

MSC 1003 - Music in Civilization      Fall 2021      Room 6-170

Prof. David Smey

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SECTIONS

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DMWA - Wednesdays 12:50-2:05

EMWA - Wednesdays 2:30-3:45

FMWA - Wednesdays 4:10-5:25

*(Class syllabus version 2.0)*

Welcome to Music in Civilization! The title of this course is a bit of a misnomer, because it focuses almost exclusively on *Classical* music in *Western* civilization. (Back in the day such a class used to be called “Music Appreciation,” which was perhaps equally misleading.) By the end of this class you should be able to hear any piece of Classical music and have an idea of when it was written, who it was originally written for, how it is put together, and basically what the whole point of it is. For some people this makes the world of artsy concert music less intimidating and more enjoyable – hopefully it will do that for you as well.

The course catalog also promises some discussion of non-Western music. In this class the non-Classical component will be a unit on the African-American tradition of jazz, which we will understand as a combination of European and African influences.

## Covid Considerations

Since this class will occur during an ongoing international pandemic and a surge of the delta variant, we will have to take a few special measures. Following CDC guidelines, I will ask that you **mask up** in class while New York City has a 7-day average of 600 new covid cases per day, [as reported in the NY Times](#). (This is roughly equivalent to what the CDC calls a “significant” transmission rate. I will wear a mask as well, of course.)

Also, as long as new daily cases remain above 1200 (roughly what the CDC calls “high” transmission) **in-person class will be optional**. I’ll post all assignments online, but some will be designated for in-person coverage. In class, I’ll present that material to you in a more traditional way and then we’ll actually do the accompanying exercises in-person, as a group. Everyone who attends class will get an automatic “check plus” (= 100 points) on these assignments.

If New York City manages to get back below 1200 cases per day we may switch back to “regular” class in which once-a-week attendance is required.

Of course the most important aspect of covid preparedness is vaccination – all students (and their families, roommates, partners etc.) really need to be vaccinated, whenever possible.

## The Hybrid Class Format

In-person sessions will follow a “hybrid” class design that meets once a week for an hour and 15 minutes. In addition, an hour-and-a-quarter’s worth of material that we would normally do in person will be done in online homework units – these will be hosted on our class website, [davesmey.com](http://davesmey.com).

Here is a schedule of our 14 sessions. All dates are Wednesdays!

Class 1 – August 25

Class 2 – September 1

(No class September 8 due to Rosh Hashana)

(No class September 15 due to Yom Kippur)

Class 3 – September 22

Class 4 – September 29

Class 5 – October 6

Class 6 – October 13

Class 7 – October 20

Class 8 – October 27

Class 9 – November 3

Class 10 – November 10

Class 11 – November 17

Class 12 – November 24 (*Note: This is the day before Thanksgiving.*)

Class 13 – December 1

Class 14 – December 8

## Website

I am going to use my personal web space, [davesmey.com](http://davesmey.com), to support this class. (If you don’t like my name, you can also get it at [musicinciv.com](http://musicinciv.com). Both URLs go to the same place!) There you will find the assignments for each week, class notes, and links to the music you need to study. You should get in the habit of looking at our web page at least once a week to make sure you’ve done everything you are supposed to do.

Our class website is built by me and coded “by hand.” I apologize in advance for any errors I might make, and ask that you contact me by email if you observe any problems.

## Office Hours + Support Sessions

I will offer zoom appointments each week where you can meet with me and discuss anything you want. In addition, there will be a few special small-group zooms where we meet to work on particularly tricky assignments that people may have trouble with.

The schedule for these sessions will change from week to week. For more information, click on the OFFICE HRS tab on our class web page.

I may also offer an in-person office hour on campus. And remember, you can email me at any time with problems or questions at [david.smey@baruch.cuny.edu](mailto:david.smey@baruch.cuny.edu).

## What do you need for this class?

You don't actually have to buy anything to take this class. However, I can think of three things you might want to spend money on which might enhance your experience.

1) A decent pair of earphones or headphones.

Since the point of the class is to listen to music, you want a setup that will make the music sound good! I do not recommend holding your cellphone up to your ear or playing the music on your laptop speakers. I have [a page on the website](#) that suggests some inexpensive options for headphones, earphones, and bluetooth speakers.

2) A student subscription to Youtube Premium, Spotify, or Apple Music.

In order to listen we'll frequently use these three popular streaming options. I use Youtube the most, and I try to offer alternate links to Spotify and Apple Music when I can. These services offer discounted student subscriptions that would make your streaming experience ad-free. I recommend picking one of them and subscribing.

3) An optional textbook, *Listening to Western Music* by Craig Wright.

