Course meets: Tuesdays, 2:00-4:50pm, MM 316
Course webpage: http://music.arts.uci.edu/mdessen
My office: 3023 Contemporary Arts Center (CAC)
Office hours: Tuesdays, 12:30pm - 2pm, and by appointment
Email: mdessen@uci.edu

Course description
In this course, we will explore a variety of writings on music and culture. Rather than emphasize a single scholarly discipline or musical tradition, we will study writings by a range of researchers, philosophers and artists, highlighting questions that have shaped interdisciplinary discourses of music and cultural studies during recent decades. The goal is to strengthen your analytical skills through reading, discussion, writing exercises, and an oral presentation.

Reading and Discussion
In addition to two book assignments, you will read several articles each week. They are grouped very loosely around key ideas but diverge in topic and method. I expect you to have carefully read the assigned essays each week, taking notes as necessary so that you can come to class prepared to summarize them. If you have trouble, you should take notes on exactly what is confusing you, ideally with specific quotes, so that you can ask more precise questions in class. Your participation grade reflects how prepared and informed your comments are. If you scan the articles quickly and make comments that are only tangentially related to the readings, you will receive a low participation grade, no matter how much you talk.

Class format
In the first half of every class, we will use your abstracts and presentations to briefly cover each of the articles for that day in as objective a manner as possible. Here the focus will be on clarifying exactly what each author is trying to say, not what you think about their argument. In the second half of class, we'll discuss our own responses to the readings, at which point your personal reactions are not only welcome but required.

Guidelines for abstracts
An abstract is a concise summary. Most scientific articles are accompanied by abstracts so that researchers can quickly glean the results of an experiment. Abstracts are also used in the humanities and social sciences to capture an author’s thesis and method.

Some of the articles we’ll read will lend themselves well to an abstract, in that they have a clear central idea with supporting arguments. Others will be more poetic in style and difficult to summarize. But in every case, the challenge of abstract writing is to capture the essence of the article as fully as possible within the word limit.

Use a word processor that has “word count” feature to make sure your abstract is 200 words or less. Writing a good abstract takes a great deal of revision since every word literally counts. Revise your work carefully, and submit it to the corresponding Dropbox folder before the beginning of the class in which it is due. Use rtf, txt, or MSWord format.

Guidelines for presentations
For the presentations, you have only five minutes. You may use a handout or powerpoint if you wish but you should resist the urge to depend on numerous and extensive quotes, since this is unlikely to be effective given the time limit. Using some carefully-chosen quotes and key terms is fine, but paraphrase when possible and use a concise format. Five minutes does not allow for much detail, so the challenge is how to best communicate the main ideas quickly. This practice is important for many kinds of teaching and public speaking and will also push your own understanding of the essay further.

Book assignments
I will provide a handout early in the quarter listing the books you may choose for these two assignments, as well as specific guidelines for the writing assignment. For each book, you'll write a response (roughly 4 double-spaced pages) that addresses the questions on the handout. I encourage you to choose books relevant to your own area of study, but if you are interested in using a book not on the list, you must ask me first, and it must fit certain criteria that I will explain in class.

**Due dates**
In addition to the book assignments and weekly readings, each student will be responsible for 2 abstracts and 1 presentation. We'll randomly assign these in the first class to establish the due dates, which I will send to the class email list in the first week of the quarter. It is your responsibility to keep up with your own due dates.

**Required materials**
Articles will be on Langson Library's electronic reserves. For the book assignments, you should plan ahead so that you can get the book in time. You may be able to find your books in the library, but if not you'll need to order them on your own. I suggest you choose your books early in the course to leave time to locate them.

**Grade Breakdown**
Informed participation: 30%
Abstract: 2 x 10% = 20%
Presentation: 10%
Book response assignments: 2 x 20% = 40%

**Sources and academic honesty**
Please do not use published abstracts or other sources such as Wikipedia to write your abstract or presentation, since that limits the effectiveness of the exercise. If you are completely lost and must use outside sources to better understand an article before producing a presentation or abstract, cite all sources carefully and use your own words as much as possible.

