
Term Information

Effective Term Spring 2025

General Information

Course Bulletin Listing/Subject Area Music
Fiscal Unit/Academic Org School Of Music - D0262
College/Academic Group Arts and Sciences
Level/Career Graduate
Course Number/Catalog 8920
Course Title Esoteric Musical Modernism
Transcript Abbreviation Esoteric Mus
Course Description This class unveils the secret history of esoteric musical modernism in the long twentieth century, circa 1875-present. Students will relate esoteric philosophies to the sounds, theories, and performance practices of figures such as Heinrich Schenker, Arnold Schoenberg, Luigi Russolo, Alexander Scriabin, Maud MacCarthy, Henry Cowell, Ruth Crawford, John Cage, Sun Ra, Alice Coltrane, and Anthony Bra
Semester Credit Hours/Units Fixed: 3

Offering Information

Length Of Course 14 Week
Flexibly Scheduled Course Never
Does any section of this course have a distance education component? No
Grading Basis Letter Grade
Repeatable No
Course Components Lecture
Grade Roster Component Lecture
Credit Available by Exam No
Admission Condition Course No
Off Campus Never
Campus of Offering Columbus

Prerequisites and Exclusions

Prerequisites/Corequisites Graduate Standing
Exclusions
Electronically Enforced No

Cross-Listings

Cross-Listings

Subject/CIP Code

Subject/CIP Code 50.0901
Subsidy Level Doctoral Course
Intended Rank Masters, Doctoral

Requirement/Elective Designation

The course is an elective (for this or other units) or is a service course for other units

Course Details

Course goals or learning objectives/outcomes

- 1. Map the pervasiveness of esoteric activity among a broad cross section of twentieth century theorists, performers, music educators, and composers.
- 2. Investigate the relationship between esoteric philosophy, speculative theorizing, and sonic innovation.
- 3. Trace how esoteric musical modernism intersects with issues of colonialism, race, gender, and transcultural exchange.
- 4. Contribute to our collective mapping of esoteric musical modernism by choosing a unique topic to research and present your work in a concise, engaging way.

Content Topic List

- What is esotericism?
- Indian Modernism
- British orientalism
- World transformation
- Sounds and technology
- German occult organicism
- American experimentalism
- Avant Garde Jazz
- Electronic music

Sought Concurrence

No

Attachments

- Music 8920 Esoteric Musical Modernism-Syllabus 07 02 24.docx: proposed syllabus
(Syllabus. Owner: Banks,Eva-Marie)

Comments

Workflow Information

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Banks,Eva-Marie	07/02/2024 02:04 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	COSTA-GIOMI,EUGENIA	07/03/2024 08:26 AM	Unit Approval
Approved	Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal	08/26/2024 10:45 AM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Jenkins,Mary Ellen Bigler Hanlin,Deborah Kay Hilty,Michael Neff,Jennifer Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal Steele,Rachel Lea	08/26/2024 10:45 AM	ASCCAO Approval

MUSIC 8920
Esoteric Musical Modernism
Spring 2025

Instructor: TBD

Course Format: seminar

Meeting times: Tu-Th 2:20-3:40 (two 80 minute meetings per week)

Meeting location: TBD

Credits: 3

Course description:

As the philosopher Glenn Alexander Magee remarked, esotericism and occultism “constitute the hidden intellectual history of the West, running like a dark thread through the fabric of the more conventional intellectual history we all have been taught.” This class unveils the secret history of esoteric musical modernism in the long twentieth century, circa 1875-present. Students will relate esoteric philosophies to the sounds, theories, and performance practices of figures such as Heinrich Schenker, Arnold Schoenberg, Luigi Russolo, Alexander Scriabin, Maud MacCarthy, Henry Cowell, Ruth Crawford, John Cage, Sun Ra, Alice Coltrane, and Anthony Braxton. Topics will include organicism, Orientalism, scientism, vibration theory, mythology, as well as esoterically-informed philosophies of artistic creation, performance, and reception. Classwork will combine close reading of esoteric sources, listening, and discussion.

Course Objectives:

1. Map the pervasiveness of esoteric activity among a broad cross section of twentieth century theorists, performers, music educators, and composers.
2. Investigate the relationship between esoteric philosophy, speculative theorizing, and sonic innovation.
3. Trace how esoteric musical modernism intersects with issues of colonialism, race, gender, and transcultural exchange.
4. Contribute to our collective mapping of esoteric musical modernism by choosing a unique topic to research and present your work in a concise, engaging way.

