

Boston University
College of Fine Arts, Department of Music

Counterpoint II - MU 406/705
Spring 2012

- Syllabus -

Instructor: Prof. Deborah Burton
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Meeting Times and Location:
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00 - 3:30, CFA 216

Course Description and Objectives

The official description states for this course states that it will cover the “study of eighteenth-century instrumental styles.” This, like many other statements we will examine in this class, is both true and not true. Here, the eighteenth century ends about 1750, with J.S. Bach’s death. And Bach, like other composers of his time, wrote in many styles: he composed in the Italian style, the French style, he wrote program music, he wrote in keys but also in modes. Further, these compositional techniques, while certainly useful for instrumental pieces, could apply very well to vocal works as well. Perhaps it is more precise to say that we will be learning to write tonal counterpoint in ways that Bach would have recognized.

A subtext of this class is the relationship between theory and practice: there are innumerable examples of composers teaching counterpoint by “the rules” but not following them in their own works. You will have a chance to delve into this seeming contradiction more deeply with your papers and class presentations (see below). You are also welcome to bring into class any examples you may find of real contrapuntal pieces that seem to conflict with these “rules,” so that we may try to discover together why this has occurred.

By the end of this course, you will have a good understanding of the art of tonal counterpoint, and will have composed, among other pieces, a canon, a two-part invention, and a fugue.

Prerequisite
CFA MU 405

Required Texts (available at the BU bookstore)

- Bach, Johann Sebastian, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Books I and II (Dover)
- Bach, Johann Sebastian, *The Art of the Fugue/ Musical Offering*, (Dover)
- Bach, Johann Sebastian, *Keyboard Music* (Dover) [This text includes the *Two- and Three-part Inventions*, the *Goldberg Variations*, the *English Suites*, the *French Suites*, and the *Partitas*.]

You may substitute your own copies for any of the above, but please make sure that your versions are not highly edited.

For reference (on reserve at Mugar): Kennan, Kent, *Counterpoint; based on eighteenth-century practice* MT55 .K53 1998

Course Grade Components

• attendance and participation	15%
• weekly assignments	35%
• canon	10%
• invention	10%
• presentation / paper	15%
• final project (fugue exposition)	15%

Attendance Policy

Your attendance and participation are required at all class meetings and are 15% of your grade. Excused absences include: (1) illness with a note/receipt from a doctor or health service, the day you return to class, (2) official school business, (3) observance of religious holidays, or (4) extenuating family circumstances. If a class is missed, it is your responsibility to find out what was covered and what homework was assigned. Tardiness of more than five minutes will be counted as a half-absence.

Weekly assignments

- In addition to the four larger projects, you will be given a short weekly assignment relating directly to the classwork. Recordings containing all the assigned material for listening will be on reserve at the library and/or available through the Blackboard page. Reading assignments from other sources may also be made; any extra materials will be placed on reserve at the library, on the Blackboard site, or given out in class.
- All written assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will go down one grade for every twenty-four hours the work is late. For example, an A assignment, one day late, will receive an A-. However, **the lowest grade you can receive for handing in a completed assignment is a D.** Therefore, even if your work is very late, you should still hand it in. Exceptions will be made only with appropriate valid documentation.
- If you want to hand in non-required written assignments for extra credit, they will be counted as one-half a normal assignment.
- You are responsible for keeping all graded work in the event there is a disagreement regarding grading.

Paper

A written version of your class presentation, the paper should be a well-organized investigation that, in the first part, summarizes a "prescription" for a fugue set out by one of several theorists. Then, in a second section, the paper should compare a fugue from Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* and the fugue prescription. Explain in detail, with musical examples, how the piece fits or does not fit the prescribed form. The paper should be approximately five pages long, not including musical examples. Further details about the length and nature of the project will be given in class. For all questions regarding bibliographic form, footnote citations, and other matters of writing and style, you should follow Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). This book is available in the reference section of any library.

Digital Resources

- J.S. Bach scores: http://imslp.org/wiki/Category:Bach,_Johann_Sebastian
- Paul Mark Walker, *Theories of fugue from the age of Josquin to the age of Bach*:
http://books.google.com/books?id=1PGj55jfH2cC&pg=PA276&dq=niedt+friedrich&hl=en&ei=VqInTdXGD8H78AaKzNGcAQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=9&ved=0CEoQ6AEwCDgK#v=onepage&q=niedt%20friedrich&f=false

Conduct

You are expected to abide by the CFA Academic Conduct Code. Cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean's Office.

Electronic Devices

All electronic devices are to be turned off in class. If your phone rings, you must silence it immediately and may not answer it during class time, or send text messages. If you are expecting an urgent phone call, please let me know before class and an exception can be made.

Disabilities

A student with disabilities must register with the Office of Disability Services prior to the beginning of the first term for which the assistance is being requested. Students will be requested to provide current appropriate documentation of their disability.

Blackboard

More information about the class can be found at blackboard.bu.edu.

Course Schedule*

Week	Dates	Material	Assignment / Text
1	January 17 - 19	introduction, Baroque melody	Assignment 1
2	24 - 26	2-part counterpoint	Assignment 2
3	31 - February 2 [1/30 last day to add a course]	“	Assignment 3
4	7 - 9	canon at the 8ve, 5th and 2nd	Assignment 4, <i>Art of Fugue</i> , <i>Goldberg Variations</i>
5	14 -16	canon with special devices, puzzle canons, etc.; intro to invertible counterpoint	Assignment 5 (canon), <i>Goldberg Variations</i> , <i>English Suites</i> , <i>Art of Fugue</i> , <i>Musical Offering</i>
6	23 [no classes 2/20, Monday schedule on Tuesday 2/21; 2/21 last day to drop without “W” grade]	invertible counterpoint at the 8ve, 10th and 12th	completed 2-voice canon due, <i>Well-Tempered Clavier</i> , Assignment 6
7	28 - March 1	two-part inventions	Assignment 7, <i>Inventions</i> , <i>Well-Tempered Clavier</i>
8	March 6-8 [Spring recess March 10-18]	“	Assignment 8 (invention), <i>Inventions</i>
9	20-22	3-part counterpoint	two-part invention due, Assignment 9
10	27-29 [3/30 last day to drop with a “W” grade]	fugue: types of subjects, analyses of <i>WTC</i> and JKF Fischer.	Assignment 10, <i>Well-Tempered Clavier</i>
11	April 3 - 5	4-voice fugue exposition	Assignment 11, <i>Well-Tempered Clavier</i>
12	10 - 12	“	<i>Well-Tempered Clavier</i>
13	17 - 19 [no classes on 4/16, Monday schedule on Wednesday 4/18]	analyzing fugues, student fugues	Assignment 12, <i>Well-Tempered Clavier</i>
14	24 - 26	student presentations	<i>Well-Tempered Clavier</i>
15	May 1	later fugues: Mozart, Beethoven, Verdi	fugue exposition due

* course material is subject to change; all alterations will be announced in class.