All abstracts, presentations and book response assignments should be entirely your own work. Do not collaborate with other students on assignments.

You should also be aware of the UCI policy on academic honesty, which is online at: [http://www.senate.uci.edu/senateweb/default2.asp?active_page_id=754](http://www.senate.uci.edu/senateweb/default2.asp?active_page_id=754)

**Late/makeup/absence policy**
All assignments must be completed on time, or they will receive an F. If you have a truly severe illness or emergency you should contact me on the due date (and be prepared to provide documentation). Aside from such emergencies, absences will lower your participation grade.

**Special needs**
If you have a disability that affects your performance in this course, you must document it through the Disabilities Services Office at the beginning of the quarter, and have them contact me to establish the necessary arrangements.

**Office hours and getting help**
If you have any trouble with the course, it is important to seek help as early as possible. If you want to meet for help but cannot make my office hours, please email me some times you are free.
Enrolled students: Please see the email sent shortly after the first class to find out when each of your presentation/abstracts are due.

**Sept. 27**
Course introduction

**October 4**

**October 11**

**October 18**

**October 25**
November 1

November 8
*Book assignment #1 due by 9am on Tuesday, Nov. 8.*
Special guest lecturer in class on Tuesday Nov. 8, attendance required.

November 15

November 22

November 29:

December 6:
No class meeting during exam week
*Book Assignment #2 due by 5 pm on Tuesday, Dec. 6.*
You will complete this assignment twice during the quarter, with a different book each time. Submit them to M235 Assignments Dropbox in the folders called BookAssign1 and BookAssign2. Due dates:

Book assignment #1 due by 9am on Tuesday, Nov. 8
Book Assignment #2 due by 5 pm on Tuesday, Dec. 6

About choosing the books:
For each assignment, you can either select a book from the list below, or ask me at least 2 weeks before the due date if you wish to propose a book not listed here. Please note that I will only approve books that:
1. are written by a single author (i.e. no anthologies, etc.) and of substantial length
2. are primarily theoretical/philosophical in orientation. That is, you may not use books that are mainly about outlining facts, repertoire, etc. The book must have some kind of theoretical/philosophical focus. This can be a difficult call to make, which is why I require that you receive my approval BEFORE you start working on a book if it is not listed here.
For 2nd year students, I suggest that you choose books relevant to your thesis. Let me know if you need suggestions.

About finding the books:
It is up to you to locate copies of both books and complete the assignment on time. This handout will be given on Sept. 27, and the first book assignment is not due until Nov. 8. You should start picking the first book right away.

Writing Assignment:
The writing assignment should be roughly 4 double-spaced pages (about 1,400 words) and should address the questions below (roughly 2 pp. for each group of questions). Be concise.

1. What is the author's main argument and how do they support it? Include some information on their methodology, i.e., what kinds of sources or data do they draw on (interviews or other fieldwork? archival research? analyses of media, of musical recordings or performances, or of other author's work?) In addition, discuss the field(s) the book is considered a part of, and how it relates to previous work in those areas. Is it a highly innovative book with new ideas challenging conventional understanding, or does it respond in another way to previous scholarship? These questions may be addressed by the author in the book itself, typically in an introductory chapter, or they may require a little searching on your part, such as finding published book reviews that situate the book in a larger context.

2. How do the author's ideas relate to your own understanding of the topic - or, in cases where you knew nothing about the topic previously, to your understanding of music more generally? Rather than simply stating whether you agree or disagree with the author, try to relate the ideas to your own personal experience or perspectives, using specific examples as needed.

Citing sources:
It is critical that you fully cite all sources, not only the book itself but any other sources you drew on. It is fine to consult published reviews of the book, for example, but you should cite them if you draw any ideas from them at all. Plagiarism will be punished severely, as outlined in the UCI policies on Academic Honesty (see syllabus)

Pre-approved books:
(This is an idiosyncratic list. If you don't find what you need here, you should consult with me early in the quarter, as described above.)


