

NCAL 410D: GREAT COMPOSERS & MUSIC MASTERPIECES FOR OLDER ADULTS

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Winter 2026
Units:	0
Hours:	4 lecture, 3 laboratory per week (84 total per quarter)
Degree & Credit Status:	Non-Degree-Applicable Non-Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Non-GE
Transferable:	None
Grade Type:	Non-Credit Course (Receives no Grade)
Repeatability:	Unlimited Repeatability

Student Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate detailed knowledge of Western music as a reflection of its societal and historical context.
- Demonstrate self-managed learning.
- Discuss, with insight and understanding, the social and personal implications of the ways music can be a powerful tool for communicating our common humanity across history and within the context of diverse cultures.
- Distinguish between musical styles from these historical periods based on structural characteristics related to melody, harmony, rhythm, instrumentation, and form, as well as think critically as you analyze, compare, and contrast this repertoire.

Description

This noncredit course is targeted towards older adults. Introduction to the great composers and music masterpieces of Western culture. Includes composer biographies with emphasis on how composers synthesize or transform the aesthetic ideals of their time. Examines how their music reflects their own lives as well as mirrors contemporary social, political, and religious events. Historical periods are mid-19th century Romanticism through the present. Composers include Schumann, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Berlioz, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Strauss, Verdi, Wagner, Bizet, Debussy, Ravel, Ives, Cowell, Bartok, Berg, Webern, Stravinsky, Copland, Varese, Babbitt, Cage, Crumb, Ligeti, Penderecki, Reich, Glass, and Adams.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the historical development of musical style in Western culture in relation to the political, economic, social, and religious developments of the time.
2. Apply knowledge of musical style, historical periods, and genres from Western culture to representative examples of music.

3. Compare and contrast repertoire of concert music through familiarity with a broad sampling of works, composers, styles, and genres.
4. Critique good performance from bad, from the perspectives of artistic quality and appropriate historical performance practice.
5. Discuss, with insight and understanding, the social and personal implications of the development of musical style in Western culture.
6. Demonstrate self-managed learning in a comprehensive journal, in which they reflect upon, evaluate, and describe their own learning process.

Course Content

1. Music fundamentals: melody, rhythm, harmony, texture, timbre, ornamentation
2. Style, characteristics, and function of music, from the mid-19th century through the present
 - a. Vocal music (opera)
 - b. Instrumental music forms (concert overture, modified versions of forms studied in previous classes, including ternary and binary)
 - c. Composer biographies (Schumann, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Berlioz, Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Verdi, Wagner, Bizet, Mussorgsky, Debussy, Ravel, Ives, Cowell, Bartok, Berg, Webern, Stravinsky, Copland, Varese, Babbitt, Cage, Crumb, Legeti, Penderecki, Reich, Glass, Adams)
3. Compare and contrast to music of other world cultures
4. Identification of major themes of the culture at each period in history (divine authority, redemption, freedom, artistic creativity and originality, political, social, religious ideologies, gender roles), their definition in other periods in Western culture, and their parallels in other world cultures

Lab Content

Laboratory activities are provided for students to practice and apply their theoretical knowledge regarding each topic area's structural characteristics (rhythm, melody, form, instrumentation, and harmony), style, genre, and important composers. Activities consist of online laboratory worksheets correlated with listening examples. Examples of the types of representative music selected for study in Romantic era music and 20th century music are provided.

Representative listening examples for Romantic era:

1. Lieder ohne Worte: Op. 30, No. 3 (1837), Felix Mendelssohn
2. Mazurka in a minor, Op. 17, No. 4 (1833), Frédéric Chopin
3. Preludes, Op. 28, Nos. 1-4 (1839), Frédéric Chopin
4. Ballade No. 1 in G Minor, Op. 23 (1835), Frédéric Chopin
5. Carnaval, Op. 9, excerpts (1835), Robert Schumann
6. Galop de bal (ca. 1840), Franz Liszt
7. Études d'exécution transcendante, No. 1 in C Major (1838; revised 1851), Franz Liszt
8. Il Barbiere di Siviglia, excerpts (1816), Gioacchino Rossini
9. Rigoletto, excerpts (1851), Giuseppe Verdi
10. Tristan und Isolde, excerpts (1859), Richard Wagner
11. The Nutcracker, excerpts (1829), Peter Illyich Tchaikovsky
12. Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, Op. 95 Largo (1893), Antonin Dvorák

13. Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98, fourth movement (1855), Johannes Brahms
14. Symphony No. 1 in D Major, third movement (1888), Gustav Mahler

Representative listening examples for Impressionism and 20th century:

