The Music of Poetry and the Poetry of Music  
Fall 2015 – IDSEM 1649  
Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-4:45  
Silver Building- 404  
Professor Lisa Goldfarb  

COURSE DESCRIPTION  
Although the ancient Greeks used the word “moûsike” to designate both poetry and music and the two were once “one” art, with alphabetic writing their paths diverged and poetry, music, rhetoric, and musical theory became distinct from one another. Yet, however much music and poetry may have their separate histories and technical languages, poets and composers have continued to probe the relation between the two arts. In this course, we will focus on the relationship between music and poetry in the modern era -- from the “fin de siècle” and Verlaine’s call to the symbolist poets to compose “Music above everything,” to the modernists in English and American poetry and the jazz improvisations of the twentieth century. We will study musical and poetic history of the period, grapple with what we mean when we say a poem is musical and what melody means in poetry, and we will study how to define and discuss lyricism in music.

As you can see from the description and the syllabus, this course investigates the relationship between music and poetry largely through the writings of poets, philosophers, and some composers. As we move through the various readings, we will also add a musical/listening component to the course. When we read the French symbolists, we will listen to Wagner, Debussy and Stravinsky, as we study Hughes, we will listen to and think about the rhythms of blues and jazz. When we study the work of the American modernists, we will we will listen to Ives, Thomson, and Copland. We will work together through the readings and our listening to consider how these poems, essays, and musical texts reflect upon one another.

Our aim as a class will be to understand both the critical language that we use to understand each of these arts, to develop productive ways we can understand each and in relation to the another. Most of all, we will work together to understand the ways that both composers and poets have borrowed from each other’s work, particularly in the modern period, as well as the way they, in turn, define the period in which they compose their work.

LEARNING GOALS  
• Students will develop an understanding of the broad history and definitions of the modernist period in poetry and in music (European and Anglo-American literature and music).

• Students will learn a critical language to apply to reading of poetic and musical texts.

• The class will help students master the close reading of poetry.
• All students will learn to define and discuss lyricism in poetry and in music.

• Students will learn how to contextualize the modernist period historically and artistically.

• All students will learn to orally present their readings of both poetic and musical texts to the class in informal and formal presentations.
• Students will master critical writing and conventions of comparative critical writing across the arts.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Baudelaire: Flowers of Evil and Other Works (Dover)
Mallarmé: Selected Poems (New Directions)
Moore: Complete Poems (Penguin)
Hughes: Selected Poems (Vintage)
Pound: Selected Poems (New Directions)
Stein: Selections (U California Press)
Stevens: The Palm at the End of the Mind (Vintage)
Stravinsky: Poetics of Music in 6 Lessons (Harvard UP)
Verlaine: Selected Poems (U of California Press)
Valéry: Selected Writings (New Directions)

There will also be a course pack containing the work of literary historians and musical theorists (Winn, Copland, Adorno, and Kramer). Please note I will also be assigning and distributing additional poems during the course of the semester (indicated on syllabus).

All books should be available at the NYU Bookstore. The course pack will be available at Unique Copy Center (Greene Street).

*Please note that as we move through the course, there may be additional short readings distributed and/or posted on NYU Classes (critical essays, etc.).

READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
To ensure that our discussions are lively and meaningful, each week students will write a critical response on each week’s reading in which s/he addresses questions regarding each text, and observations about how the reading relates to our theme of study, as well as a few questions pertinent to the class. I will collect critical reading responses at the end of each Thursday meeting or as indicated on the syllabus.

For each class in which poetry is assigned students will be expected to have read both comprehensively and deeply; that is, you are expected to read as many poems of each assigned poet as possible, and then to focus closely on the particular poems listed on the syllabus. As writing about poetry helps us to read more closely, each student will write very brief observational response to each assigned poem (one sentence). Responses should be typed and brought to each class to be shared with the group. In addition, students will write an extended observation to the one poem per week on which they
choose to focus (no more than one page). From time to time, if students would like to memorize and recite a poem in place of or as part of the longer weekly assignments, we can certainly make arrangements. For those students who are comfortable doing a close reading of a musical text, those weeks during which we are listening to pieces of music, they might also submit a one-page observation of the musical text under study. Both short and extended responses will be collected at the end of each week. They will be returned with brief comments.

During those weeks in which we are considering, musical, philosophical, and literary-critical material, each student will be expected to compose a few questions about a particular passage, or consider the pertinence of a particular idea to a poem or particular poet. These responses should accompany the extended poetic reading. All responses should be no more than a page (extended reading and questions).

There are three required papers for the course, two papers of roughly 5 pages and a final longer paper of about 8-10 pages. I will be handing out suggested study questions/topics on which to write before the papers are due. The final paper may be an essay developed on a topic of your own design; however, please discuss your ideas for topics with me before you begin. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides and documented according to the *MLA Handbook*. The first and second papers may be revised as long as students resubmit the paper no later than one week after they have been returned to you. Final papers cannot be revised for the course after they have been submitted.

Please keep in mind that all written work must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides. Formal papers must be documented according to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES**

“The Music of Poetry and the Poetry of Music” is a seminar course that develops through class discussion. It is crucial that you attend class regularly, and that you arrive on time. If, due to illness or emergency, you cannot attend class, please be sure to inform me. Also, please be sure to consult the syllabus and speak to someone in class so that you can be sure to be prepared for the next class. Your participation in class is vital to the success of the class, as is your timely submission of all weekly written assignments and formal papers.

Grades are based on the quality of all of your written work, informal and formal papers, as well as class participation. Please note that excessive absences (more than two unexcused absences) can jeopardize your course grade.

