

MUS 502: Proseminar in Tonal Analysis – Music of Beethoven and Ellington
Instructor: August Sheehy | Thursday, 3:30pm – 6:20pm

This course concerns the analysis of tonal music. Accordingly, a principal aim will be to understand exactly what we mean when we refer to a musical work as tonal or say that it exemplifies “tonality.” To that end, we will study tonality both as a musical phenomenon (something you can hear—or learn to hear—in music) and as discourse (a way of talking and thinking about music). These two ideas are related to one another, but they are not the same. Tonal phenomena can be perceived in many kinds of music. Tonal discourses emerged in nineteenth-century Europe as a means of organizing music history and elevating particular musical repertoires above others.

Our inquiries will be focused through analyses of two different sets of musical works, Ludwig van Beethoven’s String Quartets 1–6 (Op. 18) published in Vienna in 1801, and selected songs by Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, and Juan Tizol as performed on the 1957 album *Ella Fitzgerald Sings the Duke Ellington Songbook*. We will analyze these pieces from various perspectives, including harmony, form, rhythm and meter, counterpoint, improvisation, and timbre. Throughout the course, we will work to develop the means for communicating analytic insights to others clearly, elegantly, and persuasively.

Coursework involves weekly readings and analyses, one presentation on an assigned piece, and a final paper (with formal presentation).

This course is suitable for all graduate students. For MM and DMA students, this fulfills the Elective Group 2 requirement. MA students in the Composition track must take either MUS 502 or MUS 504 in the first year, unless exempted via an examination or advisory assessment.

3 credits