

MUS 504, Analysis of Music of the 20th and 21st Centuries: Analyzing Tonal Music of the 20th and 21st Centuries

Instructor: Matthew Barnson | Thursday, 3:30pm – 6:20pm

This course acknowledges that, despite the theoretical and analytical attention to post-tonal or atonal music in academia over the past century, much of the most exciting and beloved music composed since 1900 has been and continues to be tonal. Yet the tools used to analyze Western classical music prior 1900 are imperfect and the tools used to analyze post-tonal repertoires are often irrelevant. In this course we'll look at various theoretical and analytical approaches drawn from both in order to better understand the works of composers ranging from Debussy, Price, and Rachmaninoff to Thomas Ades, Julius Eastman, and Caroline Shaw. We will also examine the influence from and the influence on film, Broadway, and popular musics on recent Western classical music exemplified by Sondheim, John Williams, Howard Shore, Reich, Glass, Pärt, and Adams; the "postmodernism" of Schnittke, Rihm, and Gubaidulina; and a younger generation of composers like Jessie Montgomery, Nico Muhly, and Sarah Kirkland Snider. Regular coursework will include reading theoretical texts (around 40-50 pages per week), critically listening, weekly analysis assignments, and short, phrase-length model composition exercises. Students should allot about 6 hours of work outside of class per week. Regular participation and short presentations will be required.

This course is suitable for all graduate students. For MM and DMA students, it fulfills the Elective Group 2 requirement. Students in the MA in Composition and the MA in Critical Music Studies tracks must take either MUS 502 or MUS 504 in the first year, unless exempted via the relevant examination (Composition) or advisory assessment (Critical Music Studies).

3 credits