

MUS 534, Opera Studies - *Parsifal*

Instructor: Ryan Minor | Monday, 2pm – 4:40pm

This course, open to all graduate students, is a deep dive into one work: Wagner's *Parsifal*. It is also an examination of a wide range of issues emerging from Wagner's last and most inscrutable opera: the enduring appeal of a "total work of art," both before and after Wagner's time; the unique acoustics, spectatorial experience, and political ideology of the Bayreuth theater, which *Parsifal* was written to consecrate; the work's harmonic transformations, whose traversal of nostalgic diatonicism and at times nearly atonal chromaticism lies at the heart of many recent theories of chromatic harmony; a plot about redemption that seems alternately naïve and blasphemous in its relationship to Christianity; and the depiction of an all-male community, which strongly resonates with emerging, and increasingly racialized, notions of German identity.

All of these issues emerge forcefully in performance, and one central component of the course is considering how the opera has been staged in recent decades. Over the semester students will be expected to screen five different productions (Syberberg, Castellucci, Girard, Tcherniakov, and Laufenberg), in addition to weekly readings and responses.

No previous experience with Wagner or opera studies is required. Grades will be based on attendance and participation, weekly responses, in-class presentations, and a research paper.

This course is suitable for all graduate students. This course fulfills the Elective Group 1 requirement for MM and DMA students.

3 credits