



MUS 58216 Music and Disability

Syllabus

Hunter College. Department of Music

Fall 2021: Wednesdays, 6:10PM-9:00PM,
8/25/2021 - 12/15/2021
Taught via synchronous Zoom

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Office hours: by appointment

Acknowledgement:

I am grateful to Prof. Joseph Straus for the model of his syllabus on which this draws extensively. I also thank Blake Howe, Andrew Dell'Antonio, Laurie Stras, James Deaville, and others for making their syllabi available online.

Course Description

In this course, we will examine the intersections of music and disability: how disability shapes the identity of a composer/performer, affects musical performance and composition, is perceived by the audience, and is represented in music.

Course Materials

For most weeks, we will be reading a mix of articles and book chapters. There are, however, books we will be using a lot:

- Adams, Rachel, Reiss, Benjamin, and Serlin, David (eds). *Keywords for Disability Studies*. NYU Press. 2015.
- Howe, Blake, Jensen-Moulton, Stephanie, Lerner, Neil, and Straus, Joseph (eds). *Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies*. Oxford University Press. 2016.
- Lerner, Neil, and Straus, Joseph (eds). *Sounding Off: Theorizing Disability and Music*. Routledge. 2006.
- Straus, Joseph N. *Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music*. Oxford University Press. 2011.

All readings will be accessible a week in advance on Blackboard.



Attendance

The course is designed as a mix of lecture and seminar. This means that your participation in discussions is crucial. Thus, attendance and punctuality expected. I also expect you to inform me in advance if you cannot attend a seminar on a given day.

Withdrawal and Incomplete

Students who wish to withdraw from a class with a grade of “W” may do so by submitting a withdrawal form with the required signatures to OASIS by the announced deadline (around the 8th week of class). Withdrawal after the deadline is allowed only in cases of serious emergency and must be approved by Student Services. Students who stop attending a class without withdrawing officially will receive a grade of “WU,” which is the same as an “F.” The music department does not support requests to have grades of WU changed retroactively to W. In the music department, the grade of incomplete (INC) is granted only in cases of serious, documented emergencies, and then only when permission has been obtained in writing from the department chair, no later than one week before the final class meeting.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

ADA STATEMENT REGARDING ACCESSIBILITY

In compliance with the ADA and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational access and accommodations for all its registered students. Hunter College’s students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of AccessABILITY for assistance and accommodation. For information and appointment contact the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1214 or call (212) 772-4857 /or VRS (646) 755-3129.

Please also contact me privately to discuss your specific needs so that I know how to help you.

Requirements

Weekly reading assignments (see below).

Weekly reading responses. 2-3 pages in length. Pass/fail. Each week (excepting the first week), students will complete a reading response for the texts that we read; these responses are to be emailed to the other members of the class by midnight on the Monday before class. The response should consist of a generous paragraph for each text: an opening sentence that summarizes or restates the thesis of the piece of writing and then an analysis, an argument, a critique, or an observation about the text and its conclusions. You may focus on what you have found new or challenging, noting if something in the reading resonates with personal experience or current events. You should also come up with one question of your own to contribute to the week’s discussion. These assignments demonstrate your



engagement with the material we will read, and allow you to express your observations and queries in a fashion that will simultaneously prepare you to discuss the material in class.

Term paper proposal plus indicative bibliography. 350 words. Due on October, 27th.

A 10-15 minute in-class presentation of your final paper in-progress. Think of this as a teaching situation, not a formal paper. December 8th.

Final paper. The topic is of student's own choosing but it must relate to the course's overall topic of music and disability. The paper should be 3500-4500 words (12-15 pages, including bibliography). Due on December 20th.

Note:

All writings must be in .doc or .docx format (not pdf) and submitted electronically.

Grading Policy

Participation in class discussions: 15%

Weekly reading responses: 20%

Final paper proposal with bibliography: 10%

Presentation of final paper in-progress: 15%

Final paper: 40%

Course Outline *(Subject to Modification)*

August 25. Introduction to Disability Studies

Adams, Rachel, Benjamin Reiss, and David Serlin, "Introduction" and "Disability," in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, 1–11.

Davis, Lennard. "Introduction: Normality, Power, and Culture," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, 5th ed., ed. Lennard Davis (New York: Routledge and London, 2017), 1–14.

Howe, Blake, Stephanie Jensen-Moulton, Neil Lerner, and Joseph Straus, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies*, 1–14.

September 1. Representations and Narratives of Disability

Bérubé, Michael. "Representation," in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, 151–54.

Straus, Joseph. "Musical Narratives of Disability Overcome: Beethoven." In *Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 45-62.

Straus, Joseph. "Musical Narratives of Disability Accommodated: Schubert." In *Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 63-71.

September 8 and 15. No classes

September 22. Performing Disability Musically

Kuppers, Petra. "Performance," in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, 137–39. and 33–46.