Grades will be calculated as follows:
Informal papers and class participation: 25%
Paper #1 – 25%
Paper #2 – 25%
Paper #3—25%
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

OFFICE HOURS
My office is in room 604 (1 Washington Place) and my office phone number is 998-7325. You can also reach me most easily by e-mail at lg3@nyu.edu or lisa.goldfarb@nyu.edu

My office hours for fall:
Monday - 1:00-4:00
Tuesday - 2:00-3:00
Thursday - 2:00-3:00

• Please note that it is always important to arrange appointments in advance by emailing and confirming the date and time.

SYLLABUS
WEEK 1
September 3
• Introduction / Ovid’s “Orpheus” in The Metamorphoses

WEEK 2
September 8
• Reading: Ovid’s “Orpheus” and Rilke’s Sonnets to Orpheus (1,2,3,5,7); Winn’s Unsuspected Eloquence (packet)

September 10
• Further discussion of Rilke’s sonnets (1.2.3.5.7); Auden’s “Orpheus” (to be distributed)
• Reading: Kramer, Music and Poetry (packet)
• Listening: portions of Monteverdi’s Orfeo
• Writing: Write a one-page reflection on the “auditory imagination” in Ovid’s Orpheus story.

WEEK 3
September 15 CLASS CANCELED

September 17
• Discussion: Contours of French symbolism
• Writing: Write a one-page extended reading of one of Rilke’s sonnets on Auden’s “Orpheus,” or one of Baudelaire’s poems.

WEEK 4
September 22  CLASS CANCELED (MAKE-UP TBA)

September 24
• Further discussion of Baudelaire poems
• Reading: Baudelaire, “Richard Wagner and Tannhauser in Paris,” “Mnemonic Art” (essays to be distributed, if necessary)
• Reading: Pater, conclusion to “The Renaissance” (to be distributed)
• Listening: Wagner, Overture to Tannhauser
• Writing: Work on first formal paper due October 1.

WEEK 5
September 29
• Reading: Marshall Brown (essay to be distributed)
• Additional poems: “It weeps in my heart” (103), “In the ennui unending” (113), “Green” (133), “Listen to this music sweet” (149), “The sky, above the roof” (163) ,“The Art of Poetry” (181)

October 1
• Reading: Further discussion of Verlaine/ Introduction to Mallarmé
• Listening: Debussy – Verlaine poems set to music (tba)
• Writing: PAPER #1 DUE

WEEK 6
October 6
• Reading: Further discussion of Mallarmé poems

October 8
• Reading: Mallarmé – Continued discussion of “Faun”; Adorno – “Music, Language, and Composition” (packet)
• Listening: Debussy – Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun
• Continued work on Mallarmé and Debussy
• Writing: Choose one portion of either Mallarmé’s essay or poem and write a one-page reflection in which you consider its musicality (either structurally, in terms of sound or image, or, if you would like, in relation to Debussy’s composition).

WEEK 7
October 15
• FALL BREAK (LEGISLATIVE DAY, NO CLASS)

• October 17
• Continued discussion of Adorno
• Reading: Valéry – Extracts from “A Discourse on the Declamation of Verse” (55), “Fragment of ‘The Memories of a Poem’” (159)
• Writing: Write a one-page reflection in which you consider the relation between music and language either in Adorno’s essay or one of Valéry’s essays.

WEEK 8
October 20

October 22
• Reading: Valéry – “The Graveyard by the Sea” (41)
• Listening: Debussy – La Mer
• Writing: Write a one-page extended reading of one of Valéry’s poems. You might also write a reflection on lyrical elements in Debussy’s La Mer.

WEEK 9
October 27
• Reading and discussion of Stravinsky – The Poetics of Music

October 29
• Listening: Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring, Firebird
• Writing: Work on paper #2 due on November 5

WEEK 10
November 3
• Aspects of American modernism (review Kramer / Altieri, others tba)

November 5
• Reading: Eliot – “The Three Voices of Poetry,” “The Music of Poetry”; “Preludes” (to be distributed)
• Writing – Write a one-page reflection on one of Moore’s or Eliot’s poems.

PAPER #2 DUE

WEEK 11
November 10

November 12
• Reading: Stein, Tender Buttons (126)
• Writing: Write a one-page reflection on the way Stein creates “music” in language. Try to focus on a technique that she uses to achieve musical effects. You might also write a one-page reflection on an Eliot or Pound poem.

WEEK 12
November 17
• Reading and discussion: Stein and Virgil Thomson
• Listening – Thomson, from Four Saints in Three Acts / The Mother of Us All (tentative)

November 19
• Writing: Write a one-page reflection on a Stevens poem (or, if you haven’t already on the way Stein creates music in language).
WEEK 13

November 24

- Writing: Write a one-page reflection on a Stevens poem.

November 26

THANKSGIVING

WEEK 14

December 1

- Continued discussion on Stevens
- Elizabeth Bishop – “The Bite” (additional selected poems to be distributed)
- Listening: Charles Ives – *Concord Sonata* (possible additional pieces tba)

December 3

- Writing: Write a one-page extended reading of a Stevens or Bishop poem. You might also write about the nature of narrative or lyricism in one of Ives’ compositions.

WEEK 15

December 8

- Discussion: Hughes and the Blues

December 10

- Reading: Baldwin – “Sonny’s Blues” (to be distributed)
- **Writing: PAPER #3 DUE**

WEEK 16

December 15 (last day of class)
• Reading: Copland’s *Music and Imagination* (packet)
• Listening: Copland – *Appalachian Spring Suite*