class time (if rewriting)</b> <i>Hamilton</i> , first half (**)
Wednesday	April 26	<i>Hamilton</i> , second half (**)
Friday	April 28	Janelle Monae, “Dirty Computer” (**)
Monday	May 1	<b>FINAL EXAM PERIOD—Make-up Discussion</b>
Wednesday	May 3	<b>Assessment Session as needed, time and reading TBD</b> <b>Tragedy Paper due at 5pm</b>