In addition, studying esotericism presents a unique opportunity to practice two modes of cognitive engagement: *epistemic empathy* and *integrative complexity*.

From Jaber, et. al., (2018): epistemic empathy is “the act of understanding and appreciating someone's cognitive and emotional experience within an epistemic activity—i.e., activity aimed at the construction, communication, and critique of knowledge.”

From Békés and Suedfeld (2019): “Integrative complexity (IC) refers to the structure of information processing, independently of its content. It entails two aspects: differentiation and integration, where differentiation refers to the extent of perceiving a variety of dimensions and perspectives when considering an issue, whereas integration is a capacity to create conceptual connections among these different dimensions and perspectives...In general, low IC is characterized by rigid, black-and-white thinking, intolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, a desire for rapid closure, and not recognizing the validity of other viewpoints. Conversely, high IC is marked by flexible, broad thinking that recognizes multiple aspects and possible interpretations of an issue and sees connections and dynamic tensions between perspectives.”

Materials

All readings and recordings will be linked to the Carmen classes server.

Musician reports

Reintegrating esotericism into the story of musical modernism has the potential to overturn canonical placements of figures at the margin/center, defamiliarize the ideas of well-known musicians, highlight the work of lesser-known musicians, and make sense of what otherwise might appear to be a stream of autonomous sonic innovations. Over the course of the semester, you will do two musician reports drawn from the list of composers on the schedule below. I will put together a research packet posted on Carmen consisting of short excerpts in the following categories: 1) A musical selection (score and recording) 2) primary source aesthetic/philosophical/theoretical/spiritual text written by the musician; 3) secondary scholarship on that composer; 4) primary esoteric text that the musician is known to have read. You are responsible for preparing a 10-minute synthesis of these materials, with a 3-5 page slideshow, and lead a 20-30 minute discussion on how his or her work relates to a given esoteric topic.

By 1/16: Select musicians using sign-up sheet on Carmen.

Preparation and participation: You are expected to read the posted material ahead of time and prepare responses to any posted questions in advance. In class, you will be expected listen and respond to your peer’s presentations, expand upon your own or other’s ideas, make connections between sources, and refer back to the articles as

needed. Your participation grade will be comprised of three self-assessments and three instructor assessments submitted at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester.

Peer review (see attached comment sheet)

You will peer review three projects during the week of 4/14 using a standard comment sheet. Project assignments will be made in Carmen on the basis of your preferences after the Project Pitch Session. Peer review participation will be graded on an S/U basis.

Original research project (see attached formatting guidelines)

Your final project should represent a synthesis, complement, or extension of ideas presented in class. You may choose to present your work in one of the following forms of scholarly communication. See formatting guides and rubrics attached to the end of this syllabus.

1. A written academic paper of ca. 7 pages (this works best for text-heavy projects)
2. A 10-minute scholarly video (in the style of SMT-V)
3. A 10 minute scholarly podcast in the style of Earl Fontanelle's "The Secret History of Western Esotericism" or "SMT-pod"
4. A 2000-word blog post that integrates text, music, image, and/or video (in the style of Musicology Now)

Due Dates:

February 27: A one-sentence description of the area you want to explore

March 18: Proposal due (using template online); Project Pitch session in class

April 15: Draft projects due

April 15-17: Peer review of final projects

April 22: Final meeting; final drafts of projects due online.

Attendance Policy: Learning is a social and communal activity. The best thinking is done in partnership with others. This material is challenging; we will need to think through it together on a regular basis. If you must be absent, please communicate with me in advance to coordinate the make-up of missed work. Under ordinary circumstances, students should miss no more than two class periods (160 minutes of instruction) over the course of the semester. If you have a serious issue that is impacting your learning and will need additional absences excused, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements that are appropriate to the circumstances. Additional absences will be excused for religious observation, participation in professional development activities, serious illness, or family

emergency. Additional documentation may be requested. If I don't hear from you, I will consider the absence unexcused and your participation grade will be lowered by 5% per absence.

