

Term Information

Effective Term Autumn 2026

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 8828
Course Title Advanced Topics in Popular Music Analysis
Transcript Abbreviation Advncd Topics Mus
Course Description This course is a graduate seminar in music theory that discusses scholarship on the analysis of popular music (broadly construed).
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 Yes

Cross-Listings

Cross-Listings

Subject/CIP Code

Subject/CIP Code 50.0901
Subsidy Level Doctoral Course
Intended Rank 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

- Students will develop techniques for aural (audio-based) analysis, and the visual presentation of analytical interpretation.
- Students will develop their scholarly reading and critical thinking skills, evaluating and responding to concepts and claims.
- Students will develop their humanities-based research and writing skills.
- Students will appreciate the real-world issues relating to the study of popular music.

Content Topic List

- Introduction to the field
- 21st century pop: formal function
- 21st century pop: texture and virtual space
- Hip hop: rhythm and meter
- Pop and rock: corpus studies
- Methodologies
- Genre studies
- Metal and punk: form and timbre
- Electronic dance music: form texture, timbre and rhythm
- Funk and soul
- 20th century pop and rock: form
- 20th-21st century pop and rock: harmony
- Remixes, covers, and mashups
- Wrap-up discussion

Sought Concurrence

No

Attachments

- MUSIC 8828 Advanced Topics in Popular Music Analysis syllabus proposal.docx: Proposed syllabus
(Syllabus. Owner: Banks,Eva-Marie)

Comments

Workflow Information

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Banks,Eva-Marie	10/28/2025 12:05 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	COSTA-GIOMI,Eugenia	10/28/2025 12:54 PM	Unit Approval
Approved	Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal	10/29/2025 04:30 PM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Jenkins,Mary Ellen Bigler Neff,Jennifer Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal Steele,Rachel Lea	10/29/2025 04:30 PM	ASCCAO Approval

Advanced Topics in Popular Music Analysis (MUSIC 8828)

The Ohio State University School of

Music 3 credit hours/units

Format of instruction: in-person lecture and discussions with active participation

Location: Timashev Family Music Building (Room TBD)

Class Meetings Schedule: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:55–5:15 p.m.

In most weeks, Tuesdays will be spent discussing the assigned readings. Thursdays will usually be spent discussing assigned pieces for listening and analysis, or workshoping research projects.

Instructor: Jeremy W. Smith

- Email: smith.15851@osu.edu
- Office: Timashev Music Building room N482
- Drop-in office hours: Mondays 1–3 p.m., and by appointment

Course Description

This course is a graduate seminar in music theory that discusses scholarship on the analysis of popular music (broadly construed). Students will learn about foundational literature and recent trends in the field of popular-music analysis, while critically thinking about how their work can be in dialogue with the field. They will also develop research, writing, and analysis skills for analyzing form, melody, harmony, lyrics, rhythm, meter, and timbre in various music genres.

There will be weekly readings for discussion and songs assigned for analysis, and a final research project that involves students creating an original piece of scholarship.

Learning Goals and Expected Learning Outcomes

Goal	Learning Outcomes
(A) Students will develop techniques for aural (audio-based) analysis, and the visual presentation of analytical interpretation	1. Students will be able to apply existing analytical tools to a cross section of genres and time periods within popular music 2. Students will be able to create accurate analytical diagrams representing various aspects of the music, including transcriptions of melody and rhythm in staff notation, chord charts, form charts or timelines, and annotated spectrograms or waveforms 3. Students will be able to edit and manipulate audio files (e.g. slowing down, isolating the melody) to investigate analytical hypotheses 4. Students will be able to convert audio and visuals to various file formats, incorporating them into presentations and papers

