

MU3106

Issues in Contemporary Music

Initial Course Document:

- 1. Timetable of lectures and seminars**
- 2. Assignments (with a first list of essay titles) and due dates**
- 3. General Course Bibliography**

Matthew Spring (September 2003)

This course explores the world of contemporary music, in its widest sense, through weekly seminars in which students present papers analysing and evaluating contributions of particular composers, musical trends and developing genres. The aim is to equip students with an awareness of current trends and developments in contemporary music and to encourage in-depth debate and discussion. The field might embrace current trends in film and theatre music, multi-media, early music performance, popular and ethnic music, as well as contemporary art music. There will be contributions from visiting composers and specialists

The course consists of three main strands:

1. A number of preliminary sessions in which themes and trends in contemporary music are discussed.

2. Timetabled delivery by students of seminar papers leading to discussion of the subject presented.
3. Independent work in preparation for assessed seminar presentations by both the seminar presenter and the class as a whole.

1. Timetable of lectures

N.B. All lectures sessions are compulsory. Attendance will be monitored and a register taken each session.

.Week 1

29th September, 2003

1. Outline of course and discussion of possible student seminar subjects.
2. Contemporary Trends in young British Composers – Chris Fox, Graham Fitkin and James Dillon

Week 2

October 6th

1. Nyman, Glass and Reich – a retrospective
2. Brian Eno and Ambient

Week 3

October 13th

1. Electronic music – Jonty Harrison and the Birmingham School
2. Frank Zappa – His legacy and developments since his death

N.B. Subject area for seminar paper to be submitted.

Week 4

October 20th

1. Electro-acoustic composers – Alvares and Vinuo
2. Bjork – recent developments

Week 5

October 27th

1. Skempton, Bryers and Parsons – the British 60s generation
2. Contemporary British Female composers – Weir and Beamish

Week 6

November 3rd

1. Berio and Stockhausen – a retrospective

Week 7: Reading Week – No Session.

Week 8

November 17

1. Student seminars 1

Week 9November 24th

1. Student seminars 2

Week 10

December 1

1. Student seminars 3

Week 11

December 8

1. Student seminars 4

Week 12January 5th**2. Assignments and due dates**

Seminar Paper (2500 words) 50%

Essay (2500 words) 50%

Seminar Papers will be given in class sessions between week 7 and 11 and must be handed in written up as a conference paper on December 8th at 4.00 class. Cut off date January 5th

Due Date Essay – 11.00 am Monday January 19th

Cut Off date (max 40%): January 26th

1 Essay (c.2,500 words)

Essay Titles. N.B. If you wish to formulate your own title this can be done in consultation with me, and it is envisaged that some students will wish to do so. The essay subject should be one of those below or a title of the student's own choice, but submitted in advance, and agreed by the lecturer. The subject matter should in no way duplicate or overlap with the seminar subject. Students will be expected to show skills of independent investigation and research, of musical analysis, as well as communication skills. While concentrating of a specific topic it will be in the context of a general understanding of contemporary music.

1. Outline the ways that technological developments in music since the late 80s have impacted on the creative methods and performance styles in contemporary music.
2. Does black music in Britain today reflect the social conditions of black youth in Britain since the 70s?
3. Give a critique of the analytical approaches that have been applied to contemporary music. Give an assessment of their validity in each case.
4. Has the profile of women composers in contemporary music changed significantly since the 1970s?
5. Outline some of the development in electro-acoustic music since the 1970s.

6. What are the trends in contemporary British composition? Who in your opinion is producing significant work and why do you judge it to be so?
7. Is there still an avante-garde in music now, or is everything Post Modern?
8. What makes Nyman such a successful film composer?
9. Bryers and Fernyhough are both 60 this year. They stand at opposite poles in their approach to composition. Choose a work from each with which to highlight their differences.

Seminar Paper (50%)

Identify a topic that interests you from the world of contemporary music. This may be a particular work, a certain composer or performer, an artistic movement, an historical event, etc. Choose a topic that genuinely interests you *and that offers opportunity for your own critical perspective*.

