

MUS 3, Introduction to Music, Summer Session 2, 2009
Michael Dessen, University of California, Irvine
Syllabus

Waitlisted students: Unfortunately I cannot sign add cards for this class because we cannot exceed 35 students. If you are on the waitlist and want to get in, the only option is to wait and hope that others drop.

Course meets: Tues/Thurs, 9am-11:50am, MM 316

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

My office: 105 Music and Media

Phone: None (victim of budget cuts). Please use **email** to contact me.

Office hours (summer): By **appointment**

Email: mdessen@uci.edu

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 introduce strategies of listening and understanding that can deepen your musical experiences.

This course will explore some basic questions about how music is constructed technically, as well as how musical practices shape our understanding of ourselves and our culture. We will survey a wide range of musical examples, Western and non-Western, ancient and contemporary. Most of the examples and contexts we will study will probably be new to you, though a few will be common sounds from contemporary mass media.

The first half of the course will be organized around two main units, "Time and Rhythm," and "Sound and Pitch," along with a brief introduction to analog and digital sound technologies. The second half of the course will present several case studies from European classical music, jazz, and "world music," ending with a brief look at intellectual property debates and the structure of today's commercial music industry.

Assignments and exams

Reading and listening assignments related to class lectures will be announced in class and through the email listserv.

Two audio collage assignments will be explained in class and on detailed handouts, at least 8 days in advance of their due dates (listed below). These assignments will be graded pass/fail, though points may be taken off for not properly following instructions. They require no previous music training and are impossible to fail *if you 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.

The midterm and final exams will cover material from class lectures, including main ideas from reading assignments that were covered in class. They will consist of multiple choice questions as well as several short answer questions. 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.

Lectures slideshows

Powerpoints used in class lectures will be posted to Dropbox (on EEE) as PDF files after each class.

Required materials

There is no textbook for this class, and readings will be available on electronic reserve. However, you will be asked to purchase some of the listening assignment tracks through the

iTunes store, likely totalling no more than \$25.

For the audio collage assignments, you can use a free software program called [Audacity](#), which works on all major computer platforms. Be sure that you really downloaded and installed Audacity and not another program through a popup advertisement window (a common mistake is to download AVS Audio Editor instead).

Though not required, a high quality pair of headphones is strongly recommended for close listening. If you wish to record your own sounds for the audio assignments (optional but recommended), you'll also need a computer with a built-in microphone.

Grade breakdown:

Midterm and Final exams: 40% each
Sound collage assignments: 10% each

Important dates

Tuesday 8/4 - Audio assignment #1 handout given
Thursday 8/13 - Audio assignment #1 due in Dropbox by 5 pm
Tuesday 8/18 - MIDTERM EXAM (1st half of class; lecture during 2nd half of class). Audio assignment #2 handout given.
Tuesday 9/1 - Audio assignment #2 due in Dropbox by 5 pm
Thursday 9/3 - FINAL EXAM

Late/makeup policies

Sound collage assignments will receive a grade of "0" if the audio and text files are not uploaded to Dropbox by the due date. 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 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 the 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, please [email me](#) some times you are free.