1. Prélude a l'après-midi d'un faune (1894), Claude Debussy
2. Préludes, Book 1: "Voiles" (1910), Claude Debussy
3. Mikrokosmos, Book 4, No. 101: Diminished Fifth (between 1932 and 1939), Béla Bartók
4. The Cage (1906), Charles Ives
5. Le Sacre du printemps, excerpts (1913), Igor Stravinsky
6. Saudades do Brasil, excerpts (1921), Darius Milhaud
7. The Banshee (1925), Henry Cowell
8. Pierrot lunaire (1912), Arnold Schoenberg
 - a. No. 7, "Der kranke Mond"
 - b. No. 14, Der Kreuz
 - c. No. 21, "O alter Duft"
9. Five Pieces for String Quartet, Op. 5, No. 4 (1908), Anton Webern
10. Wozzeck, Act 1, Scene 1 (1925), Alban Berg
11. Classical Symphony, Op. 25, third movement (1917), Sergei Prokofiev
12. Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta, third movement, Béla Bartók
13. Appalachian Spring: Suite, excerpt (1945), Aaron Copland
14. Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima (1960), Krzysztof Penderecki
15. 4' 33" (1952), John Cage
16. Missa Gaia: Mass for the Earth, first movement (Introit - "Within the Circles of Our Lives") (1992), Libby Larsen
17. The Gospel According to the Other Mary, excerpts (2012), John Adams

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

1. Classroom with piano, computer, and audio/video equipment.
2. Access to comprehensive digital music library for representative listening examples.
3. When taught via Foothill Global Access: ongoing access to computer with email software and capabilities, email address.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

The student will demonstrate detailed knowledge of the historical development of musical style in Western culture in relation to the political, economic, social, religious developments, and values of the time in module/chapter-level quizzes and a comprehensive examination. The student will demonstrate ability to apply knowledge of musical style, historical periods, and genres from Western culture to representative examples of music in module/chapter laboratory worksheets and quizzes.

The student will demonstrate ability to compare and contrast repertoire of concert music in module/chapter-level quizzes and a comprehensive examination.

The student will demonstrate ability to critique good performance from bad, from the perspectives of artistic quality and appropriate historical performance practice through participation in on-campus and/or online discussions.

The student will demonstrate ability to discuss, with insight and understanding, the social and personal implications of the development of musical style in Western culture through participation in on-campus and/or online discussions and in brief essays posted in a comprehensive journal (see below).

The student will demonstrate self-managed learning in a comprehensive journal, in which they reflect upon, evaluate, and describe their own learning process by writing two reflections on each module/chapter-level topic area: a pre-reflection that includes what the student already knows about the topic and a post-reflection in which students summarize what they learned and want to remember, clarify, or pursue in more depth. For the face-to-face class, students will also demonstrate the above through a portfolio of lecture notes and summaries of discussion in conjunction with in-class quizzes.

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

The student will listen to (on-campus) or read (online) lecture information. The student will listen to representative examples of music that illustrate concepts related to the historical/social context, stylistic categories, structural characteristics, and important composers for the varied topic areas.

The student will participate in discussion (on-campus and/or online).

The student will complete laboratory worksheets that provide additional information, as well as ask application questions correlated with listening examples.

The student will learn from feedback on quizzes, examinations, discussion postings, and comprehensive journal writing delivered via email or Canvas.

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Barkley, E., and R. Hartwell. Great Composers and Music Masterpieces of Western Civilization. 2023.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Reading assignments: Textbook chapters.
2. Writing assignments: Comprehensive journal, in which students first reflect upon what they already know about the topic, and then after they have completed all the learning activities associated with that topic, summarize what they have learned, what they need to clarify, and what they wish to pursue in more depth.
3. Participation in formal threaded discussion, that includes written responses to prompts for each topic.
 - a. Example: You have read about Strauss and his involvement with the Nazis. In truth, Strauss apparently thought of himself as apolitical and just wanted to be left alone to write music (nor was he the only such composer—Haydn and Prokofiev come to mind as well). Should Strauss have been demonized for cooperating with the Nazis? In the larger view, what is an artist's obligation under such circumstances? And moving into the present, does it matter, for example, what a particular musician or group thinks of current U.S. politics? Do today's most popular artists have the

right and/or responsibility to take an obvious political stance? Try to cite a specific example to defend your answer.

- b. Example: Stravinsky once commented that it was not music's job to express anything, and that "composers combine notes, that is all." He believed that music is primarily form and logic, and shouldn't be simply an expression of one's emotional state. Like Bach (and Haydn and to some extent Mozart and Brahms), Stravinsky saw composition as a craft. Throughout his long career, he set aside specific times and composed about the same amount of music each day. How does Stravinsky's music and philosophy represent a complete departure from Romanticism? If you are a composer (and please state so) or if you aren't a composer, use your imagination: To what extent is composition a craft and to what extent is composition an art?
- c. Discussion postings are assessed on the following criteria:
 - i. Appropriateness: Did the student "answer" the question and address all components of the question?
 - ii. Thoughtfulness and accuracy: Does the posting include correct information and demonstrate that the student is thinking about and understanding the material?
 - iii. Overall organization: Does the student's posting form a coherent paragraph with main statements, support statements, conclusion, and so forth?
 - iv. "ESWE" (edited standard written English): Does the student's posting contain correct grammar and spelling?

Discipline(s)

Music