Course Description

Music pervades our lives. We listen to music at home, in the car, at restaurants, parties, and bars. Music plays in retail stores and coffee shops, in the gym, and on TV. We go to concerts, dance to music at clubs, sing karaoke, and even create new music and perform in public. During pandemic times, we still sing in the shower and listen to music (and, in fact, some evidence suggests that listening to music might help us deal with the relative isolation of pandemic-related quarantines). We spend a lot of money and time on music too – according to a 2017 Nielsen poll, the average American spends over 32 hours per week listening to music. This behavior is neither unusual nor recent: every known human culture uses music in some form, and archeological evidence suggests we have been involved in music for much of our history (e.g., bone flutes have been discovered dating from about 40,000 years ago and singing probably emerged even earlier).

In this seminar course, we will explore the psychological foundations of musical behavior. Specifically, we will discuss scientific work investigating how people perceive, remember, enjoy, and use music. This will include evidence from the development of musical abilities, from musical deficits, from comparative studies of musically relevant behaviors in other species and from other human behaviors (e.g., relationships between music & language).

The ability to read and/or perform music is not required for this course.

Learning Outcomes

After taking this course, you should

- understand theories, debates, and research related to the perceptual, cognitive, and neural processes involved in musical behavior
- understand how musical behavior changes over the lifespan
- think critically about how music can affect cognitive, social, and emotional states, and how musical behavior relates to mental health and wellbeing
- know and use effective strategies to read and understand primary scientific literature (both on music psychology and in general)
- critically evaluate the implications and limitations of behavioral and neuroscientific research on music and be able to communicate relevant research findings clearly and accurately

Readings


This book provides some general background and the organization for much of the course. In addition to this book, we will read a variety of articles and/or chapters each week. PDFs of these will be posted on the course website at least one week in advance.
Course Requirements.

1. **Participate** (15%). This is a seminar/discussion class, and so you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and to contribute to discussion. More is not always better, but engagement is necessary. Participation grades will be based on your preparation to discuss the readings and the relevance of your comments to the discussion.

2. **Generate discussion topics** (15%). To help you prepare for class, you should post comments on / responses to the readings before each class. These should be relatively short (≤ 200 words) and could include thoughts about how the readings relate to each other, questions about the interpretation of data or theoretical claims, or questions about how the data/claims can be reconciled with other findings.

   - You should post these comments on the webpage discussion board by **9pm the day before each class meeting** (i.e., 9pm on Monday & Wednesday) by clicking under the topic heading and adding your entry as a new thread. You are encouraged to read (and respond to) other peoples’ comments before class.

3. **Lead discussions** (25%). You will lead discussion of several topics over the term (exactly how many will depend on enrollment). You are not required to lecture, as all members of the class will be expected to participate. Instead, you will guide the conversation, stimulate discussion, and be ready to clear up misunderstandings (e.g., be prepared to explain graphs, play example stimuli when available, etc.). It will often be useful to begin with a short review of the paper(s) and then introduce questions (several of which will likely be drawn from your classmates’ posted discussion comments) to encourage & guide discussion.

   - Topics/days will be assigned via a bidding process: By enrolling in this course, you get 100 Music Cognition Bucks (100 MCB; actual value = $0) to bid on topics. I will allocate topics to the highest bidders as fairly as I can. A few rules:

     - You can only bid between 0 and 20 MCB per topic,
     - You should bid on at least 8 different topics (more is fine)
     - Your bids should total 100

   The link to the bidding form will be posted on ELMS. Your bids are due at **noon on Thursday, January 27th**.

4. **Communicate some music-science**. Over the semester, you should write and peer-edit three blogposts (or podcasts or another format, with instructor approval) on recent research on music perception/cognition. *For each of these three assignments*, you should:

   a. **Create blogposts about a recent finding on music perception/cognition** (25%). These should each describe the findings of a recent primary source article about music perception/cognition (ideally referring to additional relevant sources as well). You should target an intelligent, but non-expert, audience; i.e., these should be engaging, informative, and accessible. For one of these assignments, you may describe a (recently published) article we have already read/discussed in class; otherwise, you should either select from a list of options that I will provide or find your own articles (but please check with me first to make sure your choices are appropriate for the assignment). I expect these posts to be around 3-4 typed pages (double-spaced) or to contain about that amount of information.
5. **Revise your favorite two blogposts/podcasts into publication-ready form (10%).** In lieu of a final exam, you should submit revised and publication-ready versions of your two favorite blogposts from (4) above. These should incorporate comments/suggestions from your classmates and from me and should be formatted to be posted online. (Info will be forthcoming on the blog platform for the class). These should be posted online before **10 am on Friday, May 13th** (the scheduled end time for the final exam). Please proofread your final products carefully and follow appropriate attribution / copyright policies for images and any other sources you use.