(B) Students will develop their scholarly reading and critical thinking skills, evaluating and responding to concepts and claims	1. Students will be able to discuss and debate scholarly readings in oral and written form, reflecting on the relevance and/or appropriateness of methodologies and findings 2. Students will be able to discuss similarities and differences between scholarly readings from various authors and time periods 3. Students will be able to test the logic and validity of musical analyses 4. Students will be able to provide constructive feedback on peer work
(C) Students will develop their humanities-based research and writing skills	1. Students will be able to articulate a research question, formulate a research plan, and identify types of evidence appropriate to the research question 2. Students will be able to locate and identify reliable, relevant sources and fact-check their own work using reliable sources 3. Students will be able to credit other people's work ethically and responsibly according to the Chicago Manual of Style 4. Students will be able to effectively communicate and provide evidence for their ideas in academic writing and oral presentations 5. Students will be able to self-assess their work, make revisions, and respond to feedback
(D) Students will appreciate the real-world issues relating to the study of popular music	1. Students will be able to describe and discuss the perspectives of various individuals in different creative roles (such as performers, producers, scholars, and fans) related to popular music 2. Students will be able to articulate how their own perspectives and background fit within a wider musical and scholarly community

Required Materials

- There is no textbook for this class; links to all readings, recordings, and materials for assignments will be posted in **CarmenCanvas (Carmen)**.
- We will use some free software in the class (e.g., MuseScore, Audacity, Sonic Visualizer, etc.), so students will need access to a **computer** where they can install that software.
- Students will need a pair of good-quality **headphones**, which they should bring to class on Thursdays for in-class analysis practice.
- I also recommend a subscription to a streaming music platform such as Apple Music or Spotify. Students usually qualify for discounted subscriptions.

Grading and Assessments

All assignments for this class will be submitted via Carmen. Assignments are to be completed independently, not collaboratively with peers. The weighting of assessments is described below.

Listening Responses/Analyses (10%)

In most weeks (starting in week 2) each student will submit a short analysis for *one* of the pieces/songs for listening (your choice from the assigned weekly pieces). These will be due by the start of class on Thursday.

The analysis must include at least one visual diagram along with a paragraph (at least 150 words) of explanation. The diagram(s) can take many forms, including but not limited to: a form chart or timeline, transcription into some kind of notation, lyric-chord chart, DAW recreation, annotated spectrogram or waveform, line graph or bar graph, or any other kind of visual representation. It should be uploaded directly into your discussion post as a .JPG or .PDF file.

Over the course of the semester, you must submit at least one transcription into staff notation, one chord chart, one form chart or timeline, and one annotated spectrogram or waveform. The idea is to practice creating something that could be used in an article or presentation.

The analysis does not need to be a polished, final product (it can be a “work in progress”) but it should provide some detailed description of one aspect or one section of the piece. The writing should be clear and include proper citations to your sources as necessary (Chicago Style author-date system). Each analysis will be graded based on completing the criteria above, clarity of the diagram, and accuracy of the analysis; although musical analysis is subjective, are your assertions logical and would they make sense to other musicians or scholars?

This type of assignment supports learning goal (A)

above. Summative Listening Responses (10%)

Twice during the course (Week 8 and Week 13), students will submit a summative listening response. This will involve revisiting a song you previously analyzed for a listening response. You will submit new or revised diagram(s) and multiple paragraphs of writing, including some reflection on your learning, how you responded to prior feedback, a summary of the song’s historical and cultural context, what performers or producers have said about the song, as well as an abstract for a potential paper you would write on the song. This is an opportunity to revisit and expand on previous work to make a deeper analysis of a song.

These analyses will be graded based on the level of detail and analytical accuracy, as well as clarity of writing, including spelling, grammar, punctuation, and citations.

This type of assignment supports learning goals (A), (C), and (D) above.

Reading Responses and Discussion Board (15%)

Most weeks (starting in Week 2), each student will write a response to the weekly readings, published to a discussion board in Carmen. The initial post is due by 9:00 am on Monday, and two responses to peers’ posts are due by the start of class (3:55 pm) on Tuesday (the day the readings will be discussed in class). Students must complete a total of EIGHT (8) of these assignments for the course, so you can choose to have up to two “weeks off” from writing them. Even in your “week off,” however, you are still expected to study the readings and discuss them in class, and you may still wish to respond to people’s posts in the discussion board.

