

MUS 3, Introduction to Music, Spring 2009
Michael Dessen, University of California, Irvine
Syllabus

Course meets: Tuesday/Thursday, 12:30-1:50pm, Winifred Smith Hall

Course webpage: <http://music.arts.uci.edu/mdessen>

My office: 105 Music and Media

Phone: (949) 824-0386

Office hours: Thursdays, 10:30-12:30, and by **appointment**

Email: mdessen@uci.edu

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR WAITLISTED STUDENTS

I am prohibited from signing any add cards for the class due to not having more TAs or seats in the auditorium. However, if you are on the waitlist and hoping to get in, and want to keep up with assignments during the first two weeks of the quarter, you will need access to the Dropbox and Mailist for this course on EEE. If you do plan to keep up with the work while waiting then email me with your UCINet ID and I can give you access to those EEE tools. Please realize this does NOT mean you are in the course, and regardless of whether you do the work during the first two weeks, I still cannot sign any add cards. Thank you.

-Michael Dessen

Course description

The official title for this course is "Introduction to Music." If you grew up on planet Earth, then this course probably won't "introduce" you to music, since most everyone in our species has musical experiences throughout life. What it will do is expose you to a wide range of music, some familiar and much unfamiliar, and present ideas and listening strategies that can deepen your musical experiences.

This course will examine some basic questions about how music is constructed technically as well as how musical practices shape our understanding of ourselves and the dynamics of our culture. We will survey a wide range of musical examples, Western and non-Western, ancient and contemporary, often drawing on musical contexts that may be new to you and occasionally using forms common in contemporary, mass media.

The first half of the quarter will be organized around two main units, "Time and Rhythm," and "Sound and Pitch," with an introduction to analog and digital sound technology along the way. The second half of the quarter will survey several case studies of musical forms and ensembles, and end with a brief look at intellectual property debates and the nature of today's commercial music industry.

Assignments and exams

Weekly reading and listening assignments will be given in each class, and also listed in the slideshows from each class which will be posted as PDF files to the DropBox shortly after each class.

Two sound collage assignments (see due dates below) will require you to use a personal computer to create your own, unique sonic compositions. Those assignments will be graded pass/fail. They require no previous music training and are impossible to fail if you follow the instructions *and start working on them well ahead of time in case any technical problems arise*. Their purpose is to introduce you in a hands-on way to working with sound and time. Details for each assignment will be explained in class and in a handout, 2 weeks before its due date.

Midterm and Final Exams will cover the main terms and ideas from the lectures. The final will only cover material since the midterm. The midterm and final will be equal in length and you'll have 1 hour and 15 minutes to complete each. They will consist of three sections:

1. Three listening identifications drawn from 10-12 assigned tracks that I'll specify as we go. For each, you'll answer multiple choice questions about the track upon hearing it played

once.

2. Multiple choice questions based on the terms and case studies presented in the lectures.
3. Two short answer questions (2-4 sentences each).

Important deadlines and exam dates

Thursday, April 16: Sound Collage Assignment #1 due by 12:00 noon, uploaded to the Dropbox named "Collage1."

Thursday, April 30: Midterm exam in class. You must arrive on time and be ready to start by 12:30 in order to get the full amount of time on the exam.

Thursday, May 21: Sound Collage Assignment #2 by 12:00 noon, uploaded to the Dropbox named "Collage2."

Thursday, June 11: Final Exam, 10:30am, Winifred Smith Hall.

Required materials

There is no textbook for this class, and readings will be available on electronic reserve. However, you will be required to purchase listening assignment tracks through the iTunes store, totalling no more than \$40 for the quarter.

For the audio collage assignments, you will have the option of using a free software program called Audacity (which works on all major computer platforms). You will also need to have access to a computer with a built-in microphone in order to record sounds for the first collage assignments. Many computers made during the past few years have built-in microphones. If yours does not, you can borrow a friend's to record the sounds or purchase a USB microphone (roughly \$25-30) at a computer store (plan ahead).

Though not required, a high quality pair of headphones is strongly recommended for close listening.

Grade breakdown

Midterm and Final exams: 40% each

Sound collage assignments: 10% each

Please note that there will NOT be any extra credit assignments.

Late/makeup policies

Sound collage assignments will receive a grade of "0" if the mp3 and text files are not uploaded to Dropbox by the due date, or if the instructions are not followed. For the midterm and final exams, no makeups will be given, except for severe (and documented) illness or genuine emergencies, in which case you must email me at <mdessen@uci.edu> or phone (949) 824-0386 on the same day of the exam to request a makeup.

Special needs

If you have a disability that affects your performance in this course, you must document it through the [Disabilities Services Office](#) and have them contact me at the beginning of the quarter to establish any necessary arrangements.

Office hours and getting help

If you have any trouble with the course, it is important to seek help as early as possible. If you want to meet for help but cannot make my office hours, please [email me](#) some times you are free.