

Honors Program, SUNY Potsdam

New Course Proposal

To propose a new honors course, please send the following to the Honors Program office at Dunn Hall 309 (email to lawrenbs@potsdam.edu is preferred):

1. This form, completed
2. A copy of the proposed course syllabus, complete with stated course objectives, pedagogical methods, and assessment tools. If you propose a **mixed-cohort course**, your syllabus must specifically indicate the ways you will provide the honors cohort with a suitable “honors” experience distinct from that of other students in the class
3. Student evaluations for an equivalent course to the one proposed here

Course Information

Instructor: Rebecca Gerber

Course Department and Number: Term (e.g. Fall 2011): Spring 2012

Day/Time: Unknown

Credit Hours: 3

Full Honors (enrollment cap): 15

Mixed-Cohort (enrollment cap):

Does this course fulfill any specific degree requirements? If so, which ones?

Major/Minor: Music Education, Music Performance, Musical Studies

Cognates for other majors:

General Education descriptors:

Prior approval of course by General Education Committee (Y/N):

Honors Experience (answer all that apply): How will your honors course explore the theory and practice of your academic discipline? How does it promote active learning, use interactive teaching methods, or emphasize student-initiated discovery? How does it differ from a non-honors section of the same course?

Musicology is an interdisciplinary field by its very nature; it is the humanistic study of music in cultural contexts, aesthetic movements and intellectual developments. Thus, music history’s relationship with other fields runs the gamut. The comparison of Classical rhetoric and music will expose students to musical analysis and historical study that leads to a deeper meaning of musical structures and the aural experience. The course will emphasize student-initiated discovery, having them propose issues and questions to investigate in the presentations and essays. I will follow up with group discussions, individual meetings and drafts of each project.

MUCH 495 Honors: Rhetoric and Music

Prof. Rebecca Gerber

Syllabus

Course Description: 'Rhetoric and Music' explores connections between the concepts of Classical rhetoric and those of music. The principles of persuasive argument, including such things as invention, style and variation, are central to both disciplines, and the manner in which writers and composers use rhetorical devices can have a powerful effect on the listener. Composers between 1450 and 1800, including Du Fay, Josquin des Prez, J. S. Bach, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, were particularly alert to the value of the rhetorical ideas proposed by Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian. By reading primary sources and secondary studies, we will examine the exposure of individual composers to Classical texts and evaluate the rhetorical intent of particular musical gestures in a number of compositions. Given that some of the above named composers played a significant role in shaping the history of western music, we will discuss whether their knowledge and understanding of persuasive argument elevated artistic expression, and discuss whether all composers apply similar rhetorical language, without comparable knowledge of the Classics.

Honors course: We will compare musical issues to those raised by Cicero, including the importance to society of rhetorical skills, of rhetoric as a science, and of developing knowledge of many subjects, including philosophy. We will also study the basic tenets of rhetorical elements and relate them to music. Students will be encouraged to explore these issues with regard to different historical periods and to compare them, but also to assess the value, effectiveness and relevance of persuasive argument in music. Thus, the readings will be more interdisciplinary.

Projects: Short presentations will be given, based on an aspect of the reading and on a relevant composition to strengthen the basis of our comparisons and to facility with the non-musical language; music students have spent several semesters learning musical terms, but some of the literary terminology will be new. Three short research/analytical essays (3-5 pages) in the first two-thirds of the semester will be assigned; at least one will compare two works and evaluate the effectiveness of the musical language. Using required drafts of the papers, we will work on creating persuasive arguments and strong supporting evidence. The final paper will be the culmination of this experience. Original questions that results in new knowledge and understanding is expected. The paper will be evaluated using our Music History Paper Grading Rubric, which weighs aspects of purpose, organization, evidence, analysis, mechanics and documentation. There will also be three essay exams, based on the readings, discussions and music literature. I would also like to try having students compose one short composition that is based on the concepts we study and have a discussion about the of this knowledge to their musical skills.

In the previously taught non-Honors course, (taught once in spring 2010): readings were mainly from music journals, rather than the broader spectrum I intend to use this Spring. Listening examples and two papers were assigned. We examined compositions for which there was a corresponding article linking a composer's knowledge of the Classics and studied the works discussed in the article. The papers were based on an exploration of rhetorical devices in individual compositions, but did not make comparisons.

Grading: 30% of the grade is based on the short assignments; 20% on the final paper; 30% on the three exams, and 20% on class presentations and participation. Attendance is expected.

Sample readings: which will be expanded to include more non-musical readings.

Classics: Aristotle, *Rhetoric*; Cicero, *On Oratory*; Quintilian. *Institutes of Oratory*

B. Wilson. "Rhetoric and Music." *Grove Music Online*

Willem Elders. "Guillaume Dufay as Orator." *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 31(1981): 1-15.

D. Schulenberg. "Music Expression and Musical Rhetoric in the Keyboard Works of J. S. Bach." *Johann Sebastian: A Tercentenary Celebration*. ed. Seymour Benstock. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992.

I. Woodfield. "Mozart's 'Jupiter': a symphony of light?" *The Musical Times* 147(2006): 25-46.

E. Sisman. "Pathos and the *Pathétique*: Rhetorical stance in Beethoven's Sonata in C Minor, Op. 13." *Beethoven Forum* 3 (1994): 81-106.