
Term Information

Effective Term Spring 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 7731
Course Title Practitioner-Centered Music Theory
Transcript Abbreviation Prctner Ctr Mus Th
Course Description What does it mean to center the practitioner in studying music theory? This class surveys a range of approaches in order to understand conceptualizations of music by musical practitioners.
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 identify scholarship that centers the practitioner and differentiate it from scholarship that centers the analyst as interpreter.
- Understand the potential and limitations of practitioner-centered methodologies to expand the types of musical thought considered as "theory."
- Understand the potential and limitations of methodologies commonly used in practitioner-centered music theory.
- Critically evaluate the kinds of arguments that can be made through practitioner-centered methodologies.
- Formulate a research question, design a practitioner-centered methodology, and prepare a research project appropriate for a 7000-level course.

Content Topic List

- What is practitioner-centered theory?
- Music Theory in Ethnomusicology
- Performance traditions
- Discursive Traditions

Sought Concurrence

No

Attachments

- MUSIC 7731-Practitioner Centered Music Theory 10 22 25.docx: Proposed syllabus

(Syllabus. Owner: Banks,Eva-Marie)

Comments

Workflow Information

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Banks,Eva-Marie	10/28/2025 11:21 AM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	COSTA-GIOMI,Eugenia	10/28/2025 12:54 PM	Unit Approval
Approved	Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal	10/29/2025 04:32 PM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Jenkins,Mary Ellen Bigler Neff,Jennifer Vankeerbergen,Bernadette Chantal Steele,Rachel Lea	10/29/2025 04:32 PM	ASCCAO Approval

MUSIC 7731—Practitioner-Centered Music Theory
Spring 2026

Instructor: Anna Gawboy
Classroom: Timashev
Format: Lecture, 3 contact hours per week
Schedule: MW 2:20-3:40
Credits: 3
Office: N480; office hour

What does it mean to center the practitioner in studying music theory? This class surveys a range of approaches drawn from ethnomusicology, performance studies, compositional theory, production, public music theory, and pedagogy in order to understand conceptualizations of music by musical practitioners, thereby broadening the types of mental activities we associate with theorizing music. Topics include theories in musical (sub-)cultures, theories of technologically-based practice, music theory in oral traditions, embodied music theories, instruments, and the voice.

Learning objectives: Students will...

- Identify scholarship that centers the practitioner and differentiate it from scholarship that centers the analyst as interpreter.
- Understand the potential and limitations of practitioner-centered methodologies to expand the types of musical thought considered as “theory.”
- Understand the potential and limitations of methodologies commonly used in practitioner-centered music theory, such as:
 - Fieldwork and interviews
 - Participatory research
 - Auto-ethnography
 - Motion-capture and other audiovisual analyses
- Critically evaluate the kinds of arguments that can be made through practitioner-centered methodologies.
- Formulate a research question, design a practitioner-centered methodology, and prepare a research project appropriate for a 7000-level course.

Course Materials: I will post readings and other resources for each class day on the Carmen classes server. You are expected to read the posted material ahead of time and contribute to in-person discussions during class to help build a foundation of understanding that you can demonstrate in graded written discussion posts due at the end of each week (see below).

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 (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 grade will be lowered by 5% per absence.

University Policies and Resources: <https://ugeducation.osu.edu/academics/syllabus-policies-statements/standard-syllabus-statements>**Grading**

Grading percentages and scale:

Reading discussion posts: 20%
Presentations: 25%
Research design assignments: 30%
Research paper: 25%

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%)

Assignment descriptions:

Reading discussion posts (20%): Each week (on average) you will be asked to reflect on the posted readings and respond to a specific prompt. Complete responses are 250-300 words in length and demonstrate understanding of the week's readings, including citations of relevant passages. Incomplete responses are less than the expected length, submitted more than 12 hours late, do not engage concepts from readings, or fail to provide analytical insight into the media.

Presentations (25%): You will give three presentations in this class. Each will be graded A-E according to the rubric posted on Carmen.

- Proposal lightning talk (2 minutes, 1 slide), week of March 9 (5%)
- Preliminary evidence presentation (10 minutes, 3 slides), April 1 (5%)

- Research presentations: (15 minutes, 5-7 slides) Week of April 27 (15%)

Research Design Assignments (30%): You will design a research project that centers the practitioner and their theorizing. This design will be broken up into a series of written assignments, listed below. Grading will be A-E based on the rubric posted on Carmen.

