

Conrad Grebel University College  
The University of Waterloo  
Department of Music  
Music 231: Music Cognition - Course Outline  
Fall Term 2023  
Section 001

**Classes:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30-3:50, CG1302

**Instructor:** Dr. John Brownell (jbrownel@uwaterloo.ca)

**Office Hours:** By appointment for in-person or Zoom, by email anytime.

## Course Description

“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.”

John Sloboda in *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music* (Clarendon Press: 1985).

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.

## Textbook (required)

Thompson, William Forde

2015 *Music, Thought, and Feeling: Understanding the Psychology of Music* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Oxford University Press. E-version available at the UW Bookstore.

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

2007 *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

2016 *Voice Leading: The Science Behind a Musical Art*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

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

2009 *Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kirnarskaya, Dina

2009 *The Natural Musician: On Abilities, Giftedness and Talent*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Levitin, Daniel J.

2006 *This Is Your Brain On Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*. New York: Dutton.

Mithen, Steven

2005 *The Singing Neanderthals: The Origins of Music, Language, Mind, and Body*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Patel, Aniruddh

2008 *Music, Language and the Brain*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## Evaluation

The final grade breaks down as follows:

Introspective report (Due October 5)	10%
Mid-term examination (October 26)	30%
Short essay (Assigned topic, 7-10 double-spaced pages, due November 11)	20%

Choose ONE of the following:

Essay (on an approved topic, due on date of final exam)	40%
<b>OR</b>	
Final examination	40%

## Missed Tests and Assignment Deadlines

Missed quizzes or midterms will require documentation before any makeup opportunity will be offered.

## UWaterloo Policies

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility.

Arts: [Academic Integrity website](#) University of Waterloo: [Academic Integrity Office](#)

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline.

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - [Student Petitions and Grievances](#), Section 4.

**Appeals:** A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read Policy 72 - Student Appeals.

## Other sources of information for students:

**Note for students with learning differences:** The [AccessAbility Services \(AAS\)](#) office, located in Needles

Hall Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the ASS office at the beginning of each academic term.

**Counselling Services:** Counselling Services provides free confidential counselling, in both individual and group

sessions, with qualified professionals to help registered students, faculty and staff with personal concerns, educational career decisions, and strategies to studies and exams: [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocs](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infocs), ext. 33528, NH Room 2080.

**Accommodation for Illness:** A medical certificate presented in support of an official petition for relief from normal academic requirements must provide all of the information requested on the “University of Waterloo Verification of Illness” form or it will not be accepted. More information can be obtained from Health Services and the form is available in pdf: <https://uwaterloo.ca/health-services/student-medical-clinic/services/verificationillness>

**The Writing Centre:** Writing Centre staff offer one-on-one support in planning assignments and presentations, using and documenting research, organizing and structuring papers, and revising for clarity and coherence. Make an appointment or drop in at the Library for quick questions or feedback. To book a 50-minute

appointment and to see drop-in hours, visit [www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/writing-centre).

## CLASS SCHEDULE

<b>Classes</b>	<b>Topic/Readings/Tests</b>
September 7	Introduction
September 12, 14	<b>Musical Building Blocks</b> Readings: Thompson Chapters 1, 3
September 19, 21	<b>Musical Building Blocks, Origins of Music</b> Readings: Thompson Chapters 2, 3
September 26, 28	<b>Music and Emotion</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 7 <b>Introspective report assigned</b>
October 3, 5	<b>Music and Emotion</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 7 <b>Introspective Report due October 5</b>
October 10, 12	No Class - Fall Break
October 17, 19	<b>Perceiving Music Structure</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 4 <b>Short essay topics out</b> <b>Music and the Brain</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 6
October 24, 26	Midterm exam (October 26) <b>Music and the Brain</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 6
October 31, November 2	<b>Music Acquisition</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 5
November 7, 9	<b>Music and Well-being</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 8 <b>Performing Music</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 9 <b>Short Essay due November 11</b>
November 14, 16	<b>Performing Music</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 9
November 21, 23	<b>Composing Music</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 10
November 27, 30	<b>Composing Music</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 10 <b>Music and Other Abilities</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 11
December 5	<b>Music and Other Abilities</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 11