In with the Old, Out with the New: Debates on "Tradition" in Western Music
ISDEM-UG1823
Tues. & Thurs., 2 – 3:15pm
Silver Center, Room 620

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Office hrs.: by appt.; or T & Th. 11-12pm

Should not an entire nation, which teaches great aims and patriotism on every page, raise to Beethoven something a thousand times grander?

And so let a high obelisk or some pyramidal edifice proclaim to future generations that the contemporaries of a great man, contemporaries who treasured his works above all else, were mindful enough of their debt to acknowledge it by an extraordinary symbol.

-Robert Schumann, composer and critic
“A Monument to Beethoven”
1836

SYNOPSIS:
Contests between stalwart custodians of “tradition” and rebels searching for new, untested modes of expression pervade Western music history. This course will survey some of the most dynamic debates on music’s past, present, and future waged in impassioned arguments between music theorists, critics, artists, and audiences as preserved in historical literature. Our focus is on the seemingly inevitable tension between what music is, what it should be and what it can be. How are traditions constructed? Who defines the boundaries of a tradition, or what’s permissible in a particular style of music? What happens when an artist transgresses upon what’s deemed conventional or acceptable? This course will bring us closer to answering these questions.

We begin by interrogating the writings by ancient Greek philosophers on music, going on to examine debates on the music of figures like Claudio Monteverdi, Ludwig van Beethoven, Richard Wagner, Duke Ellington, and Bob Dylan, and explore the backlash against and defense of styles like jazz, folk, and punk.

The goal of this course is to better understand how culture is “made” during moments of charged debate, where a particular music’s perceived transgressions or merits serve as the pretext for larger conflicting ideological issues. Art, in this sense, becomes a site where competing aesthetic values reveal and articulate deep social and cultural rifts. This class will meet twice a week; our first session is devoted to scrutinizing and discussing primary sources, i.e. letters, newspaper and magazine articles, journal entries, audio recordings, film, and even commentary from the internet (e.g. Youtube). For our second session we will read secondary (scholarly) sources for context and use this as a way to think critically about our own aesthetic judgments. Debates on tradition and innovation in music, as we shall see, are a long-standing tradition in their own right.
COURSE MATERIALS:
All of the reading and listening assignments, as well as handouts, can be found on our course site:

http://wp.nyu.edu/inwiththeold

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
1. Attendance: You are required to attend all meetings, arriving punctually. More than one unexcused absence lowers your final grade by one full point (e.g. “A” becomes “B”). More than two unexcused absences is an automatic fail.

2. Discussion Leader: Each session, one student will be assigned to opening our discussion by summarizing the key points of the readings, thinking through them in relation to the theme(s) of the course, focusing on important dates or events touched on in the material, offering a personal reflection on both the reading and listening assignment, and raising important questions to discuss. This “introduction” should last ten minutes. The discussion leader can meet or correspond with me in advance of class to discuss their summaries and questions. Discussion leaders do not submit a response paper for the week in which they present.

3. Weekly Response Paper: Each student will submit a short (500-600 words) reading response each week. These papers focus on specific issues raised in the week’s assignment, offering your thoughts based on your reading and class discussion, and can include open questions. The response paper is due on Thursdays by 10pm, and you should post your response on our course website: http://wp.nyu.edu/inwiththeold. You are allowed to miss one (1) response paper without penalty.

4. Final Presentations: Students will prepare a brief presentation (10 minutes) on a controversy in music of their choice – artist vs. artist, artist vs. critic, fan vs. fan, etc. – summarizing the terms of the dispute between the opposing factions. Audio/visual material can be used, but should be kept to a minimum since time is limited.

5. Final Paper: Students will submit a final paper (3500 words) on the topic of their final presentation on May 10 by 2pm. This paper should cite 8-10 sources (some may be from class) explaining, in detail, the terms of the debate and adding a historical and/or cultural perspective on the issues at hand.

GRADING RUBRIC:
Participation and Discussion Leading: 25%
Weekly Response Papers (10 total): 30%
Outline/Bibliography with 8-10 sources: 10%
Final Presentation: 15%
Final Response Paper: 20%
EXPECTATION OF 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) if you have any questions about how to cite properly, what are acceptable references and source materials, or what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me!