Grading:

Your final grade in the class will be based on the following activities:

Daily preparation and participation: 20%

Musician report #1: 20%

Musician report #2: 20%

Final project: 30%

Peer review: 10%

Grading scale:

A (93-100%) A- (90-92%)

B+(87-89%) B (83-86%) B- (80-82%)

C+ (77-79%) C (73-76%) C- (70-72%)

D+(67-69%) D (63-66%)

E (0-62%)

Course Schedule (subject to change):

Topic		Tues	Thurs
What is esotericism?	Week 1	1/7	1/9
		Intro	Globalization of Esotericism
	Week 2	1/14	1/16
		Intro to Theosophy	Theosophy and Music
Indian Modernism	Week 3	1/21	1/23
		Rukmini Devi, Uday Shankhar	Hazrat Inayat Khan Ravi Shankhar
British orientalism	Week 4	1/28	1/31
		Margaret Cousins, Maud MacCarthy	Gustav Holst (Scheer)
World transformation	Week 5	2/4	2/6

		John Foulds	Alexander Scriabin
Sounds and technology	Week 6	2/11	2/13
		Luigi Russolo	Yevgeny Murzin, Lev Termen
German occult organicism	Week 7	2/18	2/20
		Heinrich Schenker	Josef Hauer, Arnold Schoenberg
American experimentalism	Week 8	2/25	2/27
		Dane Rudhyar	Ruth Crawford
	Week 9	3/4	3/6
		Henry Cowell	John Cage
Break		3/11	3/13
Avant Garde Jazz	Week 10	3/18	3/20
		Project pitch meeting	Esotericism and Race
	Week 11	3/25	3/27
		Sun Ra	Alice Coltrane John Coltrane
	Week 12	4/1	4/3
		Yusef Lateef, Pharoah Sanders	Anthony Braxton
Electronic Music	Week 13	4/8	4/10
		Daphne Oram	Karlheinz Stockhausen
	Week 14	4/15	4/17
		Peer review	Peer review
	Final meeting	4/22	

Academic Misconduct

You are expected to do original work for this course, unless a collaboration is specified.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-

487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

Accessibility

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.

If you are isolating while waiting for a COVID-19 test result, please let me know immediately. Those testing positive for COVID-19 should refer to the [Safe and Healthy Buckeyes site](#) for resources. Beyond five days of the required COVID-19 isolation period, I may rely on Student Life Disability Services to establish further reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; or slds.osu.edu.

Religious Accommodation

Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research

responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement and the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the [Office of Institutional Equity](#).

Policy: [Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances](#)

Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling [614-292-5766](tel:614-292-5766). CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at [614-292-5766](tel:614-292-5766) and 24 hour emergency help is also available 24/7 by dialing 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at titleix@osu.edu.

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Formatting Guidelines for Final Project

Bibliography and Citation Style--All formats

All projects must list a bibliography that is inclusive of the following types of sources:

- music studies (or film/art studies, depending on your topic)
- esotericism studies
- at least one primary esoteric text
- any relevant primary sources in music (including works, artists' manifestos, diaries, letters, etc.)

Use the [Turabian Author-Date Links to an external site.](#) citation method, e.g.:

Blavatsky, Helena. 1888. *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*. Two volumes. London and Madras: Theosophical Publishing Company.

Formatting guidelines for 7-page research paper:

- Double-spaced, 12-pt font, 1-inch margins, .doc or .pdf file format
- Use numbered footnotes to cite relevant sources.
- You are encouraged to include score excerpts, images, tables, or other figures to illustrate your points. Caption each illustration as an "Example" and number sequentially. Do not use separate numbering systems for tables, illustrations, and figures.
- Add page numbers.

Formatting guidelines for blog post:

- Submit your draft as a .doc or .pdf file. Double-spaced, 12-pt font, 1-inch margins.
- Use hyperlinks to cite relevant sources (although you can also cite page numbers of analog texts).
- Use the scholarly blog series [Musicology Now!Links to an external site.](#) as a model.
- After the peer review process, you are encouraged (but not required) to use the [medium.comLinks to an external site.](#) platform to construct your blog post. You can use the platform to embed illustrations, sound excerpts, and video links. Posts can be saved in draft form and circulated for review.

Formatting guidelines for podcast:

- For this draft stage, you should submit a script or detailed notes in .doc or .pdf file format. This will make it easier to peer review.
- Name drop the scholars whose work you'd like to cite ("As Garry Trompf has argued in his work on Theosophical Macrohistories...").
 - Use this device sparingly; focus on the key scholars who have most shaped your ideas.
 - Use your bibliography to fill in any gaps.
- You can read longer verbatim quotes, clearly indicating where the quotation begins and ends.
- Include links or upload any sound files you plan to use in your eventual podcast.
- When it comes time to record and edit the final draft, [Audacity](#)[Links to an external site.](#) is a free Digital Audio Workstation that is fairly user-friendly.
- Use the scholarly podcasts [SMT-pod](#)[Links to an external site.](#) or [The Secret History of Western Esotericism](#)[Links to an external site.](#) as a model.

