

Philosophy of Music  
Philosophy 365  
Syllabus

John Douard

Texts:

New Jersey Books will have the texts.

*The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, by Lydia Goehr, Oxford University Press.,  
ISBN: 9780195324785

*Listening to Popular Music, or How I learned to stop worrying and love Led Zeppelin*  
by Theodore Gracyk, U. of Michigan Press, ISBN: 978-0-472-06983-5

*Improvisation: It's Nature and Practice in Music*, by Derek Bailey, Da Capo Press,  
ISBN: 978-0306805288

Derek Bailey: On the Edge: Video based on *Improvisation*:  
<http://ubu.com/film/bailey.html>

I will also email a packet of papers on specific issues.

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In this course, we begin with a consideration of the concept of the **musical work**. We will then examine improvisational music: jazz, rock and hip hop; but also music generated as improvisations in the classical canon, Indian raga, and African indigenous music. Most courses on the philosophy of music focus on "classical" or "art" music. These terms usually are used in an ethnocentric way to refer to formal Western music, and it is in that context in which the concept of the musical work evolved in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. A focus on improvisation will permit an interrogation of the concept of a musical work, by setting it against the essentially imperfect productions of improvisations. We will conclude with a conversation about the politics of music and the role of the audience in musical production.

The purpose of this course is to deepen your understanding of music by reflecting on fundamental philosophical questions, but also to deepen your philosophical understanding by examining questions about an ubiquitous human practice.

We will listen to a lot of music in this class, and guest speakers/performers will provide a perspective from the point of view of practitioners. I also encourage students to bring their own musical expertise into the course. The course will be a seminar with class discussion, and will require a considerable amount of writing.

### **Course Overview**

This class is intended for music majors, philosophy majors, and other advanced students with an interest in the philosophy of music. No formal background in either music or philosophy is presupposed, and there are no prerequisites, but some training in either music or philosophy will be helpful.

**Assignments & Grades:**

Three (3) 8-10-page papers, (25 points each)

Final Exam, 25 points

Late work will be accepted at my discretion and will result in a grade reduction of one letter grade.

**PLAGIARISM IS, OF COURSE, PROHIBITED.** *Definition: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.*

This definition applies to texts published in print or on-line, to manuscripts, and to the work of other student writers. If you plagiarize any of your work, it will be reported to your Dean and the University has a procedure for dealing with it. At that point, your grade will be out of my hands.

**Absences must be reported through the Student Self-reporting Absences System.**

**READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

- |       |   |                 |
|-------|---|-----------------|
| 9/6   | Philosophy of music and the "musical work." | Goehr: xvii-12. |
| 9/13  | The Musical Work: It's prehistory.          | Goehr: 87-147   |
| 9/20  | The Separability Principle                  | Goehr: 148-175  |
| 9/27  | Musical Production w/out the work concept   | Goehr: 176-204  |
| 10/4  | The Beethoven Paradigm                      | Goehr: 205-242  |
| 10/11 | Werktreue                                   | Goehr: 243-286  |

**FIRST PAPER DUE---TOPIC TBA**

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|-------|--|--|
| 10/18 | Aesthetic Principles, Aesthetic Properties | Gracyk: 73-102   |
| 10/25 | Aesthetic Value of the Popular             | Gracyk: 103-152<br>Handout: Defining Hip<br>Hop Aesthetics |
| 11/1  | Modernism/Postmodernism/Pstsoul            | Handouts: Aldrich: Hip<br>Hop in History; Brown:           |

Jazz Improvisation and A  
plea for imperfection;  
Hamilton: The Aesthetics  
of Imperfection.  
Handout: Jazz as Classical  
Music  
Ashe: Theorizing Post Soul  
Aesthetic

**SECOND PAPER DUE – TOPIC TBA**

11/8 Improvisation & Musical Works

Handouts: Brown: Musical  
Works, Improvisation, and  
Principle of continuity  
Bailey: 1-58; Video – On  
the Edge, Pts. 1 & 2

11/15 Music's Worldly Uses:  
Improvisation and Freedom

Gracyk: 153-175  
Bailey: 54-142  
Handout: No Boundary  
Line  
Handout: It's a hip hop  
world

11/22 Music and Politics

Richard Taruskin

11/29 Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class

**12/6 PREPARATION FOR FINAL EXAM – FINAL PAPER DUE**

**12/20 FINAL EXAM – ROOM TBA**

**I reserve the right to alter ths syllabus as the course proceeds.**