Straus, Joseph. *Extraordinary Measures: Disability in Music*, Chapter 7: "Performing Music and Performing Disability," 125–149.



Honisch, Stefan. "Re-narrating Disability through Musical Performance," *Music Theory Online* 15 (2009).

September 29. Vocal Dis/Ability

Stras, Laurie. "The Organ of the Soul: Voice, Damage, and Affect," in *Sounding Off: Theorizing Disability in Music*, 173–84.

Piotrowska, Anna. Singing Better by Sacrificing Sex, in: Eilers, M., Grüber, K., & Rehmann-Sutter, C. (Eds.). (2014). *The human enhancement debate and disability: new bodies for a better life*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 125-143.

October 6. Physical Disability

Deutsch, Helen. "Deformity," in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, 52–54.

Howe, Blake. "Paul Wittgenstein and the Performance of Disability," *Journal of Musicology* 27/2 (2010): 135–180.

October 13. Sensory Disability 1: Blindness

Caeton, D. A. "Blindness," in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, 34–37.

Straus, Joseph. *Extraordinary Measures: Music and Disability. Composers with Disabilities and the Critical Perception of Their Music*, 17-26. *Prodigious Hearing, Normal Hearing, and Disablist Hearing*, 170-74.

Johnson, Shersten. "Notational Systems and Conceptualizing Music: A Case Study of Print and Braille Notation." *Music Theory Online*. Vol. 15, iss. 3 and 4. August 2009.

Rowden, Terry. *The Songs of Blind Folk: African-American Musicians and the Cultures of Blindness* (University of Michigan, 2009), 1–34.

October 20. Sensory Disability 2: Deafness

Baynton, Douglas. "Deafness," in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, 48–51.

Straus, Joseph. *Extraordinary Measures. Prodigious Hearing, Normal Hearing, And Disablist Hearing*. 167–170.

Jones, Jeannette di Bernardo. "Imagined Hearing: Music-Making in Deaf Culture," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies*.

October 27. Cognitive Disability 1: Autism

Straus, Joseph. "Autism as Culture," in *The Disability Studies Reader*, 4th ed., 460–84.

Straus, Joseph. "Idiots Savants, Retarded Savants, Talented Aments, Mono-Savants, Autistic Savants, Just Plain Savants, People with Savant Syndrome, and Autistic People Who Are Good at Things: A View from Disability Studies," *Disability Studies Quarterly* (2014). <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3407/3640>

Straus, Joseph. *Musical Modernism and the Representation of Disability*, Chapter 6, 125–154.

Bakan, Michael. "Toward an Ethnographic Model of Disability in the Ethnomusicology of Autism," *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Disability Studies*, 15–36.

November 3. Cognitive Disability 2: Madness, Depression

Gilman, Sander. "Madness," in *Keywords for Disability Studies*, 114–119.



Straus, Joseph. *Broken Beauty: Musical Modernism and the Representation of Disability*, Chapter 4, 88–103.

Deaville, James. “More Than the Blues: Clinical Depression, Invisible Disabilities and Academe,” *Music Theory Online* 15/3-4 (2009).

November 10. Cognitive Disability 3: Idiocy

McDonagh, Patrick. *Idiocy: A Cultural History*. Chapter 1. (Liverpool University Press. 2008): 1–23.

Straus, Joseph. *Musical Modernism and the Representation of Disability*, Chapter 5.

November 17. Intersectionality: Disability/Race/Gender/Sexuality

Woodin, Sarah. Intersectionality, in “Disability Studies: a Student’s Guide”. Ed. By Colin Cameron. Sage Publications Limited. 2013.

Metzl, Jonathan. *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease* (Beacon, 2011): ix–xxi.

Bartlet, Jennifer. Longing for the Male Gaze, in “About us: Essays from the disability series of the New York Times”, ed. By Peter Catapano and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson. Liveright, 2019.

Jensen-Moulton, Stephanie. “Finding Autism in the Compositions of a 19th-Century Prodigy: Reconsidering ‘Blind Tom’ Wiggins,” in *Sounding Off: Theorizing Disability in Music*, 199–216.

November 24. Disability, Musical Education and Musical Profession

Price, Margaret. Education. In “Keywords for Disability Studies”, NYU Press, 2015.

Télez Vargas, Alejandro Alberto. T Disability and Music Performance. Chapter 2, “Ablism in the Socio-Musical Organization”, Routledge, 2019.

Sacks, Oliver. “Athletes of the Small Muscles: Musicians’ Dystonia,” in *Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain* (New York: Knopf, 2007), 264-275.

December 1. Disability Life Writing

Couser, G. Thomas. *Recovering Bodies: Illness, Disability, and Life Writing* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 3–17.

Straus, Joseph., *Extraordinary Measures*, Chapter 5, 82–102.