Philosophy of Music
Philosophy 365
Syllabus

John Douard

Texts:

New Jersey Books will have the texts.


Derek Bailey: On the Edge: Video based on *Improvisation*:  
http://ubu.com/film/bailey.html
I will also email a packet of papers on specific issues.

In this course, we begin with a consideration of the concept of the **musical work**. We will then examine improvisational music: jazz, rock and hip hop; but also music generated as improvisations in the classical canon, Indian raga, and African indigenous music. Most courses on the philosophy of music focus on “classical” or “art” music. These terms usually are used in an ethnocentric way to refer to formal Western music, and it is in that context in which the concept of the musical work evolved in the early 19th century. A focus on improvisation will permit an interrogation of the concept of a musical work, by setting it against the essentially imperfect productions of improvisations. We will conclude with a conversation about the politics of music and the role of the audience in musical production.

The purpose of this course is to deepen your understanding of music by reflecting on fundamental philosophical questions, but also to deepen your philosophical understanding by examining questions about an ubiquitous human practice.

We will listen to a lot of music in this class, and guest speakers/performers will provide a perspective from the point of view of practitioners. I also encourage students to bring their own musical expertise into the course. The course will be a seminar with class discussion, and will require a considerable amount of writing.

**Course Overview**

This class is intended for music majors, philosophy majors, and other advanced students with an interest in the philosophy of music. No formal background in either music or philosophy is presupposed, and there are no prerequisites, but some training in either music or philosophy will be helpful.
Assignments & Grades:
Three (3) 8-10-page papers, (25 points each)
Final Exam, 25 points

Late work will be accepted at my discretion and will result in a grade reduction of one letter grade.

PLAGIARISM IS, OF COURSE, PROHIBITED. Definition: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. This definition applies to texts published in print or on-line, to manuscripts, and to the work of other student writers. If you plagiarize any of your work, it will be reported to your Dean and the University has a procedure for dealing with it. At that point, your grade will be out of my hands.

Absences must be reported through the Student Self-reporting Absences System.

READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

9/6 Philosophy of music and the “musical work.” Goehr: xvii-12.
9/20 The Separability Principle Goehr: 148-175
9/27 Musical Production w/out the work concept Goehr: 176-204
10/4 The Beethoven Paradigm Goehr: 205-242
10/11 Werktreue Goehr: 243-286

FIRST PAPER DUE—TOPIC TBA
10/25 Aesthetic Value of the Popular Gracyk: 103-152
Handout: Defining Hip Hop Aesthetics
11/1 Modernism/Postmodernism/Pstsoil Handouts: Aldrich: Hip Hop in History; Brown:
Jazz Improvisation and A plea for imperfection; Hamilton: The Aesthetics of Imperfection. Handout: Jazz as Classical Music Ashe: Theorizing Post Soul Aesthetic

SECOND PAPER DUE – TOPIC TBA

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Handouts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/22</td>
<td>Music and Politics</td>
<td>Richard Taruskin</td>
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<td>11/29</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class</td>
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12/6  PREPARATION FOR FINAL EXAM — FINAL PAPER DUE

12/20 FINAL EXAM — ROOM TBA

I reserve the right to alter this syllabus as the course proceeds.