

MUS 542, Ethnomusicology and Social Theory: Nightlife Theory
Instructor: Benjamin Tausig

Nightlife is a site of performativity, of self-making and remaking, of worlding, and of relationality. Though often quite rich aesthetically, the dynamism of nightlife can render genre categories fluid. Much of the art made or staged in nightlife, at an unspeakable hour and under the influence of something other than the muses, is emergent rather than fixed. And yet nightlife can be vitalizing as well as generative for many individuals and communities. This course will examine several major theoretical approaches to nightlife, including those grounded in performance studies, music, queer studies, and urban studies. We will consider historical as well as contemporary nightlife contexts, many outside the United States. We will sit with questions about privacy and safety, about social mobility and intersections of race, gender, and class. We will consider how music is made and consumed in messy contact zones, reading widely to reckon with the stakes of nightlife for a variety of human communities across time and space.

Coursework includes weekly readings and Brightspace postings, one substantial mid-semester assignment, and a final paper/presentation.

This seminar is primarily intended for MA or PhD students. Though it counts as a history course for performers, any MM or DMA students considering enrolling must confer first with Prof. Tausig.

3 credits