COURSE SCHEDULE
(“*” denotes secondary source)

WEEK I
Case: Introduction
Music: N/A

Jan. 26: No class.
Jan. 28: Introduction and course objectives; open discussion.

WEEK II
Case: What is “tradition” in Western music culture(s)?
Music: N/A

Feb. 4: Composers and artists, art music and popular music. Read: A) Taruskin, The Oxford History of Western Music Vol. 1, Ch. 1: The Curtain Goes Up:
   a) “Literacy”
   b) “The Romans and the Franks”
   c) “The Carolingian Renaissance”
   d) “The Chant Comes North”

WEEK III – Western Antiquity
Case: The Greek foundations of Western aesthetics in music.
Music: N/A

Feb. 9: Plato, Republic, a) Book II, 376e-364e (pp. 611-625); b) Book III, 392e-403c (pp. 637-48, 656); c) Book IV, 424b-c, 441a-443e (pp. 683-6).
Feb. 11: Aristotle, a) Politics, Book VIII, Chs. 3, 5-7 (pp. 1306-8, 1309-16); b) Poetics, Chs. 1-4, 6-10 (pp. 1455-9, 1460-5).
WEEK IV – Seventeenth Century, “Baroque”
Case: Giovanni Maria Artusi vs. Claudio Monteverdi
Music: Claudio Monteverdi, “Cruda Amarilli” (madrigal, 1605)
       b) Excerpt from Giovanni Maria Artusi, *Artusi, or, Of the Imperfections of Modern Music* (1600) Grout pp. 526-534.
       c) Claudio Monteverdi’s letter in his Fifth Book of Madrigals (1605) and Giulio Cesare Monteverdi’s explanation of his brother’s letter, Grout pp. 536-544.

WEEK V – Nineteenth Century, “Late Classical/Early Romantic”
Case: Beethoven’s critics
Music: Tuesday: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 3 in Eb Major (“Eroica”), Op. 55, first movement (1803); Thursday: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67, first movement (1807)

WEEK VI – Nineteenth Century, “Romantic”

WEEK VII – Twentieth Century, “Popular/Swing”
Case: The Dangers of Popular Music
Music: Paul Whiteman Orchestra, “Changes” (1927) and Duke Ellington Orchestra, “It Don’t Mean a Thing If It Ain’t Got That Swing” (1932)
   March 8: Theodor Adorno, “Farewell to Jazz” (1933) and “On Jazz” (1936) in Leppert, pp. 496-500, 470-495.
WEEK VIII
Spring Break – No Class

WEEK IX – Twentieth Century, “Bebop”
Case: Bebop vs. “Moldy Figs”
Music: Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, “Bebop” and “Groovin’ High” (1945)

WEEK X – Twentieth Century, “Experimentalism/Avant-Garde”
Case: The Euro- and Euro-American Avant-Garde vs. Convention
Music: John Cage, Atlas Eclipticalis (1961), performed by the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Leonard Bernstein (1964)

WEEK XI – Twentieth Century, “Experimentalism/Avant-Garde”
Case: Jazz Avant-Garde and Jazz Fusion vs. The Mainstream
April 7: a) Stanley Crouch, “On The Corner: The Sellout of Miles Davis” (1986); b) *Film: Miles Davis: A Different Kind of Blue (in-class viewing)

WEEK XII – Twentieth Century, “Popular/Folk”
Case: Bob Dylan vs. (Folk) Authenticity
Music: Bob Dylan, “Like a Rolling Stone” (1965)
April 12: Film: Bob Dylan: Don’t Look Back (in-class viewing)

WEEK XIII – Twentieth Century, “Popular/Rock”
Case: Punk vs. Respectability
Music: The Sex Pistols, “God Save The Queen” (1977) & The Slits, “Instant Hit” (1979)
April 19: Film: Punk: The Early Years (in-class viewing)
WEEK XIV  
April 26 & 28: Student Presentations I

WEEK XV  
May 3 & 5: Student Presentations II

MAY 10, 2pm: FINAL PAPER DUE

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