

MUHI 390/450: DECOLONIZING MUSIC STUDY

Instructor: AJ Kluth (he/him)

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Meetings: T & R 2:30-3:45pm, Haydn Hall 311

Office Hours: TBD

Course Description, Objectives, & Learning Outcomes

Topics: music, pedagogy, imperialism, power, epistemology, ontology, race, ethnicity, gender, social justice, dispossession, value extraction, political economies

Effective responses to growing calls to engage with issues of decolonization in institutions of higher learning are challenging to consider and implement – music’s slipperiness seems to compound perceived challenges. By interrogating previous assumptions that comprise music study, we are led to ask not only what music might be, but also what the university and music degrees are for; to interrogate the type of knowledge and value production in which we are engaged. In this course, we will work to gain a better understanding of how we might respond to received material and ideological legacies of colonization as we reconsider and remake music study in an ever-more compassionate and inclusive world.

Our approach to the project of decolonization* in music study is speculative in that it is historical and theoretical but oriented toward the construction of a new world. To be sure, music study is our primary object of analysis. However, through readings in postcolonial theory, feminist study, etc., we will gain a better vernacular to understanding how we got here, what’s at stake, and what ways forward in music study may look like.

* Some of what we’ll be engaging with is more correctly termed “social justice.” As we will discuss, calling anything critical of imperialist, capitalist, white supremacist patriarchy “decolonization” is a category mistake that risks diminishing or confusing relevant discourse and action.

About Professor Kluth:

I have benefited from the privileges available to me through my positionality in various fields of power and as a descendent of settler colonists. I aim to own the privileges and limitations of that positionality in good faith as we do this work together. In addition to my academic work, I have background in the performance of vernacular, “art,” and “world” musics on several instruments and am interested in playing music as I am in thinking about it. I can get carried away talking about theory – please always feel free to interrupt and/or challenge me if I get lost or you could use clarification or have a different idea. My greatest hope is that we all share our ideas as we engage in conversation about this material seminar-style rather than in lecture.

Materials & Sources

Required Reading & Listening:

- There is no required textbook for this course. All required reading will be made available on the course website.
- The course website on Canvas contains essential materials and information about the course and should be consulted regularly for syllabus updates or deadline changes. Syllabus, required readings, study guides, paper guidelines, notes for required listening, and links to online resources will be posted on the site.

Assessment

Assignments turned in on time will be given full credit if engaged with in good faith. Assignments turned in late will lose some points but still get you credit. I take you and this class seriously and expect you to do the same.

- Attendance and participation: I expect each of us to be present and prepared for each class meeting. This will not be graded, but it's difficult to engage with this material if you don't show up so that we can discuss it together. Be in touch with me if you're having trouble and we'll work things out. Each class participant will be responsible for informally leading discussion related to at least two readings throughout our semester.
- Essays (5 x 10% (7% if late)): Essay prompts are related to course readings and ask that you think critically about the topics, but that you respond from your own experience, ideals, position, etc. Your essays should be about 1000 words long. It is not necessary that they be strictly academic and formal, though I ask you do your best writing in good English, use Times New Roman 12-point font, 1" margins, and upload to Canvas as a Word .doc (or .docx) file, not a Google document, Pages, etc. Prompts available on course Canvas site.
- Note: for graduate students, these essay prompts will more specifically address particular readings/issues and to engage more specifically than the more general undergraduate requirement. This will be evident in the prompts.
- Letters to Instructor (6 x 5% (3% if late)): This is a new idea for me, but I hope that that engaging in regular mutual feedback, we might even more intentionally engage with course material. For the dates noted below, please compose a letter to me about your engagement with recent course material: how are you feeling about the topic? What sort of thoughts and feelings are you having? What personal insights, challenges, or takeaways are you experiencing? These can be personal reflections or engaging specifically with a text/idea. They should be about 500 words and can be oriented somewhat like a journal but should specifically address me as your audience. I will respond with a series of statements or questions related to whatever it is you share.
- Final Project (20%): Please prepare a final project that responds to the topics/issues relevant to our course. The form of this project is open and could take the form of a paper (at least 5 pages), a composition, an improvisation with written reflection, a sample syllabus, an ethnography, a film, etc. I will speak with each of you throughout the semester to discuss the sort of project you'd like to pursue.
- Note: for graduate students, papers/projects will be more substantial - we'll address this one-on-one to find an appropriate project/topic that might aid your development.

