Writing on Music (WRTG 3020)
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Overview
First and foremost, this course focuses on inquiry and analysis: asking meaningful
questions so that we may better understand the topic at hand. Naturally, our topic will be
music. The medium through which we will express our thoughts and opinions is the written
word; therefore, we will spend time covering not only style and grammatical issues, but also
ways to make our insights clear and cogent. To help us reach these goals, the class will be
taught not in lecture format, but in a discussion/workshop format.

Core goals for the course:

1. To help you shape and defend your own ideas and opinions.
   -- Class discussion (‘structure’ and ‘evidence’)
   -- Every paper we complete (personal narrative, Crap Band assignment,
     Music Review, Research essay) helps us meet this objective
   -- Workshops in which you give and defend your opinions

2. To make you highly aware of the importance of your “audience”
   -- Workshops

3. To introduce you to the field of Aesthetics
   -- Various readings
   -- Informal presentation of your interesting, pleasing, and displeasing
     music/sounds
   -- Music Review

4. To heighten your awareness of the sounds that surround you
   -- Readings of Yi-Fu Tuan and R. Murray Schafer
   -- Soundwalk
   -- Writing exercises on your personal Soundscape
   -- Soundscape paper/ Roadtrip paper

5. To make you more familiar with the methods of academic research
   -- Process of the Research Essay
   -- Music Review

6. To help you move towards a graceful, error-free writing style
   -- In-class lecture and writing exercises
   -- Major papers

Materials
Readings you will find on e-reserve (see Chinook main menu).
Think of your own writing as the major text for this course. Please double-space and staple final drafts -- 12 point font is also greatly appreciated. I do not accept late homework or major papers that have not been reviewed by classmates.

You will receive other course material in the form of handouts. Essential tools for writing are a good dictionary and thesaurus; I recommend Webster’s Collegiate and Roget’s, respectively.

Attendance
Without penalty, you may miss three class periods. Students who miss class will be expected to ask classmates for the information missed (you will exchange email addresses for this purpose). For every absence past the allotted amount, your participation grade (worth 20% of final grade) will be lowered 10 points. Please note that I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. Six absences will result in an F in the course. If, for reasons beyond your control, you cannot meet these standards, you have the right to ask me for an IW/IF — essentially, an incomplete.

Tardiness and leaving early is unacceptable and will also affect your participation grade. Two late arrivals/early departures count as one absence. If you are late, take responsibility for that fact and make sure I haven’t marked you absent.

Grading standards
These standards apply to papers as well as other written assignments. Grades for oral presentations are based on clarity, form, and delivery.

A Exceptional in content, structure, and style: responding to a topic or question that many find interesting, it offers an original point of view and follows a compelling narrative or line of reasoning. If need be, the paper responds to counterarguments thoughtfully, and it certainly analyzes evidence or one’s experience in an in-depth manner. The style is graceful and error-free.

B Clearly written, well-developed, interesting. The paper may have some minor, non-recurring difficulties regarding the narrative, structure, argument, style, or mechanics, but no flaws that compromise the point of view it presents or the readability of its prose. OR An essay that is far less ambitious than an “A” paper; this is an essay that may be well-written and organized, but whose narrative, reasoning, and argument may be nonetheless somewhat routine or self-evident.

C A mixture of strengths and weaknesses. The paper may be readable, reasonably well-organized, and support a point of view satisfactorily, but it will have some important unresolved problems concerning the quality of the claim, the line of reasoning, the narrative, the use of evidence, detail, style, or grammar. The paper may fulfill the basic requirements of the assignment, but say little of genuine importance or significance.

D Deficient in content, form, style, or mechanics. It may be disorganized, illogical, confusing, unfocused, superficial, or contain pervasive errors that impair readability.

F Incoherent, formless, or not turned in when due.
Participation grading standards (attendance, promptness, in-class participation, comments on classmates’ drafts, timely submission of work)

"Life is a group activity." -- Amanda Bryant

A  Excellent participants are always prepared for class and offer their insights freely. (This does not mean they dominate class discussion; they are more discrete than that.) Moreover, they understand the strengths and weaknesses of the paper at hand, and consistently suggest ways to make the author’s point clearer and/or more persuasive. As well as always being in-class and on-time, they are noted as excellent critics by their classmates.

B  Above average participants are usually prepared for class. Regularly, they offer their insights. They often understand the strengths and weaknesses of the paper at hand and usually suggest ways to make the author’s point clearer and more persuasive. They are noted as good critics by their classmates. They rarely miss class and are always on-time.

C  More often than not, average participants are prepared for class. Occasionally, they will offer their insights freely, but usually they wait to be called on. These critics may have some trouble discerning the strengths and weaknesses of the work in front of them; thus, they may not be sure how to make it clearer, more interesting, or more persuasive. They are noted as average critics by their classmates.

D  Below average participants are generally not prepared and generally do not participate in class discussion. They have difficulty determining the strengths and weaknesses of the work in front of them. They are noted as below average critics by their classmates.

F  These critics are not prepared and do not participate in class discussion.

Approximate Calculation of Grades

*Please note that there is no extra-credit

20% Participation (attendance, promptness, in-class participation, comments on classmates’ drafts, timely submission of work)
5% Miscellaneous HW (quizzes on readings, writing exercises, informal presentations etc.)
10% Personal Narrative
10% Crap Band assignment
15% Roadtrip paper
15% Music Review
25% Research essay

Plagiarism

If you submit another person’s work as your own or fail to credit the ideas of others, you will receive an F in the course.
Special Notes

If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities, let me know early in the semester so your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to bring documentation of your disability to the Disabilities Service Office in Willard 322 (phone 303.492.8671).

If you are a non-native English speaker, let me know before the third class period. Though it may not be necessary, the Program for Writing and Rhetoric offers a version of WRTG 3020 in the ESL format.