January 28: Focused Research Topic and Research Questions (6%)

February 11: Bibliography and Research Problem (6%)

February 25: Research Methodology and Outline (6%)

March 11: Research Proposal, synthesizing first three assignments. (6%)

April 6: Preliminary evidence (6%)

Research Paper (25%): You will communicate your research in a paper of ca. 20 pages. A draft version is due for instructor feedback April 20 and the final revisions are due May 4. Both the draft and the final paper will be graded A-E according to the rubric which will be posted on Carmen.

Week	Topic	Monday	Wednesday	Due Wed
Jan 12	What is practitioner-centered theory?	Intro; Syllabus Blum- Introduction	Christensen; Jenkins	Class questionnaire
Jan 19	Music Theory in Ethnomusicology	No class, MLK	Blum Ch. 1	
Jan 26		Blum Ch. 2	Blum Ch. 3	Research Topic and Questions
Feb 2		Blum Ch. 4	Blum Ch. 5	
Feb 9		Blum Ch. 6	Agawu	Bibliography and Research Problem
Feb 16	Performance Traditions	Tilley Ch. 1	Tilley Ch. 4	
Feb 23		Leong, Framing Material	Leong, Ch. 3	Research Methodology and Outline
Mar 2		Andersen	Proposal Workshop	
Mar 9		Lookenbill Ch. 5; Proposal lightning talk	Givan; Proposal lightning talk	Proposals Due March 11
March 16	Spring Break			
Mar 23		DeSouza Ch. 2	Shea	

Mar 30	Music Theory, Instruments, and the Body	Maler Ch. 2	Haugen	
April 6	Discursive Traditions	Preliminary evidence reports	Hannaford	Preliminary evidence report, April 6
April 13		Luong	Reymore	
April 20		IRB proposal workshop	IRB proposal workshop	Draft Papers April 20
April 27		Presentations	Presentations	
				Final Paper Due May 4

Bibliography

Agawu, Kofi. "Against Ethno-theory." In *On African Music*, 129-147. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023.

Anderson, Drake. "Performance Spaces for Improvised and Notated Music." *Journal of Music Theory* 67/1. (2023)

Blum, Stephen. *Music Theory in Ethnomusicology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023.

Christensen, Thomas. "Fragile Texts, Hidden Theory." *Musica Humana* 3/2; 177-207.

DeSouza, Johnathan. *Music At Hand: Instruments, Bodies, and Cognition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Jenkins, J. Daniel. "Hidden Public Music Theory." *Music Theory Spectrum*, Volume 47, Issue 1, Spring 2025, Pages 28–30, <https://doi.org/10.1093/mts/mtae014>

Givan, Ben. "Rethinking Interaction in Jazz Improvisation." *Music Theory Online* 22/3 (2016): <https://mtosmt.org/issues/mto.16.22.3/mto.16.22.3.givan.html>

Hannaford, Marc. "Fugitive Music Theory and George Russell's Theory of Tonal Gravity." *Theory and Practice* 46 (2021): 47-81.

Haugen, Mari. "Investigating Music-Dance Relationships: A Case Study of Norwegian *Telespringar*." *Journal of Music Theory*, 65/1 (2021): 17–38.

Leong, Daphne. *Performing Knowledge: Twentieth Century Music in Analysis and Performance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Lookenbill, Zachary. "Rhythm and Timing in North American Drum Corps Drumline: In Theory and Practice." PhD dissertation, Ohio State University, 2024.
http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1713458191085335

Luong, Vivian. "Redrawing Analytical Lines." *Music Theory Online* 31/1 (March 2025):
<https://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.25.31.1/mto.25.31.1.luong.html>

Mahler, Anabel. *Seeing Voices: Analyzing Sign Language Music*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024.

Reymore, L. (2021). Characterizing prototypical musical instrument timbres with timbre trait profiles. *Musicae Scientiae*, 26(3), 648-674.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/10298649211001523> (Original work published 2022)

Shea, Nicholas. "'Guitar Thinking' and 'Genre Thinking' Among An Online Community of Guitarists." *IASPM Journal*, 13/1 (2023): 45-76.

Tilley, Leslie. *Making It Up Together: The Art of Collective Improvisation in Balinese Music and Beyond*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019.