Administrative

Class Etiquette:

- Students are expected to arrive on time for class, participate in class activities and discussions, and to be respectful to instructor and fellow students. Each individual is responsible for completing all readings and assignments on time. Late assignments will be penalized. I trust your commitment to your own learning. While I am not interested in being a cop, I am interested in working with you if you're having trouble. Let's work together to have a great semester as we encounter this material.

Academic Integrity:

- All work must be done independently unless otherwise directed. Plagiarism, whether from printed, unprinted, or digital sources, is a serious violation of the university conduct code and will be reported to the Academic Integrity Board.

Anti-Racist/Gender Neutral/Inclusive Language (i.e., don't be racist, misogynist, or transphobic):

- This class committed to fostering the flourishing of all individuals, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, sexual identity, ability or disability, age, language, culture, appearance, or socio-economic background. Critiques of ideas are to be encouraged, while criticism of individuals is strictly forbidden. In other words, personal attacks are prohibited, and persistent personal attacks are cause for ejection from the class session and/or lowered participation grade. I expect all of us to use inclusive language.

Students with Disabilities:

- If you have a disability for which reasonable accommodation should be made, please notify me at your first convenience. I am committed to being as accommodating as possible and look forward to utilizing available resources.
[\(https://case.edu/studentlife/healthcounseling/disability-resources/\)](https://case.edu/studentlife/healthcounseling/disability-resources/)

Course Schedule – Subject to Change

General/Introductory

Week 1

T: August 24

Bradley, Deborah. 2015. "Hidden in Plain Sight: Race and Racism in Music Education." In *The Oxford Handbook of Social Justice in Music Education*, 190-203. Edited by Cathy Benedict, Patrick Schmidt, Gary Spruce, and Paul Woodford. New York: Oxford University Press.

Klages, Mary. 2006. "Race and Postcolonialism." In *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 147-63. London: Continuum.

R: August 26

Tuck, Eve and Yang, K. Wayne. 2012. “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 (1): 1-40.

Constructing/Performing Race

Week 2

T: August 31

Johnson, E. Patrick. 2003. “Introduction.” In *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*, 1-11. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

R: September 2

Morrison, Matthew D. 2019. “Race, Blacksound, and the (Re)Making of Musicological Discourse.” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72 (3): 781-823.

Letter #1 Due by end of Thursday, September 2

(De)Colonizing Epistemologies/Methodologies

Week 3

T: September 7

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 1999. “Chapter 3: Colonizing Knowledges.” In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 58-75. Zed Books, Ltd: London.

R: September 9

Radano, Ronald and Philip V. Bohlman. 2000. “Introduction: Music and Race, Their Past, Their Presence.” In *Music and the Racial Imagination*, 18-23. Edited by Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Essay #1 Due by end of Thursday, September 9

Assumptions of the “Purely Musical” – Legitimizing the Canon

Week 4

T: September 14

Scruton, Roger. 2001. “Absolute music.” In *Grove Music Online*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.00069>

R: September 16

Hanslick, Eduard. [1856] 1986. “Chapter 3: The Musically Beautiful.” In *On the Musically Beautiful*, 28-44. Translated by Geoffrey Payzant. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.

