



Writing about Music: Women in Music

MUSIC 121-005, Course no. 53963

Fall 2023: Mon/Wed 9:15AM-10:30AM, Music 351

Prof. Schindele (she/her), Adjunct Lecturer

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Course Information:

Course Description: “Why has the idea taken hold that there is something peculiarly inexpressible about music?” asks Alex Ross, music critic for the *New Yorker*, continuing, “the explanation may lie not in music but in ourselves.” This semester, we will aim to capture this “inexpressible” nature of music through our writing practice. We will explore various forms of music writing, including traditional/comparative analysis, music criticism, soundscapes, program notes, and more. Specifically, we will focus on music by women, from works by medieval composers to top 40 hits by contemporary pop stars. This course will prioritize instruction on writing, and students should come to each class prepared to write, revise, and share their writing. This course (MUSIC 121) is a College Writing 2 course and satisfies an English Composition requirement of the Pathways General Education Required Core.

Learning Goals for College Writing 2:

1. Learn the central rhetorical genres and conventions within the course’s discipline and/or division.
2. Build on writing practices introduced in English 110 such as pre-writing, drafting, revision, and research.
3. Build on critical reading practices introduced in English 110 such as summary, synthesis, and analysis.
4. Learn the research and attribution skills appropriate to the discipline that will help strengthen their writing and thinking.
5. Take ownership of their writing and gain an understanding of their voice and style in relation to disciplinary expectations.

CUNY Pathway Learning Outcomes:

1. Read and listen critically and analytically, including identifying an argument’s major assumptions and assertions and evaluating its supporting evidence.
2. Write clearly and coherently in varied, academic formats (such as formal essays, research papers, and reports) using standard English and appropriate technology to critique and improve one’s own and others’ texts.
3. Demonstrate research skills using appropriate technology, including gathering, evaluating, and synthesizing primary and secondary sources.
4. Support a thesis with well-reasoned arguments, and communicate persuasively across a variety of contexts, purposes, audiences, and media.
5. Formulate original ideas and relate them to the ideas of others by employing the conventions of ethical attribution and citation.



Course Modality: This fall semester of Music 121 will be taught fully in person on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:15AM-10:30AM in room Music 351 (Aaron Copland building).

Course Webpage: Learning activities (assignments, posts, readings) will be found on our class CUNY Academic Commons site. To fully participate in the course, please register for the CUNY Academic Commons, set up your profile, and navigate to our course site. Instructions on how to do so are linked below. If this is your first time using the Commons and you need assistance accessing the course, or have any questions throughout the semester, please let me know.

1. [Register for the CUNY Academic Commons.](#)
2. [Set up your Commons Profile.](#)
3. [Find and join your course on the Commons](#)

Office Hours: Office Hours will be held on Zoom by appointment- please make an appointment via email to meet with me.

Assignments:

Musical Analysis Writing Assignment: You will choose a piece of music discussed in class to analyze (from a provided list), being sure to include background/biographical information, an analysis of the song's musical elements, and the cultural context of the piece. This piece will be revisited throughout the semester via the musical comparison assignment and final project. You will receive feedback for this assignment and will have the opportunity to revise if necessary. Please see the guidelines posted on the syllabus tab of the Commons site for more information.

Musical Comparison Assignment: In addition to the musical analysis writing assignment completed the previous week, you will locate an alternate performance/recording of your chosen work and write a comparative analysis of the two performances. Please see the guidelines posted on the syllabus tab of the Commons site for more information.

Concert Review Writing Assignment: You will write a concert review of a chamber music concert, "HERS" featuring Molly Carr and Anna Petrova. This concert is available on YouTube and was originally performed on November 7, 2022, at Queens College. This writing assignment will include a rough draft (to be peer reviewed) and possible revisions. Please see the guidelines posted on the syllabus tab of the Commons site for more information.

Soundscape Writing Assignment: In the spirit of Pauline Oliveros's *Poetics of Environmental Sound*, you will write on a soundscape that you encounter. Please see the guidelines posted on the syllabus tab of the Commons site for more information.

Annotated Bibliography: You will complete an abridged annotated bibliography (including three secondary sources and three popular reception sources) on a piece you plan to include in your final project. Please see the guidelines posted on the syllabus tab of the Commons site for more information.



Final Project: “Now That’s What I Call ‘Women in Music’”: Your final project will consist of program notes for a compilation album of six pieces by women. This project will be workshopped throughout the semester, as an outline of your program notes will be peer reviewed, and a rough draft will be reviewed by Prof. Schindele. Please see the guidelines posted on the syllabus tab of the Commons site for more information.