This class used to be based on a textbook, so if you like to read I would still recommend picking up an inexpensive used copy. You will see that the text still follows the sequence of the class fairly closely, and it will add some depth and detail to what we are talking about. Craig Wright teaches full-time at Yale, and I'm just an adjunct at Baruch, so that would suggest that he's smarter than me. :)

There are actually four different versions of the text that you could get, depending on what you can find on the used market. You can purchase *Listening to Music* or *Listening to Western Music*, in either the seventh or eighth editions. I have [an online guide](#) which could help you locate a cheap copy.

## Grading

Our semester's grade is based on a combination of homework, tests, and (maybe) attendance.

### Homework: 60% of grade

There should be about 60 brief homework assignments which are completed through our class website (davesmey.com). At the end of the semester your overall homework average will be 60% of the final grade.

Remember that we need to do homework assignments for about half of the material that I used to cover in-person, so there should be about an hour and fifteen minutes' worth of "extra" units assigned each week! It is important that you budget time to keep up with this.

The way homeworks are graded usually helps you maintain a healthy overall average. When you complete an assignment you will be awarded a "check plus," "check," or "check minus."

*Check plus* – This is worth 100 points. It means you did excellent work. For each assignment, I decide what that means. I might only give a check plus for perfect work on one assignment, and then give check pluses out for 50% correct answers on the next assignment. The first screen on each homework assignment tells you what the grading criteria will be.

Your work also has to be on time for it to be a check plus.

*Check* – This means "pretty good." It is worth 88 points. This is also the best grade you can possibly get on late work.

*Check minus* – This is unacceptable work. It is worth a 60. That's a really bad grade, so I usually give you a second chance on check minuses.

*Re-dos* – After you get a check minus on an assignment, you'll have an opportunity for one re-do. Sometimes the assignment is programmed to let you try again immediately, and sometimes it makes you wait for a 24-hour lock-out period. If you do an acceptable job the second time around you can get upgraded to a check. Be careful, though – if you don't meet the criteria on your second try you'll get a *permanent check minus* which is worth even less (40 points)!

Remember that re-dos are only for check minuses. You can't redo a check.

*Zeros* – If you don't do an assignment it factors a zero into your homework average. This does unnecessary damage to your grade. Since I do accept late homework there really is no reason not to take a few minutes to click through each exercise and get a grade – even a 60 is much better than a 0.

*You can pause at any time.* The assignments are not timed and you are allowed to stop and close the page after you've started. Just start again at the beginning, later – it will remember the answers you already entered and you'll be able to find the place where you left off. Don't try to monkey around with the URLs and skip a question, though – not doing a question is the same as getting it wrong.

## Due Dates and Expiration Dates

Homework will be posted each week and will typically be due before the next class. You can do the assignments late and still get a “check” (88 points).

However, each assignment will also have a second due date which I'll call the expiration date. This will typically be a month after it was assigned. As the name implies, you won't be allowed to do an assignment after it expires - instead you will get a zero.

We'll also have a final deadline at the end of the semester, when absolutely everything needs to be done. All work must be completed by Monday, December 20 at midnight.

## 4 “special” assignments: 40% of grade

We'll periodically do some test-like assignments to summarize each historical era. Each one will be 10% of the overall grade.

There is no midterm and no final.

## Possible Changes in the Formula

If we go back to regular in-person class with mandatory attendance, that also means that we will have some real tests! The overall grade formula may shift a little bit.

In addition, I normally have an “attendance modifier” that can give you 3 bonus points if you have good attendance and will cut your grade severely if you miss a lot of classes. But that won't go into effect unless we go back to mandatory attendance.

## Cheating + Other Disciplinary Issues

### Tests

If we go back to real in-person tests, please be aware that I have no tolerance for students who cheat. Phone use, copying off of a classmate, or using an answer sheet will result in penalties ranging from a zero on the test to an F in the class and referral to the Dean of Students.

Cases of copying that cannot be definitively resolved may result in both students being required to retake the test.

### In-Class Conduct

While we are in class it is important that we maintain a focused and respectful atmosphere. Excessive chatting, the use of electronics for immersive activities (like video, long text exchanges, work for other classes etc.), bullying, or harassment may result in a reprimand, grade penalty, or even ejection from the class.

### Web

Your account at [davesmey.com](http://davesmey.com) is for your use only. Sharing your password, using another student's password, or creating a bogus account during open signups will result in grade penalties.

In general I expect all web homework to be based on a viewing of our online lecture materials. If I think you've skipped the reading + videos I may reject your work and give you a zero.

## But seriously, this is a fun class!

Most students won't need to worry about any of this stuff. If you like music, and you can get into unfamiliar *kinds* of music, this class should be pleasant and relatively easy. Let's relax and have fun.