The Child as Music Critic
M9582a

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Fall 2017
Mondays 5:30-8:30pm
(we may reschedule for an earlier start time if approved by all enrolled, perhaps 4:00-7:00pm)

Location: TC 307

Rationale:

A key idea in western music education has long been that children should develop musical critical thinking ability, that is, they should learn how to think like expert music critics who can perceive, evaluate, judge and appreciate the quality of music for themselves, unmediated, or so it seems, by history, politics, or other modes of experience. Music is still regarded by many in the field as an autonomous domain existing in isolation from the nitty gritty of everyday life. This course excavates some of the social history of the term “music critic” to reveal how it, and similar notions (e.g., pedagogy), because socially constructed, can play important roles in the shaping of personal and social consciousness and identity. The overarching theme of the course is that, by becoming more critically aware of the social and historical contingency of music, and also of music teaching and learning, teachers and their pupils can exercise their musical freedom and creativity to a greater extent than they may have previously supposed possible.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this course you should be able to

-demonstrate knowledge of music and music education history regarding the development of notions of ‘criticism’ and ‘critical thinking’ and how the former have shaped modern-day conceptions of those terms.
-explain some of the implications of those terms for music teaching and learning in schools and universities (e.g., how it might impact pedagogy and other forms of practice).
-demonstrate understanding of why and how those terms relate to democratic citizenship
-locate music education as social and political ‘criticism’ within wider social, educational, cultural, and political contexts and debates affecting school music (e.g., the national music education standards in the United States, globalization, educational policy as it affects music education, etc.).
-demonstrate informed awareness of many of the political and other problems facing the profession that stifle or otherwise frustrate the exercise of musical and other criticism and critical thinking among children.
- apply philosophy to professional practice by questioning and critiquing underlying assumptions of traditional music methodologies, pedagogies, and philosophies and by demonstrating basic knowledge and skills of argument analysis.
-demonstrate an ability to teach effectively by presenting and explaining issues and ideas to the class in an engaging manner while using appropriate illustrative materials (e.g., videos, short handouts, diagrams, music recordings, etc.).
-participate intellectually in class discussions about the nature and values(s) of criticism in education and how it relates to the wider society.
-relate music and music education criticism to other subject areas in the schools in terms of any common problems, purposes or potential conflicts (e.g., science and business studies vs. art and music).
-demonstrate careful reasoning, research and writing ability by developing a scholarly paper addressing how music teachers might apply different conceptions of criticism and critical thinking to children throughout their schooling.

Evaluation:

1. **Class Attendance/Participation/Discussion** 30%

You will each be assigned weekly topics to present to the class in the form of 15-20 minute oral reports using supporting media. These are opportunities to demonstrate and practice leadership and teaching ability. Presentations should demonstrate the following: understanding of content, organization (clear and concise summary of ideas in some sort of logical order), clarity of expression and communication, levels of personal and intellectual engagement with peers (can you grab and hold their attention?), and appropriate use of illustrative materials (videos, youtube clips, recordings etc.). For each assigned topic, you must also present a short, one-page (point form) synopsis to the class (please include your sources).

2. **Personal Reflections** (10) 40%

You are to write weekly personal reflections (10 in total) on ideas encountered in class discussions or readings. I am looking for intellectual honesty, clarity of thought and expression, and critical awareness (you should attempt to make explicit and critically examine your own beliefs). Each reflection should be no more than 2 double-spaced, typed pages in length (Times font size 12).

3. **Scholarly Paper** (1) 30%

This should be a personal and professional exploration of the meanings and educational significance of the terms ‘music criticism’ and ‘critical thinking’ and how they might be applied, with frequent examples, to curriculum, pedagogy and practice throughout the child’s schooling, and whether in the school, private music studio or elsewhere. The emphasis should be on the development of children’s intellectual capacities for music criticism and critical thinking wherever music education is found (e.g., in the home, school, music studio, community music centres etc.), suggesting who (taking into account personal, cultural or other differences among children), why (why should this matter to teachers, parents, politicians and children?), what and
how (what do you propose teachers should actually do in terms of curriculum and critical pedagogy for children of varying ages when wishing to promote music criticism or critical thinking among them?), and when (are there particular times of the day, week or year when this instruction might ideally take place?). Although the foregoing description of this assignment implies a considerable degree of intellectual freedom with respect to how you might proceed, and allows for differences in political stances, this is not just an opinion paper. You need to do considerable research in a variety of fields (e.g., philosophy, sociology, education, psychology, curriculum, history, political science etc.) to provide readers with sufficient background to understand the issues and to convince them that you are a credible scholar. Research informs scholarship (by exposing you to different issues, ideas, lines of argument, and sources of information that can be used either in support of, or as a foil for, your own position. The paper should be about 12 pages in length (plus reference list), in correct APA style (but leave an extra space above subtitles), and capture and hold the reader’s attention throughout. As in the oral presentations, you need to be concise and focused in your ideas or arguments. The final completed paper is due on the final day of classes for the semester. I am more than willing to read samples of the paper and to provide feedback throughout the research and writing process. Particularly successful papers may be recommended to the Canadian Music Educators Association National Graduate Essay competition. See the CMEA website for information about this competition, including awards.

University Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness. This can be found at www.studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm. As of May 2008, the University has a new policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness, which states that “in order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student’s overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the appropriate Dean’s office.” Students with special learning needs or circumstances are asked to inform the instructor as soon as possible so that necessary accommodations can be made.

Instructor’s policy on illness and attendance. Full attendance at all classes is expected and medical documentation is required unless you have the permission of the instructor. If you are ill or some problem occurs that prevents you from attending class on a given day then you must notify the instructor to that effect either before or immediately after class. Late written assignments will only be accepted and graded if permission has been granted by the instructor in advance of the deadline.

Statement on Health and Wellness

“As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help students achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing a graduate degree. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone in whom they feel comfortable confiding, such as a faculty supervisor, a program advisor, or the
Associate Dean (Graduate Studies). Campus mental health resources may be found at http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html.”

Statement on Academic Offences: “Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found at www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf. . . . Plagiarism is a major scholastic offense. Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com, www.turnitin.com.”

Required Textbook: There is no required textbook. Many of the articles listed are also available on-line through the Music Library webpage. Just click on e-journals or, alternatively, click on data bases and then search JSTOR for a particular article, topic, or author.

Key source


References


_______. (in review). The moral ends of band. *Theory Into Practice*.


Music Educators Journal, 92 (1), 54-60.


________. (2002). A realm without angels: MENC’s partnerships with Disney and other major Corporations. Philosophy of Music Education Review, 10, no. 2 (Fall, 2002): 72-


really possible? In R. Wright (Ed.), *Sociology and music education* (pp. 81-92). Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited.


University Press.


