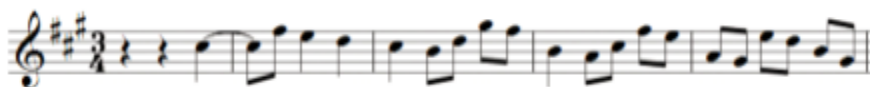


# Philosophy of Music

Philosophy//Music 244 | Fall 2022

**Website:** [Google Classroom](#)  
Course Key:



**Meeting Time & Locations**  
MWF 1:20–2:30 p.m. | GDH 104

**Professor:** Dr. Brandon Polite  
email: [bpolite@knox.edu](mailto:bpolite@knox.edu)

**Office Hours**  
MWF 2:40–3:30 | OM 304

## Course Description

*This course considers music's nature & significance.*

The specific questions we will address include: When is silence musical? What is authenticity in the classical, pop, rock, and country traditions? Is cultural appropriation ever okay? How does listening with others affect our musical experiences? Why do we sometimes find music to be not just enjoyable but also intensely moving and even profound? We approach these questions through a careful examination of key texts and arguments in contemporary musical aesthetics, and with respect to a variety of Western musical traditions.

The purpose of this course is not only to deepen your understanding of music by reflecting on fundamental philosophical questions, but also to deepen your understanding of philosophy by examining questions about a ubiquitous human practice.

### By the end of the term, you should be able to

- **Articulate** some of the leading theories in the philosophy of music.
- **Articulate** salient objections to some of the leading theories in the philosophy of music.
- **Defend** your own view on a significant issue in the philosophy of music.

## course details

**Masks:** Masks are required in class at all times. Your mask should be at least surgical quality: e.g., KN95, KF94, & N95. Cloth and paper masks are ineffective at preventing the spread of Covid-19.

**Readings:** All readings are available as PDF's on Google Classroom.

**Interviews:** I have interviewed some philosophers about work of theirs that relates to our class topics as part of my YouTube series, [Polite Conversations: Philosophers Discuss the Arts](#) (PC:PDA). These videos are assigned throughout the term (see the schedule below). Watch them at normal speed.

**Honor Code:** This course operates within the parameters set by the Honor Code. Students are encouraged to talk through all course material with one another and to function as interlocutors for one another. This extends to preparing to write your prompts and essays. However, each student is required to write their own work, to cite all sources fully, and to give explicit credit where particular formulations of claims, arguments, and examples are the product of cooperative work.

## Course Requirements

### Weekly Writing Prompts | 50 pts

Each week you will have the opportunity to select **one** significant passage from **one** of that week's readings or a significant quote from one of that week's videos, and write a **350–400 word** response to it. A passage or quote may be chosen because it rings true or seems wrong, it is illuminating or confusing, it resonates or conflicts with another author's view, etc. Whatever the nature of your response, it should reflect your familiarity with the reading/video as a whole. You will post your response on Google Classroom as that week's "**Writing Prompt**" assignment. There will be **eight opportunities** to submit prompts over the course of the term.

**Grading:** Prompts will all be graded as either **Satisfactory (S)** or **Needs Work (N)**. The number of S's needed to earn a particular grade are: **A = 5, B = 4, C = 3, D = 2.**

### Reflection Paper | 15 pts

You will write a paper of roughly **600–700 words** in which you will use a musical event you attended during term—as a *performer* or an *audience member*, in *person* or *on-line*—as a prompt for a philosophical exploration of some important aspect of music or musical experience. You can write about jazz night, a choir concert, a KGS performance, a rock concert on or off campus, a rave, etc. | This paper is due between Fall Institute & the end of Week 8.

### Engagement | 10 pts

Engagement comes in many forms, not just attendance. Taken holistically, engagement includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- Preparation:** reviewing readings and materials before class
- Focus:** avoiding distractions during in-class activities
- Presence:** engaged and responsive during in-class activities
- Asking Questions:** in class, out of class, online, offline
- Listening:** hearing what others say, and also what they're not saying
- Specificity:** referring to specific ideas from readings and discussions
- Synthesizing:** making connections between readings and discussions

**Term Paper | 25 pts** You will develop some of the ideas you've been working through in your writing prompts & in class discussions into a term paper of roughly **2000–2400 words** (7–8 pages). This paper will follow the traditional philosophical format of interpreting one or more philosophical positions & developing your own argument in response to them.

