

MUS HIST 3200/5200, Topics in Music History and Culture: American Music

Amplify Inclusivity initiative

Syllabus statement for this class:

Statement on Diversity and Inclusion:

The content for this course has been chosen purposely to engage with diversity and inclusion. Both subject matter and your work for this course will frequently address sensitive and complex issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, politics, and social justice. All participants are expected to engage with the subject and with others in a manner that is respectful and civil.

Three of the units for this course engage directly and very explicitly with diversity and inclusion (one of the benefits of not using a published textbook, but curating my own course materials from the scholarly literature and repertoire).

Below, the descriptive summaries and list of contents for these three units.

Unit 2: The Harlem Renaissance: Race, Gender, Uplift (August 31 – September 16)

Summary: This unit examines the uniquely American phenomenon of the Harlem Renaissance, an intellectual and artistic movement that flourished roughly from 1920-1930, and its influence on concert life. Samuel A. Floyd has argued that music was primary to Harlem Renaissance philosophy and practice. In this period, artists and audiences--both black and white--sought to untangle the aesthetic issues surrounding folklore, jazz, and concert music. While the Jazzmen such as Duke Ellington achieved a high degree of popularity and financial success, a small number of composers—men and women—engaged in the world of art music.

Unit Learning Objectives—at the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- Define the Harlem Renaissance and its participants
- Compare/contrast the compositional styles of Scott Joplin, William Grant Still, William Dawson, and Florence B. Price
- Graduate students will demonstrate more detailed and specific understanding of the aesthetic issues in classical/art music of the Harlem Renaissance

Readings assigned for this unit (all published articles in this unit are the work of African American scholars):

Brown, Rae Linda. "William Grant Still, Florence Price, and William Dawson: Echoes of the Harlem Renaissance." In *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd, 71-86. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1993.

Brown, Rae Linda. "The Woman's Symphony Orchestra of Chicago and Florence B. Price's Piano Concerto in One Movement." *American Music* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 185-205.

Floyd, Jr., Samuel A. "Music in the Harlem Renaissance: An Overview," in *Black Music in the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd, 1-28. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1993.

Johnson, John Andrew. "William Dawson, 'The New Negro,' and His Folk Idiom." *Black Music Research Journal* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 43-60.

Lumsden, Rachel. "Uplift, Gender, and Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*," *Black Music Research Journal* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 41-69.

Oja, Carol . "'New Music' and the 'New Negro': The Background of William Grant Still's Afro-American Symphony." *Black Music Research Journal* 22 (2002): 107-130.

Repertoire for this unit: (all repertoire by African American composers)

William Dawson, *Negro Folk Symphony*

Florence B. Price, Piano Concerto in One Movement [guest presenters for this class: Erik Rohde and Andrea Johnson)

William Grant Still, *Afro American Symphony*

Scott Joplin, *Treemonisha*

Unit 6: Uncommon Women (October 26 - November 4)
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Summary: By the dawn of the twentieth century, women enjoyed increasing educational opportunities and career paths as performers, but the "women composer" debate still raged. Critic George Upton proclaimed that there had never been a "great" woman composer a la Beethoven. Upton's viewpoint is not surprising, since the entire history of Western music, until recently written only by white men, focused entirely on the musical "genius" of other white men. This unit examines but a few of what Joan Tower calls "uncommon women" – women who take risks, who dare to throw their hat into the ring of professional creative work, especially in large forms.

Unit Learning Objectives—at the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- Discuss the hallmarks of style regarding Seeger, Tower, Larsen, Higdon, and Wolfe
- Describe the impact of feminism and gender studies on the way that music history is written/perceived
- Graduate students will demonstrate a deeper understanding of the political and cultural issues surrounding these composers and their work

Readings assigned for this unit:

Allsup, Randall Everett. "Sequoias, Mavericks, Open Doors . . . Composing Joan Tower," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 19, no. 1 (2011): 24-36.

Strepel, Eileen. "Try Me, Good King: Last Words of the Wives of Henry VIII: Libby Larsen's Royal Portraits of Song," *Journal of Singing* 64, no. 1 (Sept.-Oct. 2007): 11-20.

Repertoire for this unit:

Ruth Crawford Seeger, *Rat Riddles*

Joan Tower, *Made in America*

Jennifer Higdon, *Blue Cathedral*

Libby Larsen, *Try Me, Good King*

Julia Wolfe, *Anthracite Fields*

Unit 7: Musical responses to Tragedy and Crisis (November 7 - November 18)
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Summary: This unit surveys musical/artistic responses to tragedy and crisis, ranging from the Aids epidemic, to terrorism, Black Lives Matter, and Native American cultural genocide. This unit also provides an excellent opportunity to engage with issues of diversity, inclusion and social justice. Some of these topics will no doubt make us feel uncomfortable – but that is the entire point.

Unit Learning Objectives:

At the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- Discuss political and cultural events that inform musical creativity
- Describe some of the ways in which music can heal, reconcile, or engage with trauma
- Understand that music is not isolated from the world around it

Readings for this unit:

Bergman, Elizabeth. "Of Rage and Remembrance, Music and Memory: The Work of Mourning in John Corigliano's Symphony no. 1 and Choral Chaconne." *American Music* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 340-361.

Sheffield, Carrie Louise, "Native American Hip-Hop and Historical Trauma: Surviving and Healing Trauma on the 'Rez'." *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 94-110.

Repertoire for this unit:

John Corigliano, Symphony no. 1 ("AIDS Sympphony")

Joel Thompson, *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* (BLM)

Shawn Okpebholo, *Two Black Churches* (BLM)

Maniac: The Siouxpernatural. "The War Within" (Native American hip hop)

Night Shield, "Broken Dreams" (Native American hip hop)

Lori Laitman, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (based on children's poems from the Holocaust)