Letter #2 Due by end of Thursday, September 16

Week 5

T: September 21

Goehr, Lydia. 1992. "Werktrue: Confirmation and Challenge in Contemporary Movements." In *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, 243-53. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Essay #2 Due by end of Thursday, September 21

Recovering the Absolute: Canon, Analysis, and Convention

R: September 23

Small, Christopher. 1986. "Performance as ritual: sketch for an enquiry into the true nature of a symphony concert." *Sociological Review* 34 (1, supplement): 6-32.

Week 6

T: September 28

Weber, William. 2003. "Consequences of Canon: The Institutionalization of Enmity between Contemporary and Classical Music." *Common Knowledge* 9 (1): 78-99.

R: September 30

Kerman, Joseph. 1980. "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out." *Critical Inquiry* 7 (2): 311-31.

Letter #3 Due by end of Thursday, September 30

Week 7

T: October 5

McClary, Susan. 1991. "Sexual Politics in Classical Music." In *Feminine Endings*, 53-79. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

R: October 7

No reading: meeting for general reflection/discussion/catching up

Essay #3 Due by end of Thursday, October 7

A Few Other “Others” to Consider

Week 8

T: October 12

Brett, Philip and Elizabeth Wood. 2007. “Lesbian and Gay Music.” In *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, 350-mid 61, 366, 372-mid 76. Edited by Brett, Philip, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas. Berkeley: University of California Press.

R: October 14

Blake Howe, Stephanie Jensen-Moulton, Neil Lerner, and Joseph Straus. 2015. “Introduction: Disability Studies in Music, Music in Disability Studies.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Disability Studies*. Edited by Blake Howe, Stephanie Jensen-Moulton, Neil Lerner, and Joseph Straus. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Letter #4 Due by end of Thursday, October 14

Week 9

T: October 19 (NO CLASS – FALL BREAK)

R: October 21

No reading: Workshop final project ideas

Essay #4 Due by end of Thursday, October 21

Discursive Interventions

Week 10

T: October 26

Ewell, Philip A. 2020. “Music Theory and the White Racial Frame.” *Music Theory Online* 26 (2): n.p.

R: October 28

Kajikawa, Loren. 2019. “The Possessive Investment in Classical Music: Confronting Legacies of White Supremacy in U.S. Schools and Departments of Music.” In *Seeing Race Again: Countering Colorblindness across the Disciplines*, 155-75. Edited by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw et al. Oakland: University of California Press.

Week 11

T: November 2

Lewis, George E. 2017. “The Situation of a Creole.” In “Defining Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Music,” forum convened and edited by David Clarke, *Twentieth Century Music* 14 (3): 442–46.

Pedagogical Interventions

R: November 4

Walker, Margaret E. 2020. “Towards a Decolonized Music History Curriculum.” *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 10 (1): 1-19.

Letter #5 Due by end of Thursday, November 4

Week 12

T: November 9

Clercq, Trevor de. 2019. “A Music Theory Curriculum for the 99%.” *Engaging Students: Essays in Music Pedagogy* 7. <https://engagingstudentsmusic.org/article/view/7359/5713>.

R: November 11

Kajikawa, Loren. 2014. “Hip-Hop History in the Age of Colorblindness.” *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* 5 (1): 117-23.

Essay #5 Due by end of Thursday, November 11

Week 13

T: November 16

No reading: meeting for general reflection/discussion/catching up

Reflexivity of Critique & Biting the University That Feeds Us

R: November 18

Moosavi, Leon. 2020. “The decolonial bandwagon and the dangers of intellectual decolonisation.” *International Review of Sociology* 30 (2): 332-54.

Letter #6 Due by end of Thursday, November 18

Week 14

T: November 23

Tuck, Eve. 2018. “Chapter 9: Biting the University That Feeds Us.” In *Dissident Knowledge in Higher Education*, 149-67. Edited by Marc Spooner and James McNinch.

