

MUSIC 0610: ORCHESTRA

Brown University, Fall 2020

Tuesdays 7:30-9:30pm; course meets online

Prof. Mark Seto (mark_seto@brown.edu)

Office hours: Tuesdays 3-4pm and Fridays 11am-noon (sign up via Google calendar link on Canvas)

Teaching Assistant: Jay Loomis (jay_loomis@brown.edu)

DRAFT SYLLABUS – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In lieu of the Brown University Orchestra's usual rehearsal and performance activities, this semester MUSC 0610 will explore how orchestras (and by extension, musical ensembles in general) can engage in activism and advocate for social and racial justice. Topics will include artistic programming, community engagement, and educational initiatives. Readings in music and cultural studies will enable us to develop a shared level of discourse in the class, and we will undertake several case studies of impactful musical organizations. As a culminating project, students will develop an illustrative three-year plan for an ensemble of their choosing.

For administrative reasons, MUSC 0610 will remain within the usual half-credit framework, with grades offered on a Satisfactory with Distinction/Satisfactory/No Credit basis. Workload expectations, detailed below, will be commensurate with the half-credit designation.

COURSE ELIGIBILITY

No audition will be held, but familiarity with orchestral repertoire and the ability to read music fluently is strongly preferred. If space permits, students who have previously participated in the Brown University Orchestra may join the course on a not-for-credit basis if their course load precludes them from enrolling for credit.

COURSE GOALS

The principal goal of the course is to encourage you to think critically about how music can serve as an agent for social good. We will:

- Examine the history of racist and elitist exclusion in university music programs, orchestras, and other Western art music ensembles, and discuss how to redress systemic inequities in these spheres
- Explore music by composers and performers from historically underrepresented groups
- Consider how musical ensembles can engage fruitfully with local and global communities
- Develop action plans for antiracist, socially engaged programming that can inform our collective and individual musical practices

COURSE MATERIALS AND WEBSITE

Readings, scores, and recordings for the course will either be available through the library's electronic resources or posted on Canvas. Our Canvas site will also have an up-to-date listing of assignments and announcements. Be sure to check the site regularly for the latest course information.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

- 25% Participation
- 25% Short assignments
- 25% Midterm project (due 10/27)
- 25% Final project (due 12/8)

Students must receive a satisfactory grade in each category to pass the course.

Participation constitutes an actual grade. This is an interactive course, and your input and ideas are important to the overall success of the class. You should see effective participation as both an aid to learning and a skill that can be learned. I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the material assigned for that day. When assessing participation, I will use the following framework:

- A: You contribute to class frequently (almost every synchronous session and asynchronous forum). Your comments reflect excellent preparation, build from the comments of others and/or offer direction for the discussion. If you were not in the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished markedly.
- B: You contribute to class sometimes. Your comments reflect good preparation, sometimes build from the comments of others and/or sometimes offer direction for the discussion. If you were not in the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished.
- C: You contribute to class rarely. Your comments reflect adequate preparation, occasionally build from the comments of others and/or occasionally offer direction for the discussion. If you were not in the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished somewhat.
- NC: You contribute to class very rarely or not at all. As a result, there is little or no basis for evaluation. If you were not in the class, the discussion would not be changed.
- Also NC: You contribute to class but your contributions reflect inadequate preparation and offer no direction for the discussion. If you were not in the class, the discussion would be improved.

Short Assignments

Each week, you will be asked to submit a written response to the assigned material by noon on the day of our class meeting. These assignments will serve a dual purpose. First, they will offer a "low-stakes" opportunity for you to get in the habit of writing; I will give you feedback on your work, but will not assign letter grades. Second, the act of putting your ideas into words will help sharpen your responses to the topics we will be studying, and will prepare you to be an active participant in discussions. **Because these assignments are designed to prepare you for that day's class session, deadlines are firm. Unless you**

speak to me about a particular problem you are having getting an assignment in on time, I will generally not accept late written work. That said, I understand that things sometimes come up, especially given the current state of the world. You will be allowed to drop two written responses without penalty, no questions asked.

Midterm Project (Due 10/27)

Working either individually or in small groups, you will prepare a short report on a musical organization that is engaged in meaningful activism or social justice work. The project may take the form of a written paper, podcast, vlog, or webpage.

Final Project (Due 12/8)

As a culminating experience, you will develop an artistic and operational plan for an ensemble of your choosing, either real (e.g., the Brown University Orchestra) or hypothetical (e.g., a community wind ensemble in a mid-sized metropolitan area). The portfolio will include: statements of organizational mission, vision, and values; three years (or twelve concert programs worth) of concert programming; and a plan for community engagement and related activities.

Detailed guidelines for the midterm and final projects will be distributed later in the semester.

