

Music Theory (can be foundational)

Music Notation as Design:

All of those hyper-specific shapes and symbols: they haven't changed for 500 years! What would happen if we started over from scratch? By examining the music we create and consume, the myriad alternative systems for pitch and rhythm (John Cage, Wassily Kandinsky, Gamelan, etc.), can we unpack the intentions that underpin our inherited European system, its strengths, its limits, and perhaps implicitly, our own biases?

Music History (can be interdisciplinary)

Pussy Riot, Fela Kuti, Nina Simone: Lament as Activism

How does music express our pain and longing honestly and unrelentingly? Activist musicians across cultures embody strength and vulnerability, and their songs help to atomize and amplify entire movements. How can we be both vulnerable and uncapitulating in our beliefs, and what can musicians like Kendrick Lamar teach us about bravery and self-actualization?

Music Composition

Music Composition: Signifying Place

How do composers capture or narrate their environments? Which elements of music reveal themselves as indelible through this lens? If a composer writes about "home" or "the ocean" for example, do specific musical qualities hold constant across time and culture? Through critical listening and individual and group composition, this class is for students interested in composition and in examining their own materials, process, and expressive intentions.

Embodiment in Music (my primary area of interest, can be foundational, interdisciplinary)

Dalcroze Eurhythmics: Groove, Gesture, and Embodied Knowing

What if everything you want to understand about music is already within you, innate, instinctive, indelible? When Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950) first taught harmony to students at the Geneva Conservatory in the 1890s, he found a disconnect between their aural perception and physical coordination, and devised a coursework to re-unite the two. He called it Eurhythmics, inviting students to move according to the nuances of music to uncover this embodied truth: all rhythm is the body moving through space. Part expression, part exploration, and part meditation, "Eurhythmics," he wrote, "is not an art form—I want to shout that from the rooftops—but a path towards art."

Musicology (can be interdisciplinary)

Appropriation, Cultural Invasion, and Feeling the 'nod'

How do we honor the music of our peers and heroes through sampling and imitation without taking it over? Through the lens of author Paulo Freire's concept of cultural invasion, we'll explore examples of sensitive and insensitive cultural appropriation in music and its effects on the centering and de-centering of marginalized groups. We'll explore how market forces, demographics, and targeted advertising sometimes sow division and hide the deep unity of musics across generations, and investigate how Freire envisioned a way forward.

Music Performance (all levels):

Traditional Folk Jam: Songs of the People (Campus Community Welcome)

Join this weekly gathering, and bring your voice, your instrument, and a song from your heritage. Drawing primarily on the deep, enduring repertoire of traditional music in North America, we'll explore the intersection of various folk musics and how they can inform our sense of history, identity, inclusion, and togetherness.

Other Music Performance ideas, based on student population/interest:

Performance: Great American Songbook (all levels)

(jazz standards, for singers and instrumentalists)

Performance: Liederabend: Song Cycles

(for experienced singers interested in German, French, Italian traditions, etc.)

Performance: Chamber Music

(for those students interested in the standard orchestral and chamber repertoire)

Performance: New Orleans Brass Band

(those student instrumentalists interested in jazz and commercial music, I find New Orleans Brass Band music is the most inclusive and readily taught by ear)