

HUM-274 **Musical theory and creativity**

Cursus	Sem.	Type
Humanities and Social Sciences	BA4	Obl.

Language of teaching	English
Credits	2
Session	Summer
Semester	Spring
Exam	During the semester
Workload	60h
Weeks	14
Hours	2 weekly
Courses	2 weekly
Number of positions	65

Remark

Une seule inscription à un cours SHS+MGT autorisée. En cas d'inscriptions multiples elles seront toutes supprimées sans notification. Pas donné en 2021-22

Summary

This course provides an introduction into music theory and analysis, composition, and creativity, and combines theoretical teaching with hands-on practical exercises and music making.

Content

The connection between music, mathematics and the mind is ancient and reaches back to the very roots of human culture. Our history has witnessed the exploration of a large variety of musical forms and structures. In this course, we will delve into core concepts of music theory, mathematics and cognition as well as broader questions about aesthetics, creativity, and philosophy, as well as the interplay of art, discovery and formal systems.

Musical theory and practice need to be linked in order to ground each other. Therefore this class combines theoretical and practical parts.

On the theoretical side, core concepts from fundamental and advanced music theory will be taught and contextualized in overarching debates. On the practical side, students will learn and try different musical techniques and apply their theoretical knowledge in practical individual or group exercises.

Every year a different aspect will be at the main focus. This will be announced at the lab's website ahead of the class: <https://www.epfl.ch/labs/dcm/>

A practical musical background is recommended for this class (if you are unsure, ask before the class).

Keywords

Music, music theory and analysis, computational musicology, creativity, composition, improvisation, musical practice

POLY-perspective :

- creative perspective
- interdisciplinary perspective

<https://www.epfl.ch/schools/cdh/cdhs-vision/>

Learning Prerequisites

Important concepts to start the course

Prior knowledge of score reading and music theory (harmony & counterpoint) is desirable, but the class can be completed without.

A good start for a background in basic music theoretical concepts is provided by the literature below as well as:

- <https://www.musictheory.net/lessons>
- <http://musictheory.pugetsound.edu/mt21c/MusicTheory.html>

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the student must be able to:

- Apply musical theoretical concepts
- Analyze musical pieces and performances
- Use practical musical techniques
- Contextualise musical principles and aesthetic outcomes
- Apply and broaden listening and appraisal skills
- Critique musical pieces and performances
- Compose musical phrases and pieces

Transversal skills

- Demonstrate a capacity for creativity.
- Summarize an article or a technical report.
- Demonstrate the capacity for critical thinking
- Use a work methodology appropriate to the task.

Teaching methods

Weekly sessions including ex-cathedra lecturing, readings and discussion, group work, and practical exercises.

Expected student activities

1. Regular presence and active participation in discussions
2. Completing readings and assignments, and practicing the music theoretical and practical concepts
3. Engagement in practical parts and exercises

Assessment methods

1. Active participation in the class
2. Class project, essay, presentation or final exam on the concepts covered in the class

Supervision

Office hours	Yes
Assistants	Yes
Forum	Yes

Resources

Bibliography

The following general texts are a good starting point. Further specialized literature will be suggested

throughout the class.

Aldwell, E., Schachter, C. & Cadwallader, A. (2018). Harmony and voice leading. Cengage Learning.

Boosey & Hawkes; or: Laitz, S.G. (2003). The complete musician: an integrated approach to tonal

harmony, analysis, and listening. Oxford University Press. Gauldin, R. (1997). Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music. New York: Norton.

Hofstadter, D. (1979). Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid. Basic Books, New York, 1979.

Hallam, S., Cross, I., & Thaut, M. (Eds.). (2011). Oxford handbook of music psychology. Oxford University Press.

Ressources en bibliothèque

- [Aldwell, E., Schachter, C. & Cadwallader, A. \(2018\). Harmony and voice leading](#)
- [Hofstadter, D. \(1979\). Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid](#)
- [Laitz, S.G. \(2003\). The complete musician: an integrated approach to tonal harmony, analysis, and listening](#)
- [Hallam, S., Cross, I., & Thaut, M. \(Eds.\). \(2011\). Oxford handbook of music psychology](#)