

**Conrad Grebel University College**  
**The University of Waterloo**  
**Department of Music**  
**Music 231: Music Cognition - Course Outline**  
**Fall Term 2021**

**Classes:** Tuesdays (in class) and Thursdays (asynchronous remote delivery), 10:00-11:20  
CGC 1111

**Instructor:** Dr. John Brownell, jbrownel@uwaterloo.ca or LEARN mail

**Office Hours:** Over Zoom by appointment

“The reason that most of us take part in musical activity, be it composing, performing, or listening, is that music is capable of arousing in us deep and significant emotions . . . If emotional factors are fundamental to the existence of music, then the fundamental question for a psychological investigation into music is *how* music is able to affect people.”

- John Sloboda in *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music* (Clarendon Press: 1985).

### **Overview**

The disciplines of musicology and music theory have generally regarded music, especially music of the cultivated European tradition, as consisting of autonomous structures whose aesthetic beauty and value lie in the works themselves. This tendency reached its peak in the middle of the twentieth century with the total serialism of Milton Babbitt and his contemporaries.

Coincidentally, the middle of the twentieth century also saw the beginnings of psychological research into the reception and cognition of music. Memory, perception, and processing of musical information were rightly regarded as uniquely human abilities similar to language skills. The listener was seen as an active participant in the production of musical meaning rather than simply as a passive receiver.

Music 231 examines music from the perspective of the receptor rather than the transmitter. In so doing course participants will be encouraged to examine their own responses (aesthetic, emotional, and physical) to music.

Topics to be discussed will loosely follow the order of our text, William Forde Thompson’s *Music, Thought, and Feeling: Understanding the Psychology of Music*. The e-version of Thompson 2015 is available in the UW bookstore.

In-person lectures will take place on Tuesdays in CG 1111. The week’s second lecture will be recorded and posted on LEARN on or before the Thursday of each week.

## Text/Readings

### Required:

Thompson, William Forde

2015 *Music, Thought, and Feeling: Understanding the Psychology of Music* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Oxford University Press. E-version available at the UW Bookstore.

Additional material will be put on reserve and/or posted on LEARN from time to time.

There is a course website on LEARN. All assignments, lecture notes, test results and other information of note will be posted there. Stay tuned.

### Recommended (but not required):

Huron, David

2007 *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

2016 *Voice Leading: The Science Behind a Musical Art*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Juslin, Patrik N. and John A. Sloboda, eds.

2009 *Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kirnarskaya, Dina

2009 *The Natural Musician: On Abilities, Giftedness and Talent*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Levitin, Daniel J.

2006 *This Is Your Brain On Music: The Science of a Human Obsession*. New York: Dutton.

Mithen, Steven

2005 *The Singing Neanderthals: The Origins of Music, Language, Mind, and Body*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Patel, Aniruddh

2008 *Music, Language and the Brain*. New York: Oxford University Press.

## Evaluation

The final grade breaks down as follows:

Introspective report (Due October 7)	10%
Mid-term examination (October 26)	30%
Short essay (Assigned topic, 7-10 double-spaced pages, due November 11)	20%
Choose ONE of the following:	
Essay (on an approved topic, due on date of final exam)	40%
<b>OR</b>	
Final examination	40%

## MUSIC 231 LECTURE/READINGS SCHEDULE

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>
September 9	<b>Introduction</b>
September 14, 16	<b>Musical Building Blocks</b> Readings: Thompson Chapters 1, 3
September 21, 23	<b>Musical Building Blocks, Origins of Music</b> Readings: Thompson Chapters 2, 3
September 28, 30	<b>Music and Emotion</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 7 <b>Introspective report assigned</b>
October 5, 7	<b>Music and Emotion</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 7 <b>Introspective Report due October 7</b>
October 12, 14	<b>Perceiving Music Structure</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 4 <b>Short essay topics out</b>
October 19, 21	<b>Perceiving Music Structure</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 4 <b>Music and the Brain</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 6
October 26, 28	<b>Midterm exam (October 26)</b> <b>Music and the Brain</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 6
November 2, 4	<b>Music Acquisition</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 5 <b>Music and Well-being</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 8
November 9, 11	<b>Performing Music</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 9 <b>Short Essay due November 11</b>
November 16, 18	<b>Performing Music</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 9 <b>Composing Music</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 10
November 23, 25	<b>Composing Music</b> <b>Readings: Thompson Chapter 10</b>
November 30, December 2	<b>Music and Other Abilities</b> Readings: Thompson Chapter 11