Workload Expectations

This half-credit course will require approximately 90 hours of coursework over semester:

- 2 hours/week of class meetings x 12 weeks (24 hours)
- 3.5 hours/week for weekly assignments x 12 weeks (42 hours)
- 12 hours on the midterm project
- 12 hours on the final project

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance Policy

Attendance is particularly crucial to a course in which a great deal of the learning takes place through discussion. For this reason, I strongly recommend you attend our synchronous Zoom meetings whenever possible. If you cannot attend class in real time in a particular week, please contact me in advance to discuss how you can contribute asynchronously. If you miss more than three weeks of class without arranging asynchronous accommodations, you risk not receiving credit for the course.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you may require accommodations or modification of any of course procedures. You may speak with me after class, during office hours, or by appointment. If you need accommodations around online learning or in classroom accommodations, please be sure to reach out to [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](https://www.brown.edu/campus-life/support/accessibility-services/) (<https://www.brown.edu/campus-life/support/accessibility-services/>) for their assistance (seas@brown.edu, 401-863-9588).

Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can [contact one of the academic deans in the College](https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/drop-in-hours) (<https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/drop-in-hours>).

Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Standards

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

This is a discussion-based course. Because orchestras, conservatories, and university music programs have a long history of racist, sexist, and elitist exclusion, some of the material in this course may evoke strong emotions and contentious discussions. It is imperative that we foster an atmosphere where each class participant is able to hear and respect each other. If you ever feel that the classroom environment is discouraging your participation or problematic in any way, please contact me. You may reach out to me directly or use the anonymous feedback form linked on our Canvas site.

Class Recording and Distribution of Course Materials

I would like to record our discussion because some students may be in different time zones, have poor internet connections, or have health issues. This means that we will record all classes to make them available to all students that are enrolled but cannot be present. If you have questions or concerns about this protocol, please contact me so that we can talk through those to also ensure your full participation in this course.

Lectures and other course materials are copyrighted. Students are prohibited from reproducing, making copies, publicly displaying, selling, or otherwise distributing the recordings or transcripts of the materials. The only exception is that students with disabilities may have the right to record for their private use if that method is determined to be a reasonable accommodation by Student Accessibility Services. Disregard of the University's copyright policy and federal copyright law is a Student Code of Conduct violation.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is of the utmost importance in maintaining the high standards of scholarship in our community. Academic dishonesty is considered to be a serious offense against the community and represents a significant breach of trust between the professor, the classmates, and the student. There are many forms of academic dishonesty including plagiarism, submitting the same work in two courses without prior approval, unauthorized discussion or distribution of exams or assignments, and offering or receiving unauthorized aid on exams or graded assignments. Students are expected to be familiar with Brown's Academic Code (www.brown.edu/academics/college/degree/policies/academic-code), and violations may be referred to the Standing Committee on the Academic Code.

Cell Phones, Laptops, and Other Devices

[The text that follows is my pre-Covid technology policy. While our online format is necessarily computer-dependent, I would like to maintain the same ethos as an in-person class. Our meetings are an opportunity for focused discussion and engagement. You may, of course, use technology for class purposes (e.g., to look something up), but please resist multitasking.] Laptops and tablets may only be used during class to access course materials (scores and readings), or if you have a documented need to use an electronic device in class. If you use electronic devices for purposes unrelated to the course (e.g., texting), you will be asked to leave and you will be counted as absent for that day.

Office Hours

I will be available to students during office hours to discuss any questions or concerns you might have, or simply to chat. My office hours this semester will be on Tuesdays from 3-4pm and Fridays from 11am to noon, and will take place via Zoom. I will provide a link on Canvas where you can sign up for available office hour slots via Google calendar, and I am also available by appointment. Please feel free to email me, or to talk to me after class, to schedule a time to see me.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Please note: the repertoire list for this course will be determined by collaboration based on class interest. Representative listening may include: John Luther Adams, *Become Ocean*; Courtney Bryan, *Sanctum*; John Corigliano, Symphony No. 1; Jessie Montgomery, *Banner*; Ellen Reid, *p r i s m*; and works by Clarice Assad, Julius Eastman, Reena Esmail, Gabriela Lena Frank, and George Walker.

September 15 and 22: Course Introduction; Institutional Contexts

September 29, October 6, and October 13: Artistic Programming

Case studies: Chicago Sinfonietta, Silkroad Ensemble

October 20, October 27, and week of November 3: Community Engagement

November 3 is Election Day, so we will not have a synchronous class meeting. Vote!

Case studies: Community MusicWorks, Street Symphony

Midterm project due on October 27

November 10, 17, and 24: Diversity and the Musician Pipeline

Case studies: The Sphinx Organization, Chineke! Orchestra

December 1 (Reading Period): Discussion of Final Projects

Final project due on December 8

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY [WORK IN PROGRESS!]

- I. Orchestras, Performers, and Composers**
- II. Music in the Academy**
- III. Societal Contexts**

I. Orchestras, Performers, and Composers

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II. Music in the Academy

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III. Societal Contexts

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