Reading responses (your initial post for the week) should address all the weekly readings and be 300–500 words total. The content should include some mix of the following: a summary of something you learned, a summary of an argument the author made, something you liked or didn’t like about a reading, something that surprised you or interested you, a question or thought you had as you read or listened, a question you have for others in the class or for the instructor, or something that you were reminded of (feel free to post a link). Include in-text citations for each reading (and any other sources you cite) and a reference list, using the [Chicago Manual of Style](#) author-date system.

Responses to peers should be at least a few sentences long. You should add your own perspective to the conversation by asking a follow-up question or making a connection between the original post and something else (such as another aspect of this week’s readings, a different reading, another song, or a story from your own experience).

Each week's participation in the discussion board (including the initial post and responses to peers) will be graded based on completing the criteria above for sufficiently addressing each reading and appropriately responding to peers, as well as the clarity of writing, including spelling, grammar, punctuation, and citations.

This type of assignment supports learning goal (B)

above. Summative Reading Responses (10%)

Twice during the course (Week 6 and Week 14) each student will write a summative reading response. These will be slightly longer than usual reading responses and will involve revisiting multiple prior course readings. Students will critically evaluate the readings' methodologies, arguments, and analysis, and discuss similarities and differences between the readings.

These summative responses will be graded based on accurate understanding of concepts and arguments from the readings, insightful observations and connections between readings, and clarity of writing.

This type of assignment supports learning goal (B)

above. Class Presentations (10%)

Over the course of the semester, each student will do one presentation on an assigned reading,

and one presentation on an assigned piece for listening. Think of this as a more detailed/extended version of your usual reading response or listening response. Each presentation will be approximately 25–30 minutes long and involve leading the class in discussion. Start with providing some background on the writers or artists, then share your own thoughts, summary, and analysis. Ask discussion questions and (for a reading) be prepared to discuss other people's online posts. You should be at the front presenting with audio and visuals on a screen (e.g. showing the reading, or your analysis, or people's posts). Before class, you will submit a copy of your presentation notes and/or slides in Carmen.

Each presentation will be graded based on completing the criteria above, demonstrated knowledge about the reading or song, and effective use of time leading class discussion.

This type of assignment supports learning goals (A) and (B)

above. Final project (35%)

The end-of-semester project will involve each student writing an analytical research paper on a topic of their choosing relating to popular music. The final paper must be at least 6,000 words, *in addition to* analytical diagrams and graphs, and *in addition to* footnotes and the reference list.

This is of similar scope to an article that would be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed music theory journal.

This project will be completed in various stages throughout the semester.

- An initial proposal stating your research topic, research question(s), and plan for doing the research. Explain your reasons for choosing the music you will

analyze, your ideas of what you will investigate, as well as what research and analysis tools you plan to use.

- A first draft of the completed paper, *and* an abstract of no more than 250 words
- Written peer review. Each student will write an anonymous peer review for the draft of one classmate (instructions will be given on how to write an effective peer review). The instructor will provide feedback on the peer reviewing process, and also be a second “peer reviewer” for each student.
- A conference-style presentation, during our last class session
- Final paper, including a 250-word abstract and written comments responding to prior feedback, due during exam week

More details (including about grading) will be in the assignment description.

This project supports *all* of the learning goals above but especially learning goal (C).

Attendance and Participation (10%)

Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss all readings, pieces for listening, or

other materials relevant to that specific class period. Students should participate in discussions and class activities. Students will receive a grade out of 3 in attendance and participation for every class period, as follows:

- 0 points: Absent (aside from the two “free” absences described below)
- 1 point: Present, Unprepared: little-to-no participation in class discussion and little evidence of preparation
- 2 points: Present, Prepared: adequate participation in class and some evidence of preparation
- 3 points: Present, Engaged: adequate participation in class, as well as evidence of thorough preparation, depth of understanding, and critical engagement shown through oral discussion responses

Attendance Policy

- Your attendance in class meetings is expected. 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 (two absences excused for any reason) 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.
- Even if you are absent, assignments are still due at their regular times, unless you are specifically granted an extension on an assignment deadline by the instructor for special circumstances.