Formatting guidelines for video:

- For this draft stage, you may submit a script or detailed notes in .doc or .pdf file format alongside a .pdf export of a slideshow containing your visual materials. This will make it easier for you to incorporate revisions as needed.
- Indicate citations of key scholars or quotations on the slides.
- Include links or upload any sound files you plan to use in your eventual video.
- Use the videos posted to SMT-V as a model: <http://www.smt-v.org/Links to an external site.>

Peer Project review comment sheet

Comment sheet

Comment sheet	
Criteria	Comments
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Summary of thesis</p> <p>What is the main thesis of this paper? Summarize in your own words.</p>	
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Esotericism and music/film/art</p> <p>How does the author’s presentation of esotericism change, broaden, or deepen their understanding or interpretation of the music or artwork? Summarize in your own words.</p>	
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Highlight sentence types</p> <p>Using the RED “highlight” tool, identify the thesis statement.</p> <p>Using the BLUE “highlight” tool, highlight any sentences you find particularly strong or effective.</p> <p>Using the YELLOW “highlight” tool, highlight any sentences you found confusing.</p>	
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Identifying types of sources</p> <p>Using the “point annotation tool,” identify the types of sources the author engages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • secondary music/film/visual art scholarship; • secondary esoteric studies scholarship; • primary esoteric text 	
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Most compelling evidence</p> <p>What is the most compelling piece of evidence the author uses to support their thesis? Why?</p>	

Comment sheet

Criteria	Comments
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Gaps in evidence Where do you think could the author supply more evidence or different/stronger evidence in support of their thesis?</p>	
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Questions What further questions do you have after reading the project?</p>	

Musician's Report Rubric

Musician report rubric

Musician report rubric

Criteria	Ratings				Pts
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Presentation: biography Details regarding the musician's biography are relevant to the study of esotericism in music.</p>	3 pts Excellent	2 pts Good	1 pts Needs improvement	0 pts No Marks	3 pts
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Presentation: creative activity Details regarding the musician's creative activity are relevant to the study of esotericism in music.</p>	3 pts Excellent	2 pts Good	1 pts Needs improvement	0 pts No Marks	3 pts

Musician report rubric

Criteria	Ratings				Pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Handout The handout is clear and informative.	3 pts Excellent	2 pts Good	1 pts Needs improvement	0 pts No Marks	3 pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Discussion questions The discussion questions facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the musician's creativity and life.	3 pts Excellent	2 pts Good	1 pts Needs improvement	0 pts No Marks	3 pts
Total Points: 12					

Final Project Rubric

Final Project Rubric

Final Project Rubric

Criteria	Ratings				Pts
This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome Thesis statement Thesis is arguable, appropriate for scope of project, asserts one main idea, asserts conclusions.	3 pts Excellent	2 pts Good	1 pts Needs improvement	0 pts No Marks	3 pts

Final Project Rubric

Criteria	Ratings				Pts
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome</p> <p>Support of thesis: primary sources</p> <p>The project shows that the writer consulted at least one primary esoteric source in support of the thesis.</p>	3 pts Excellent	2 pts Good	1 pts Needs improvement	0 pts No Marks	3 pts
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome</p> <p>Support of thesis: secondary esotericism studies sources</p> <p>The project shows that the writer consulted secondary sources within esotericism studies in support of the thesis.</p>	3 pts Excellent	2 pts Good	1 pts Needs improvement	0 pts No Marks	3 pts
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome</p> <p>Support of thesis: secondary music/arts studies sources</p> <p>The project shows that the writer consulted secondary sources within music/dance/film studies in support of the thesis.</p>	3 pts Excellent	2 pts Good	1 pts Needs improvement	0 pts No Marks	3 pts

Final Project Rubric

Criteria	Ratings				Pts
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome</p> <p>Organization</p> <p>The project is well organized; points are ordered logically with appropriate transitions</p>	3 pts Excellent	2 pts Good	1 pts Needs improvement	0 pts No Marks	3 pts
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome</p> <p>Format and presentation</p> <p>The presentation of information is appropriate to the format chosen.</p>	3 pts Excellent	2 pts Good	1 pts Needs improvement	0 pts No Marks	3 pts
<p>This criterion is linked to a Learning Outcome</p> <p>Response to feedback</p> <p>The final version responds to peer and instructor feedback given.</p>	3 pts Excellent	2 pts Good	1 pts Needs improvement	0 pts No Marks	3 pts
Total Points: 21					