

MUS 507, Studies in Music History: Music, Modernity, Modernism

Instructor: Stephen Smith

Wednesday, 10am – 12:50pm

This seminar studies musical modernisms in the context of wide-reaching analyses of modernity. We will address questions like the following: What is modernism? What is modernity? Where and when have modernisms happened? Is there one modernity, or have there been many? What are the relationships between modernity and modernism? How are musical modernisms similar to, or different from, modernisms in other domains? What have musical modernisms sounded like, and how have musicians and other listeners thought about them? In considering these questions and others, we will look at some of the modernist work that has traditionally been found in, or associated with, Western classical music; but we will also examine ideas about modernity and modernism that pertain to other places, times, and practices. Readings may be drawn from music history, music theory, ethnomusicology, philosophy, sociology, literary criticism, and art history, as well as writings by composers and other artists. Our discussions will take up some of the persistent themes that have arisen in recent writings on modernism and modernity, including race, class, gender and sexuality, life, politics, and climate change. Grades will be based upon attendance and participation, reading responses, class presentations, and a final research paper.

This course is primarily intended for MM and DMA students, for whom it fulfills the Elective Group 1 requirement.

3 credits