R: November 25 (NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK)

Week 15

T: November 30

paperon, la. 2017. “Chapter 3: A Third University Exists Within the First.” In *A Third University is Possible*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
<https://manifold.umn.edu/read/a-third-university-is-possible/section/7ec715f1-b01f-4080-a3e2-19944cd2ebc4#ch03>

R: December 2

No reading: share process and outcomes of final projects

Final projects due by end-of-day, December 14

Related Reading to Look Up

Constructing/Performing Race

Bhaha, Homi K. [1994] 2004. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press.

Harris, Cheryl I. 1993. "Whiteness as Property." *Harvard Law Review* 106 (8): 1710-91.

Mills, Charles W. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press.

Robinson, Dylan. 2020. "Introduction." In *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1-36.

(De)Colonizing Epistemologies/Methodologies

Battiste, Marie. 2018. Chapter 8: Reconciling Indigenous Knowledge in Education: Promises, Possibilities, and Imperatives. In *Dissident Knowledge in Higher Education*. Edited by Marc Spooner and James McNinch. 123-48.

Koselleck, Reinhart. 2002. "Common Essential Features of *Bildung*." In *The Practice of Conceptual History*. Translated by Todd Samuel Presner and Others. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 184-207.

Recovering the Absolute: Canon, Analysis, and Convention

Shreffler, Anne. 2017. "The Myth of Cannon's Invisible Hand." *Not Another Music History Cliché!* <https://notanothermusichistorycliche.blogspot.com/2017/12/the-myth-of-canons-invisible-hand-guest.html#more>

Discursive Interventions

Amico, Stephen. 2020. "'We Are All Musicologists Now'; or, the End of Ethnomusicology." *The Journal of Musicology* 37 (1): 1-32.

Cimini, Amy and Moreno, Jairo. 2009. "On Diversity." *Gamut: Online Journal of the Music Theory Society of the Mid-Atlantic* 2 (1): 111-96.

Pedagogical Interventions

Friere, Paulo. [1970] 2005. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum.

hooks, bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge.

Robin, William. n.d. "What Controversial Changes at Harvard Mean for Music in the University." *National Sawdust Log*. <https://nationalsawdust.org/thelog/2017/04/25/what-controversial-changes-at-harvard-means-for-music-in-the-university/>

Not "class material," but interesting things to check out:

Brown, Danielle. 2020. "An Open letter on Racism in Music Studies."

<https://www.mypeopletellstories.com/blog/open-letter>

Blurring the Boundary – Teaching Transgender Students in the Music Classroom:

<https://blurringthebinary.com/>

Durham University – Decolonizing: Reading Group Resources (bibliography): <https://duracuk-lb01-production.terminalfour.net/departments/academic/music/about-us/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/decolonisation-reading-resources/>

Engaged Music Theory (bibliography): <https://engagedmusictheory.com/>

Garrett, Matthew L. and Joshua Palkki. 2021. *Honoring Trans and Gender-Expansive Students in Music Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/honoring-trans-and-gender-expansive-students-in-music-education-9780197506608?cc=dk&lang=en&>

Jenkins, Christopher. 2020. “Exploring the Aesthetics of African-American Classical Music: An Annotated Bibliography.” https://cdn.ymaws.com/aesthetics-online.org/resource/resmgr/files/diversity/Jenkins_African_American.pdf

Jenkins, Christopher. 2021. “Is Classical Music Racist? An Aesthetic Approach.” <https://aestheticsforbirds.com/2021/02/26/is-classical-music-racist-an-aesthetic-approach/>

Pete, Shauneen. 2016. “100 Ways: Indigenizing & Decolonizing Academic Programs.” *Aboriginal policy studies* 6 (1): 819. <https://doi.org/10.5663/aps.v6i1.27455>

UCLA’s Practice-Based Experimental Epistemology Research Lab:

<https://schoolofmusic.ucla.edu/about/community-engagement/peer-lab/>

“The West,” by Contrapoints:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hytafqCORT4&t=13s&ab_channel=ContraPoints

“Music Theory and White Supremacy,” by Adam Neely:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kr3quGh7pJA&ab_channel=AdamNeely