

Boston University
College of Fine Arts, School of Music
MU710: SPECIAL TOPICS: UNDERSTANDING OPERA
Spring 2013
- Syllabus -

Instructor: Deborah Burton
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Meeting Times and Location:
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 - 12:30, CFA 219

Course Description and Objectives

What is opera? How is it different than a play or a film? Is there anything that Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1600) has in common with Berg's *Wozzeck* (1921)? (The answer is "yes.") How can we understand this complex art-form in a meaningful way?

Exploring opera from its beginnings c. 1600 to the present, this course is a seminar that focuses on close readings of scores and their text /music relationships through a primarily analytic lens. Discussions, in general chronological order, will center on the problem of analyzing opera, and the analytic application to these multilayered texts of phrase rhythms, sonata forms, la solita forma and extended/interrupted harmonic structures.

Prerequisite

CFA MU 601 or equivalent

Required Texts

There are no required texts for this class. Scores can be downloaded from www.imslp.com or borrowed from Mugar library. A recommended text is Piero Weiss, ed. *Opera: A History in Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), available at the BU Bookstore.

Course Grade Components

• Attendance and participation	25%
• Presentation 1	10%
• Presentation 2	10%
• Presentation 3	10%
• Presentation 4	10%
• Short assignments	10%
• Final project	25%

Short assignments:

- Occasional short listening and study assignments will be made in the course of the semester. Recordings containing all the assigned material for listening will be on reserve at the library and/or available through the course Blackboard site. Reading assignments from other sources will 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.

Presentations: No exams will be given, but there will be four presentations, as described below; more detailed assignments for these papers will be distributed in class.

1. the week of 2/5-7: a short presentation on phrase rhythm or metric issues in early opera
2. the week of 2/26-28: a short presentation on sonata forms in Classical opera
3. the week of 3/19-21: a short presentation on *la solita forma* in Italian bel canto opera
4. the week of 4/23-25: a short presentation on extended/interrupted harmonic structures in late 19th-century opera

Final Paper: You will be responsible for selecting an opera not discussed in class, researching its background, analyzing salient aspects of the work, and presenting your findings to the class. The final version of your project can either be compiled as a written document or as an accessible electronic location, such as a website or Facebook page. You can create a website at <http://www.bu.edu/tech/web/personal/people>. The address of your website will be: <http://people.bu.edu/username>, where your username is your BU login name.

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.

Attendance Policy

Your attendance is required at all class meetings and it is 25% 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.

Digital Resources

[there are additional links on the course Blackboard site, <https://learn.bu.edu>]

- Boston Public Library: with a Boston Public Library “ecard” you have access to streaming of full-length operas through “Opera In Video.” A description on the BU library page is at: <http://www.bu.edu/phpbin/news-cms/news/?dept=847&id=51386>. The BPL “ecard” link is: <http://www.bpl.org/general/circulation/ecards.htm>
- opera libretti and translations: <http://www.aria-database.com>
- opera scores: <http://imslp.org/>
- Wagner's leitmotives: <http://www.rwagner.net>
- Opera and Society: www.operaandsociety.org [podcasts of BU lectures on many operas]

Recordings:

You are not required to purchase recordings of the operas for this course, and all required listening assignments will be on reserve at the library, and linked through Blackboard, on the Course Documents page.

Performances/ Class activities:

- you will be required to attend both BU Opera Institute performances this term, which are free for BU students.
- other local performances of operas will be announced to the class, for which attendance is recommended but not required.

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.

Cellular Phones/Laptops/Texting

All electronic devices are to be turned off in class, unless you are instructed otherwise. 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. Laptops may be used in class to take notes, but not for any other purpose. If you use a laptop for other reasons, you will be asked to turn it off.

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.

Course Schedule*

Week	Dates	Material
1	January 17	Introduction: opera analysis
2	22 - 24 [no classes Monday, 1/21]	<u>Phrase Rhythms</u> : Monteverdi, Lully, Purcell [readings: Rothstein, Krebs, et. al.]
3	29 - 31 [1/30 last day to add a course]	Handel, Querelle des Bouffons,
4	Feb. 5 - 7	student presentations 1
5	12 - 14	<u>Sonata Forms</u> : Gluck, Paisiello, Mozart [readings: Hepokoski/Darcy, Caplin, Rosen, Galeazzi, Koch, Marx, Czerny, et. al.]
6	19 - 21 [2/21 last day to drop without W]	Mozart, Beethoven
7	26 - 28	student presentations 2, <u>La solita forma</u> : bel canto, Donizetti, Rossini, Bellini, Verdi
8	March 5 - 7** [Spring recess 3/9-17]	bel canto, Donizetti, Rossini, Bellini, Verdi
9	19 - 21	student presentations 3
10	26 - 28 [3/29 last day to drop with W]	<u>Extended/Interrupted Harmonic Structures</u> : Meyerbeer, Carmen
11	April 2 - 4	German Romantics, Wagner
12	9 - 11	Wagner, Strauss
13	16 [no classes 4/15; Monday schedule on Thursday 4/18]	Verismo, Puccini
14	23 - 25	Puccini, student presentations 4
15	30 - May 2** [5/2 last day of classes]	Berg, Gershwin, final project due by 5/10

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

**Class on 3/7 may have to be rescheduled.