

Music 8845:

Advanced Research: Current Musicology

Group Project:

Studying together c. 25-30 recent English-language articles, essays, or short books in the fields of musicology and music theory (normally, about four per week). Each person is responsible for the content of each article: this includes a reasonable awareness of the surrounding historical-contextual information in which the article's topic is embedded (composers, styles, theories, forms, similar works, etc.). Class sessions: Rotating individual presentations of the articles, plus a subsequent group discussion and evaluation. Each presenter will also be responsible for producing a short, written critique of that article plus a brief annotated bibliography of related writings and sources.

Objectives:

- to deal with professional writing in a professional manner.
- to acquire an overview of the types of writing now being published by specialists in the field.
- to survey some of the main issues in a wide variety of current musicological topics.
- to analyze some common internal mechanics and strategies of the genre of the professional essay or article.
- to begin to establish an ordered set of principles that can help us to assess scholarly, musicological writing.
- to strive to organize and deliver ordered, useful presentations.

Grading and Evaluation:

Approximately 25% = quality and incisiveness of oral presentations.

Approximately 25% = quality, incisiveness of participation in subsequent discussions; evidence of thorough preparation.

Approximately 25% = written work: argumentation and prose quality.

Approximately 25% = two-hour final exam: essays and short answers on the specific content of the c. 25-30 assigned writings. Within two or three days after each presentation you also will be given a list of "Study Questions" for each article or article-set. These are for further study.

ARTICLE/ESSAY PRESENTATIONS: 20 MINUTES EACH

Before presenting the article/essay/book to the class, become a "one-week" expert in the relevant field. Familiarize yourself (in a "hands-on" way) with the past research done in the field--the major works and source-books. When possible, find in the library several of the sources cited in the text. If feasible, actively sample other repertory surrounding the work or style being written.

FIRST STEP: GRASP THE ARTICLE AS A WHOLE--GET A SENSE OF THE STRUCTURE AND LOGIC OF THE WHOLE. WHY ARE THE PARTS ARRANGED IN THE ORDER THEY ARE, AND WHY WAS THIS ORDER-CHOICE MADE? ETC.

Be able to define every word/term in the article. If the article is about a piece or section thereof, get to know it well.

Since every other class participant will have read the article, **do not dwell in your presentation on things that are already clear to us (simple content summaries, etc.)**. Unless the "content" is, for one reason or another, extraordinarily difficult, get right to your analysis and commentary--right to the crucial points.

Your task is to help us understand much more about the article, the state of the field with which it is concerned, and its immediate scholarly context. Organize your presentation carefully and in a fully professional manner. Make sure your presentations are clear, engaging, and, above all, helpful. Rossini once said that he liked all kinds of music except the boring kind. Similarly, we dislike boring presentations. Don't give one.

Plan in advance, and use your allotted time wisely--know exactly what you are going to cover and do so efficiently. In your twenty minutes (maximum: you will be asked to stop if you try to go over this limit) you should generally try to cover at least:

1. The author: credentials. (Who is he/she?)
2. The precise problem that the article sets out to solve, and the context of that problem. Is this a significant problem? Why? Who cares? Is the problem adequately posed in the article? Where?
3. The perspective or methodological procedure from which it springs. (Don't oversimplify.)
4. The strategies and structure of article.
5. Bring to your presentation some of the sources (books, articles, facsimiles) on which the author relies. Describe them briefly. Characterize very generally some of the current concerns and "state of research" in the field involved. (A new field? well established?)

(Note: 1-5 can often be handled very quickly: don't tell us what we already know.)

6. Are you convinced? Is this good work? An important article? Why? Why not? Was it work worth doing?
7. The self-projection of the author (how is he/she defining himself/herself? etc): how is the vocabulary of the article significant, etc.
8. The author's concern for and treatment of evidence; scholarly rigor, etc.
9. The strongest points of article. Is there a pivotal set of sentences--or a paragraph--that drives to the heart of the author's implicit or explicit thesis? On which ideas or assumptions does the entire article pivot?
10. The weakest points of article: what remains unclear? which contexts or relevant points are ignored? Any obvious mistakes?
11. Good writer? Bad writer? Why do you think so? Cite passages.

Within one week after your presentation, **submit a 1000-word written analysis and/or evaluation of the article. Don't tell us only what we already know. Say something new and useful. Append to it a formal, annotated bibliography** of several (5-8, if possible--but no more) related, relevant, important, and (one hopes) recent publications that you have examined. **Provide a copy of your essay and bibliography to every member of the seminar.** Write all of this in the clearest, most careful and helpful prose at your command, and write it at a level and in a tone appropriate to the profession. The grading of the whole (including the oral report) will be based on such things as your breadth and depth of vision, clarity, thoroughness, and basic fairness.

FOR THOSE NOT PRESENTING A GIVEN ARTICLE ON ANY GIVEN DAY

You are responsible for having **read the article carefully**, in advance; for having **studied** (not merely read through) its content and structure; for having listened to the piece or pieces with which it is concerned (if this is reasonably possible); and for having thought through (and prepared answers for) the most pressing questions on the "Analyzing Musicological Writing" document.

After the article has been presented, there will be a 30-35-minute discussion of the the article (and perhaps, to some extent, of the presentation).

1. You may be asked to supply some of the background information necessary to understand the article and to place it in a broader context of knowledge. For example, if the article is about Beethoven's sketches for the Hammerklavier Sonata, you may be asked to outline the place of the late piano sonatas within the late style of Beethoven. (It is simply assumed, of course, that you have gotten to know the piece or general repertory discussed in the article.)
2. You may be asked to respond to the presentation--to evaluate its accuracy, fairness, thoroughness, effectiveness, etc. (If you were bored, tell us why; if you were consistently engaged with the presentation, tell us why. We need to know these things.) Which point would you like to have the presenter clarify? Which aspects of the presenter's argument might you wish to challenge?
3. During the discussion **you will also be asked to give some of your own responses to some of the questions on the "Assessing Articles" document, along with your own evaluation of the article.** Be prepared to defend your evaluation. In principle, everyone should have cogent things to say about every article.

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4. At the end, one or two sessions of the class might be given over to a "mock oral exam" of the sort one might expect at the conclusion of one's Master's Program. This option will be reassessed as we proceed through the term.

Please remember to take notes on the article, the presentation, and so on--and to keep reviewing past readings in preparation for the final exam.