Late Assignments Policy

Late assignments will not usually be accepted for credit in this class, however, the instructor may grant an exemption if there are extenuating circumstances such as illness or emergency and the student notifies the instructor promptly. Additional documentation may be requested.

Semester Grading Scale

A (93-100%) B+ (87-89%) C+ (77-79%) D+ (67-69%) E (0-62%)
A- (90-92%) B (83-86%) C (73-76%) D (63-66%)
B- (80-82%) C- (70-72%)

Instructor Feedback and Response Expectations

Students will receive grading and feedback on assignments in Carmen, within one week of the assignment deadline. The instructor will respond to emails within 24 hours during the semester (apart from holidays).

Schedule Overview

Dates are based on Spring 2027.

Dates	Topic	Tuesday	Thursday
Week 1 (1/12 & 1/14)	Introduction to the field	Reading to discuss - Burns, Alleyne & Moylan 2022 (introduction)	Analysis of two songs in class - Taylor Swift “Shake It Off” - Alicia Keys “If I Ain’t Got You”
Week 2 (1/19 & 1/21)	21 st -century pop: formal function	Reading response due (complete 8 total), on - Adams 2019 - Cobb 2025	Listening response due, on one of - Lorde “Green Light” - Jessie J, Ariana Grande, and Nicki Minaj “Bang Bang”
Week 3 (1/26 & 1/28)	21 st -century pop: texture and virtual space	Reading response due, on - Du Guay 2022 - Schwitzgebel 2025	Listening response due, on one of - Beyonce “Sweet Honey Buckiin” - Coldplay “Viva la Vida”
Week 4 (2/2 & 2/4)	Hip hop: rhythm and meter	Reading response due, on - Duinker 2021 - Komaniecki 2017	Listening response due, on one of - N.W.A. “Express Yourself” - Eminem “Not Afraid”
Week 5 (2/9 & 2/11)	Pop and rock: corpus studies	Reading response due, on - De Clercq & Temperley 2011 - Hanenberg 2020	Listening response due, on one of - BTS “Dynamite” - Radiohead “Morning Bell”
Week 6 (2/16 & 2/18)	Methodologies	Summative reading response due	Discuss research methods for final project proposals
Week 7 (2/23 & 2/25)	Genre studies	Reading response due, on - Brackett 2016 chapter 1 - Johnson 2020	Final project proposal due Workshop proposals in class Discuss research methods for project drafts
Week 8 (3/2 & 3/4)	Metal and punk: form and timbre	Reading response due, on - Hudson 2021 - Pearson 2019	Summative listening response due
Week 9 (3/9 & 3/11)	Electronic dance music (EDM): form, texture, timbre, and rhythm	Reading response due, on - Brøvig-Hanssen et al. 2022 - Smith 2024	Listening response due, on one of - Daft Punk “Chord Memory” - Metallica “Master of Puppets”
Week 10 (3/23 & 3/25, after spring break)	Funk and soul	Reading response due, on - Stewart 2013 - Malawey 2014	Discuss two songs in class: - Parliament “Motherhip Connection (Star

			Child)" - Cory Wong "The Optimist"
Week 11 (3/30 & 4/1)	20 th -century pop and rock: form	Discuss two readings (no reading response due) - Osborn 2013 - Spicer 2004	Final project draft papers due Discuss/workshop strategies for writing peer reviews
Week 12 (4/6 & 4/8)	20 th -21 st -century pop and rock: harmony	Reading response due, on - Nobile 2015 - Temperley 2011	Final project peer reviews due Discuss/workshop strategies for revising, editing, and responding to peer review
Week 13 (4/13 & 4/15)	Remixes, covers, and mashups	Reading response due, on - Boone 2023 (video) - O'Hara 2022	Summative listening response due
Week 14 (4/20 & 4/22)	Wrap-up discussion	Summative reading response due	Final project presentations
Week 15 (exam week)			Final papers due Thursday 4/29

Bibliography

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University Policies and Statements

Please see the following link for standard syllabus statements on Academic Misconduct, Student Life – Disability Services, Religious Accommodations, and Intellectual Diversity. <https://ugeducation.osu.edu/academics/syllabus-policies-statements/standard-syllabus-statements>