Classes: Tuesdays (in class) and Thursdays (asynchronous remote delivery), 10:00-11:20 CGC 1111
Instructor: Dr. John Brownell, jbrownel@uwaterloo.ca or LEARN mail
Office Hours: Over Zoom by appointment

“The reason that most of us take part in musical activity, be it composing, performing, or listening, is that music is capable of arousing in us deep and significant emotions . . . If emotional factors are fundamental to the existence of music, then the fundamental question for a psychological investigation into music is how music is able to affect people.”


Overview

The disciplines of musicology and music theory have generally regarded music, especially music of the cultivated European tradition, as consisting of autonomous structures whose aesthetic beauty and value lie in the works themselves. This tendency reached its peak in the middle of the twentieth century with the total serialism of Milton Babbitt and his contemporaries.

Coincidentally, the middle of the twentieth century also saw the beginnings of psychological research into the reception and cognition of music. Memory, perception, and processing of musical information were rightly regarded as uniquely human abilities similar to language skills. The listener was seen as an active participant in the production of musical meaning rather than simply as a passive receiver.

Music 231 examines music from the perspective of the receptor rather than the transmitter. In so doing course participants will be encouraged to examine their own responses (aesthetic, emotional, and physical) to music.

Topics to be discussed will loosely follow the order of our text, William Forde Thompson’s *Music, Thought, and Feeling: Understanding the Psychology of Music*. The e-version of Thompson 2015 is available in the UW bookstore.

In-person lectures will take place on Tuesdays in CG 1111. The week’s second lecture will be recorded and posted on LEARN on or before the Thursday of each week.
Text/Readings

Required:

Thompson, William Forde

Additional material will be put on reserve and/or posted on LEARN from time to time.

There is a course website on LEARN. All assignments, lecture notes, test results and other information of note will be posted there. Stay tuned.

Recommended (but not required):

Huron, David


Juslin, Patrik N. and John A. Sloboda, eds.

Kirnarskaya, Dina

Levitin, Daniel J.

Mithen, Steven

Patel, Aniruddh
Evaluation

The final grade breaks down as follows:

- Introspective report (Due October 7)  
  10%
- Mid-term examination (October 26)  
  30%
- Short essay  
  20%
  (Assigned topic, 7-10 double-spaced pages, due November 11)

Choose ONE of the following:

- Essay  
  40%
  (on an approved topic, due on date of final exam)
- OR
- Final examination  
  40%
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