Topics must be negotiated with and agreed by the module tutor. Subject areas submitted by week three. Using library materials (books, journals, magazines, recordings, etc.), the Internet, primary source material (interviews, visits, etc.), develop a paper for a 20-minute seminar presentation to your peers. The presentation may include audio examples, video, computer projection, handouts, etc. The text of your presentation must also be submitted as a conference paper (December 8th, 4.00 pm).

It is expected that there will be student contributions to the discussion and that students listening to the presentation will also prepare and be able to partake in discussion in an informed manner.

Assessment criteria:

- the quality of your research (the breadth and depth of your investigation, attention to detail, critical use of sources)
- enterprise and originality
- the quality of your own critical perspective
- your ability to communicate your findings effectively within the seminar format
- appropriate use of audio-visual material
- effective use of the 20-minute time limit

3. General Course Bibliography

Students are encouraged to look at **article material and recent recordings** as much as possible. Journals such as Popular Music, Ethnomusicology, Computer Music and all those that deal with art music – Music and Letters, Perspectives on New Music, etc, are important, as are magazines – The Wire, New Notes, etc.

General:

Elliot Schartz and Daniel Godfrey, *Music Since 1945*, Schirmer Books (New York, 1993)
Griffiths Paul, *Modern Music and After* (Oxford: Oxford U.P.)
Griffiths, Paul, *A Concise History of Modern Music*, Thames and Hudson (London 1980)
Griffiths, Paul, *Modern Music: The Avant-garde since 1945* George Braziller (New York)
Morgan Robert .P. (ed) *Modern Times* (Man and his Music, vol.8), Macmillan (1993)
Morgan Robert P *Twentieth-Century Music*, Norton (New York, 1991)
Nyman, Michael, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, Schirmer Books (New York, 1980)
Simms, Bryan, *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure* Schirmer Books (New York, 1986)
Smith-Brindle, Reginald *The New Music: the Avant-garde since 1945* OUP, (Oxford, Palgrave, formerly Macmillan Press, 1998)
Lester J (1989), *Analytical Approaches to Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Norton, 1989)
Morgan R.P. (1992) *Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Norton)

Pop Music

Frith, Simon & Straw, Will (ed). (2001) *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock* (CUP)
Larkin, Colin (ed). (1998) *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, Palgrave (formally Macmillan Press)
Middelton, Richard (1990) *Studying Popular Music* (Open U.P)
Covach, John & Boone, Graeme (ed), (1998) *Understanding Rock* (Oxford U.P)
Shuker, Roy (2001) *Understanding Popular Music* (Routledge, London, second edition)

Feminist/Gender Issues:

Bayton, Mavis (1998): *Frock Rock* (Oxford, OUP)
Garr, Gillian, G (1992): *She's a Rebel* (Washington)
McClary, Susan (1991): *Feminine endings, music, gender, and sexuality* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press)
Reynolds, Simon and Press, Joy (1995): *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion and Rock'n'roll* (London, Serpent's Tail)

Adorno and Mass Culture:

Strinati, Dominic (1995): *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture* (London and New York, Routledge.)
Attali, Jacques (1985, rep.1992) *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press)
Paddison, Max (1996): *Adorno, Modernism and Mass culture* (London, Kahn and Averill)

Globalisation:

Taylor, Timothy D (1997): *Global Pop* (Routledge, London)
Barret, Robert (1996): *The Global Jukebox* (London)
Born, Georgina and Hesmondhalgh, David (2000): *Western Music and its Others* (California)

Aesthetics:

Frith, Simon (1996): *Performing Rites* (Oxford, OUPress)
Pattison, Robert (1987): *The Triumph of Vulgarly* (Oxford, OUP)

Social History/Politics:

Frith, Simon, ed. (1989) *World Music, Politics and Social Change* (Manchester, Manchester University Press)
Friedlander, Paul (1996): *Rock and Roll: A Social History* (Boulder)
Street, John (1986): *Rebel Rock. The Politics of Popular Music* (Oxford, Blackwells)
Gillet, Charlie (1996): *The Sound of the City*

Walker, Robert (1993): *Running with the Devil* (Wesleyan, Wesleyan University Press)
Oliver, Paul (1990): *Black Music in Britain* (Open University Press, Milton Keynes)
Orma, John (1986): *The Politics of Rock* (Illinois, University Press)