## Schedule

### Week 1 (Sep. 12–16) | *Music & Sound*

9/12 M Introductions  
 9/14 W Jennifer Judkins, "Silence, Sound, Noise, and Music"  
 9/16 F PC: PDA, Ep. 39

**Recommended:** Julian Dodd, "What 4'33" Is"

### Week 2 (Sep. 19–23) | *Being True to the Work*

9/19 M Lydia Goehr, "Being True to the Work"  
 9/21 W Julian Dodd, "Performing Musical Works Authentically"  
 9/23 F Further discussion

**Recommended:** Andrew Kania, "All Play and No Work"

### Week 3 (Sep. 26–30) | *Being True to the Song*

9/26 M Jeanette Bicknell, "Just a Song? Exploring the Aesthetics of Popular Song Performance"  
 9/28 W Cristyn Magnus, P. D. Magnus, & Christy Mag Uidhir, "Judging Covers"  
 9/30 F PC: PDA, Ep. 30

**Recommended:** Ley Cray, "Transparent and Opaque Performance Personas"

### Grades

<b>A+</b>	100 – 97.7	<b>C+</b>	79.9 – 77.7
<b>A</b>	97.6 – 93.4	<b>C</b>	77.6 – 73.4
<b>A-</b>	93.3 – 90	<b>C-</b>	73.3 – 70
<b>B+</b>	89.9 – 87.7	<b>D+</b>	69.9 – 67.7
<b>B</b>	87.6 – 83.4	<b>D</b>	67.6 – 63.4
<b>B-</b>	83.3 – 80	<b>D-</b>	63.3 – 60

### Weekly Writing Prompts

Due Fridays by 11:59 p.m.

<b>Week 4 (Oct. 3–7)   <i>Being True to Yourself</i></b>	
10/3	M <i>Aesthetics for Birds</i> , <a href="#">Artworld Roundtable on Selling Out</a>
10/5	W Theodore Gracyk, "Authenticity in Popular Music"
10/7	F <i>PC: PDA</i> , Ep. ??
<b>Recommended:</b> C. Thi Nguyen, "Trust and Sincerity in Art"	
<b>Week 5 (Oct. 10–14)   <i>Being True to Your Values</i></b>	
10/10	M John Dyck, "Philosophical Issues in Country Music"
10/12	W Evan Malone, "Country Music and the Problem of Authenticity"
10/14	F <i>PC: PDA</i> , Ep. 40
<b>Recommended:</b> Nadine Hubbs, "Anything but Country"	
<b>Week 6 (Oct. 17)   <i>Taking from Others</i></b>	
10/17	M Paul C. Taylor, "Make it Funky; Or, Music's Cognitive Travels and the Despotism of Rhythm"
<b>Recommended:</b> <i>Aesthetics of Birds</i> , <a href="#">Artworld Roundtable on Cultural Appropriation</a>	
10/19	W <b>No Class (Fall Institute)</b>
<b>Week 6 (Oct. 21)   <i>Listening with Others</i></b>	
10/21	F Tom Cochrane, "Joint Attention to Music"
<b>Recommended:</b> Margaret Gilbert, "Walking Together"	
<b>Week 7 (Oct. 24–28)   <i>Listening with Others, continued</i></b>	
10/24	M Nick Zangwill, "Listening to Music Together"
10/26	W Brandon Polite, "Shared Musical Experiences"
10/28	F <i>PC: PDA</i> , Ep. 41
<b>Recommended:</b> John Dyck, <a href="#">"Making Socially Distanced Music Together"</a>	
<b>Week 8 (Oct. 31–Nov.4)   <i>Music &amp; Emotion</i></b>	
10/31	M Kathleen Marie Higgins, "Comfort and Joy"
11/2	W Saam Trivedi, "Imaginationism"
11/4	F <i>PC: PDA</i> , Ep. 37
<b>Recommended:</b> Laura Sizer, "Sad Songs Say So Much"	
<b>Term Paper (Nov. 7–20)</b>	
11/7	M How to Write a Philosophy Paper
11/9	W Thesis Workshop
11/11	F <b>No Class</b>   Work on Your Term Paper
11/14	M <b>No Class</b>   Work on Your Term Paper
11/20	Su <b>Term Paper Due by 10 p.m. by no later than 10 p.m.</b>

## Late Assignments

There is enough flexibility built into the assignments & structure of the course that you shouldn't find it too difficult to turn the work in on time. But if you feel like you need additional time & would like to negotiate reasonable, alternative deadlines for any assignment for any reason, including having academic accommodations, get in touch with me as soon as you can—preferably before it's due.



## Listen to Music!!!

Our readings are full of musical examples. Try your best to track them down online & listen to them, as this will give you a clearer sense of what they're discussing. Moreover, regularly listening to **beautiful, cool, & amazing** music is generally a great idea!

**Further information** on all assignments can be found on Google Classroom.