

**9735a: Fall 2022**  
**Special Topics in Musicology:**  
**MUSIC AND TRAUMA**  
**Wednesdays, 1:30pm – 4:30pm, TC 310**

Instructor: Emily Abrams Ansari

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Zoom office hours: Tuesdays, 2-4pm; in person by appointment (office: TC229)

Course delivery format: In person

### **Course Description**

When it comes to events that the human mind struggles to process or verbalize—those with the potential to induce trauma—music has frequently proven a powerful mechanism for documentation, examination, memorialization, and even healing. This course examines theories of trauma, post-traumatic stress, resilience, and post-traumatic growth in light of their potential for aiding interpretation of musical works that deal with potentially traumatic experiences, both individual and collective. We then undertake an overview of some of the existing literature on music and trauma, considering music from a wide range of styles and genres. Students will apply theories of trauma to consider both musical reactions to our present moment and musical works from history.

### **Objectives/Learning Outcomes**

1. Gain an understanding of how theoretical models from other fields, including those from beyond the humanities, can be applied in the analysis and interpretation of musical works.
2. Develop a more holistic approach to the study of music, transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries both within and beyond music scholarship, while learning how to draw relevant research materials and analytical models from across an array of disciplines.
3. Improve scholarly research and writing skills, including methods for researching the current moment.
4. Improve presentation skills for a range of contexts.
5. Learn how to work collaboratively and to explore challenging issues of our own times.
6. Improve ability to read critically and synthesize scholarly writing for others

### **Readings**

Readings will be available in electronic form through the “course readings” section of the library website (linked through our class’s Owl page.)

### **Evaluation**

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| Attendance and participation             | 15% |
| Weekly discussion comments contributions | 10% |
| Short paper                              | 25% |
| Final project presentation               | 20% |
| Final project paper                      | 30% |

## **Assignments/Tasks**

### **1. Participation**

Part of your participation grade (5%) will be based on self-assessment of your participation. The remaining 10% will be calculated by me and will be based on your participation in class discussion.

### **2. Weekly discussion comments**

Submit a short message by email with questions that the readings raised for you, elements you did not understand from the readings, and issues raised by the readings that you would like to explore further in class discussion to EAA by noon the day before class.

### **3. Short Essay**

Write a short description of a suitable model from the trauma studies literature that you might use for analyzing a piece of music that deals with trauma. If you were to write a full-length of analysis of this piece using this particularly trauma theory, which elements of the theory would you focus on and would you use this frame to interpret the music's exploration of the traumatic experience? 800-1200 words. Submit by email to Prof. Ansari as a Word document attachment by **October 14**.

### **4. Final Project**

This project, which you will work on alone through the semester, can consider any aspect of the intersection of music and trauma. If you wish, it can carry through the analysis proposed in the Short Essay.

- a) Submit a brief project proposal by email to Prof. Ansari by **November 16, before class**. This should include a brief (1-2 paragraph) overview of your planned project, and a provisional bibliography.
- b) Give a 15-20 minute presentation about your project during our final two class meetings.
- c) Write an 15-20 page paper and submit by email as an MS Word document to Prof. Ansari by **December 14**.

## **Class Environment**

When tackling this kind of material in a course, it is essential that our virtual classroom provides a safe and respectful environment where everyone can feel comfortable both asking questions and voicing their ideas. This being said, I also think that discomfort is often necessary as part of the learning process. There will be moments when we discuss difficult issues that you may not have addressed in previous courses. However, I expect each of you to come to class with empathy, an open mind, and the recognition that you have an ethical responsibility to those with whom you share our classroom space. If for any reason, you feel that your classroom is not providing you with the environment you need, please e-mail me or come see me immediately.

This course directly addresses many common individual and societal traumas, including war, colonialism, sexual trauma and rape, and racism. If you have been personally

affected by any of these experiences, you may find this material difficult. We also explore the cultural trauma of the Covid-19 pandemic, which we have all lived through. I am happy to talk about your reaction to course materials at any time. If you need to leave the class at any time because of your reaction to course materials, or wish to stay away for a particular class, please let me know. Take whatever time you need and talk to others, or me, if you think it will be helpful. Mental health resources are also available if needed (see below).

### **Course policies**

- This course is all about discussion and **participation**. If you miss classes without notifying me or are silent in class, this grade will be affected. If you cannot attend class for a degree-related or medical reason, please let me know in advance. Please come to each class having carefully considered the material listed in the syllabus and with plenty of critical perspectives to share with your colleagues. I encourage lively debate in class, so a wide variety of viewpoints will be very well received. I am always glad to hear opinions that differ from my own.
- Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. **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 [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)
- The Graduate Program in Music recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by illness or injury. 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 office of the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies), not to the course instructor.
- Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illness, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students throughout their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

- Students with **special learning needs** or other circumstances are asked to inform the instructor as soon as possible so that necessary accommodations can be considered.
- 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](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html) Students who are in emotional or mental distress should refer to [Health and Wellness](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.
- Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, either recently or in the past, you will find information about support for services for survivors, including emergency contacts at [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca) or call 519-661-3568.

## **Class schedule**

FIRST SCHEDULED CLASS (Sept. 14) POSTPONED: Prof. Ansari conducting research in El Salvador

### September 21: Theories of Trauma

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2016 (2<sup>nd</sup>. ed.), 1-10.

Wirtz, Ursula. *Trauma and Beyond: The Mystery of Transformation*. New Orleans: Spring Journal, Inc, 2014, 57-64.

Herman, Judith. "Introduction" and "A Forgotten History," in *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 1-32.

Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," and Neil J. Smelzer, "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelzer, Piotr Sztompka, 1-59. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

### September 28: Theories of Resilience and Post-Traumatic Growth

Wirtz, Ursula. *Trauma and Beyond: The Mystery of Transformation*. New Orleans: Spring Journal, Inc, 2014, 75-102.

Luckhurst, Roger. *The Trauma Question*. New York: Routledge, 2008, 209-14.

- Harms, Louise. *Understanding Trauma and Resilience*. London: Macmillan, 2015, 4-27.
- Hernández-Wolfe, Pilar. *A Borderlands View on Latinos, Latin Americans and Decolonization: Rethinking Mental Health*. Jason Aronson, Plymouth, UK: 2013, 63-81.

#### October 5: Talking about Trauma Sensitively in Music Studies

- Byron, Katie. "From Infantilizing to World Making: Safe Spaces and Trigger Warnings on Campus." *Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies* 66 (February 2017): 116-125.
- Halberstam, Jack. "You are Triggering Me! The Neo-Liberal Rhetoric of Harm, Danger And Trauma," *Bully Bloggers* (5 July 2014): <https://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2014/07/05/you-are-triggering-me-the-neo-liberalrhetoric-of-harm-danger-and-trauma>.
- Rogers, Jill. "On the Emotional and Social Significance of Teaching Music History in Relation to Trauma Studies." Unpublished paper, AMS National Meeting, 9 November 2017.
- Paulus, Shannon. "The Latest Study on Trigger Warnings Finally Convinced Me They're Not Worth It," *Slate* (12 July 2019).
- Wong, Deborah. "An Ethnomusicology of Hope in a Time of Trauma," in *Musical Islands: Exploring Connections Between Music, Place, and Research*. Edited by Elizabeth Mackinlay, Brydie-Leigh Bartleet, and Katelyn Barney. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, 3-19.

#### October 12: Cultural Trauma and Music

- Cizmic, Maria. *Performing Pain: Music and Trauma in Eastern Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. 3-66.
- Schwartz, Jessica A. "Vocal Ability and Musical Performances of Nuclear Damages in the Marshall Islands." In *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies*, ed. Blake Howe, Stephanie Jensen-Moulton, Neil Lerner, and Joseph Straus. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Hennessy, Sarah et al. "Music and Mood Regulation during the Early Stages of the Covid-19 Pandemic." *Plos One*. October 20, 2021.

#### **October 14: Short Essay due**

#### October 19: Resilience and Music

- James, Robin. *Resilience and Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism*. Winchester: Zero Books, 2015, 125-64.
- Cheng, William. "Black Noise, White Ears: Resilience, Rap, and the Killing of Jordan Davis." *Current Musicology* 102 (Spring 2018): 115-64.

### October 26: Traumas of Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism

Craps, Stef. "The Trauma of Empire." In *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 9-19.

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.

Barney, Katelyn and Elizabeth Mackinlay. "'Singing Trauma Trails': Songs of the Stolen Generations in Indigenous Australia," *Music & Politics* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2010).

### October 31 to November 4: Fall Study Break – No Class

### November 9: Gender- and Sexuality-Related Trauma

Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. PAGE NUMBERS TBC.

Greene, Kathanne. "Women Singer-Songwriters as Exemplary Actors: The Music of Rape and Domestic Violence." *Music and Politics* 11/2 (Summer 2017): <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/mp.9460447.0011.205>.

Greitzer, Mary Lee. "Queer Responses to Sexual Trauma: The Voices of Tori Amo's 'Me and a Gun' and Lydia Lunch's *Daddy Dearest*." *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 17/1 (2013): 1-26.

**November 16, before class – Submit final project proposal to Prof. Ansari by email.**

### November 16: The Politics of Traumatic Memory

Sprigge, Martha. "Dresden's Musical Ruins," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 144, no. 114 (2019): 83-121.

Keyes, Beth. "'The Absurd Disordering of Notes': Dysfunctional Memory in the Post-Traumatic Music of Ivor Gurney." In *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies*, ed. Blake Howe, Stephanie Jensen-Moulton, Neil Lerner, and Joseph Straus. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Wlodarski, Amy Lynn. "Afterword." *George Rochberg: American Composer*. (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2021). 148-62.

### November 23: Music and memorialization; Secondary Musical Witnessing; the Politics of Representation

Blim, Dan. "‘Meaningful Adjacencies’: Disunity and the Commemoration of 9/11 in John Adams’ ‘On the Transmigration of Souls.’" *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 11/2013 (7/4): 382-420.

Wlodarski, Amy Lynn. *Music Witness and Holocaust Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University 2015, 1-10; 126-175.

Waterhouse-Watson, Deb and Adam Brown. "Playing for Their Lives: Music, Musicians and Trauma in Holocaust Film." *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust*, 29:1, 1-16.

Listen to John Adams, *On the Transmigration of Souls* and Steve Reich, *Different Trains*, and watch "The Pianist" and "Wunderkinder".

#### November 30: Auditory Trauma and Weaponized Sound

Daughtry, Martin. *Listening to War: Sound, Music, Trauma, and Survival in Wartime Iraq*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 76-102.

Hirsch, Lily. *Music in American Crime Prevention and Punishment*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012, 110-38.

Cusick, Suzanne G. "‘You are in a Place that is Out of This World...’: Music in the Detention Camps of the ‘Global War on Terror.’" *Journal of the Society for American Music* vol. 2, no. 1 (2008), 1-26.

#### Additional meeting time TBC and December 7: Presentations of final Projects

**December 14 – individual project paper due. Submit by email as an MS Word document to Prof. Ansari.**