Grading:

Musical Analysis Writing Assignment: 10%
Musical Comparison Writing Assignment: 10%
Concert Review Writing Assignment: 20%
Soundscape Writing Assignment: 10%
Annotated Bibliography Assignment: 10%
Final Project: 40%

Please see Queens College’s Academic and Grading Policies for more information:
<https://www.qc.cuny.edu/aac/academic-and-grading-policies/>

Late Work/Extensions: I am happy to accept late work and grant extensions as I understand that our circumstances in and outside of our academic world are continuously changing. If you need an extension for any reason, please contact me *before* the due date. Please note, there is no need to share personal (family or medical) information with me when emailing about an extension. Generally, late work where an extension has not been discussed prior will either have points deducted or receive half credit.

CUNY’s Academic Integrity Policy: Academic dishonesty is prohibited in the City University of New York. Penalties for academic dishonesty include academic sanctions, such as failing or otherwise reduced grades, and/or disciplinary sanctions, including suspension and/or expulsion. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to cheating, plagiarism—passing off someone else’s work as your own, which often occurs through copying and pasting passages from webpages into your own assignments—obtaining unfair advantage, and/or falsification of records and official documents. If you share an assignment with a classmate and they copy your work, with or without your permission, both of you can be penalized.

Need access to recourses?

I care about you. I also know that you have a life outside of school, that everyone learns differently, and that you came to college to succeed. For all of these reasons and more, it is important for you to have ready access to the resources and services that are free and available to you as a student at Queens College. **Care statement inspired by Shelly Eversley*

Need accommodations? If you have any kind of disability or any other condition that negatively affects your access to education, or you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, please feel free to contact me to discuss accommodations for your access needs. I also encourage you to register with the QC Student Services Office if you have a diagnosis, as they can help you document your needs and create an accommodation plan:



<http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/spsv/index.htm>. It is never too late to request accommodations – our bodies and circumstances are continuously changing.

Need someone to talk to? In times like these, many students are dealing with feelings of depression, anxiety, and stress. At no cost, the Counseling, Health, and Wellness Center allows students to consult a nurse about health, diet, and reproductive concerns and discuss academic and personal issues with licensed mental health professionals, among other services. Contact them via email (CounselingCenter@qc.cuny.edu) or by phone: (718) 997-5420.

Need an online device? If technological difficulties persist, or you need to borrow an online device from Queens College, please contact the information technology help desk:

<https://www.qc.cuny.edu/computing/HelpDesk/Pages/Welcome.aspx>

Need help with writing? For one-on-one help with topics like sentence structure, grammar, and spelling, please make a free appointment online with the campus writing center:

<http://writingcenter.qwriting.qc.cuny.edu/>



Course Schedule:

Week 1: Syllabus Overview & What is Music?

Week 2: Musical Elements

- Reading: N. Alan Clark, *Understanding Music: Past and Present*, chap 1.

Week 3: Women in Music: Listening and Responding in Antiquity & Medieval Era.

- Reading: Anne C. Schreffler “The Myth of the Canon’s Invisible Hand,” (2017).

Week 4: Women in Music: Listening and Responding in the Renaissance, Romantic Era, and Today

Week 5: In Class Workshop: Musical Analysis Assignment

Week 6: Analyzing Performances

- Reading: Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance* (London: CHARM, 2009), Introduction paragraphs 1-10

Week 7: Concert Reviews

- Listen:
 - o [Nina C. Young's "Tread softly"](#)
 - o [Haydn, Cello Concerto no. 1 mvt. 1](#)
 - o [Mozart, Mass in C Minor, mvt 1 "Kyrie"](#)
- Readings:
 - o [New York Classical Review](#)
 - o [New York Times](#)
 - o [Parterre](#)

Week 8: Opinion Writing

- Readings:
 - o Amy Beth Kirsten, “[The ‘Woman Composer’ Is Dead](#),” (2012)
 - o Kristin Kuster, “[Taking Off My Pants](#),” (2013)
 - o Liz Pelly, “Discover Weakly: [Sexism on Spotify](#),” (2018)

Week 9: Soundscapes

- Reading: Pauline Oliveros ["The Poetics of Environmental Sound"](#) (1968)

Week 10: Writing the Research Paper

- Reading: Selections from Booth, *The Craft of Research*

Week 11: Bibliographies

- Reading: Queens College [Bibliography Guide](#)



Week 12: Liner Notes

- Reading: (Assigned album liner notes that aligned with students' musicals interests)

Week 13: Program Notes

- Reading: Queens College [Program Notes Guide](#)

Week 14: In Class Workshop: Program Notes

Week 15: Peer Review Workshop: Program Notes

**Schedule subject to change. If any changes are made to the schedule mid-semester, you will be notified, and I will post an updated schedule.*