**Course Policies**

This course is subject to university-wide policies for undergraduate courses, detailed at [http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html](http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html). These include policies on academic integrity, student conduct, sexual misconduct, discrimination, accessibility, attendance, absences, missed assignments, student rights, official UMD communications, midterm grades, complaints about final exams, copyright and intellectual property, final exams, course evaluations, and campus resources. A few details specific to this class:

- **Attendance:** This is a discussion-based seminar course, so attendance is important. Excused absences (described via the link above) will be granted when appropriately documented. **NB: given COVID, I will be lenient on what counts as documentation. Please do not come to class if you are feeling unwell.** We will attempt to accommodate online attendance when necessary and I will drop your two lowest participation scores, effectively allowing two ‘unexcused’ absences.

- **Inclusive Learning Environment:** Diverse opinions are welcome and will probably lead to more interesting discussions. However, respectful communication is expected, even when expressing differing perspectives. Supporting one's statements with research findings is encouraged. In accordance with free speech statutes, speech that contains threats of violence is prohibited.

- **Grading:** Your final letter grade will correspond to the weighted sum of the grades for the course requirements listed above¹ as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter grade breakdown (lower cutoff scores)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>OMG</td>
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</table>

Late assignments will be penalized by one grade step per day late (e.g., an A- assignment turned in within 24 hours after the due date would receive a B+). Formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing within one week of receiving the grade.

¹ i.e., .15 × participation + .15 × discussion posts + .25 × discussion leading + .25 × blogposts + .10 × peer reviews + .10 × final revised blogposts
Topics and readings

A tentative schedule of topics and readings is listed below. *Note that this is subject to change – please monitor the course webpage for updates.*

(Remember: discussion posts are due by 9PM on Monday/Wednesday before we meet)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 1/25</td>
<td>(Tu)</td>
<td>Organizational issues &amp; introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – 1/27</td>
<td>(Thu)</td>
<td>What is music?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 – 2/1</td>
<td>(Tu)</td>
<td>Auditory perception (of musical sounds)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 – 2/3</td>
<td>(Thu)</td>
<td>First musical steps</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. <em>YATM</em> Chapter 1</td>
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<td><a href="https://www.americanscientist.org/blog/from-the-staff/12-tips-for-scientists-writing-for-the-general-public">https://www.americanscientist.org/blog/from-the-staff/12-tips-for-scientists-writing-for-the-general-public</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>5 – 2/8</td>
<td>(Tu)</td>
<td>Early musical development</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 – 2/10</td>
<td>(Thu)</td>
<td>Music in childhood</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. <em>YATM</em> Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 2/15</td>
<td>(Tu)</td>
<td>Music &amp; non-musical abilities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Music and social processes


Music in adolescence (blogpost #1 due)

1. YATM Chapter 3

Musical use & preferences


The musical adult (peer-feedback #1 due)

1. YATM Chapter 4

Musical plasticity


Musical deficits


Musical deficits 2


Music at work

1. YATM Chapter 5

Music while doing stuff


--- spring break ---

17 – 3/29  (Tu)  Cross-modal music perception (blogpost #2 due)


18 – 3/31  (Thu)  Music at play (peer-feedback #2 due)

1. *YATM* Chapter 6

19 – 4/5  (Tu)  Music and emotion 1


20 – 4/7  (Thu)  Music and emotion 2


21 – 4/12  (Tu)  Music and memory

1. *YATM* Chapter 7

22 – 4/14  (Thu)  Musical Imagery


23 – 4/19  (Tu)  Music and memory 2


24 – 4/21  (Thu)  Musical savants?

25 – 4/26  (Tu)  Music and well-being *(blogpost #3 due)*
   1. YATM Chapter 8

26 – 4/28  (Thu)  Music and rehabilitation *(peer-feedback #3 due)*

27 – 5/3  (Tu)  Music across cultures 1

28 – 5/5  (Tu)  Music across cultures 2

29 – 5/10  (Thu)  Music across species