

## **The Properties of Free Music MA505 Spring 2018**

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### **Course Description**

In this class we will explore the joy of play., especially how it is related to music.

Will will explore various ways to stretch our ears, fingers and minds with the goal of creating performances that are “Free”.

This course will examine how musicians interested in “Free Music” construct methodology and realize it in unique compositions and musical-organizational strategies.

“Free Music” can apply to any individual or group that uses improvisation as a way of expanding thematic material or as the material itself, regardless of whether the result is categorized as jazz, rock, free jazz, free improvisation, or otherwise.

The term “Free Music” is not intended to suggest that there is anything random occurring in the examples we will study, or in any music. In fact, this course works from the premise that that “Free Music” is searching for new ways to improvise by *not* focusing primarily on harmony, but still maintaining a high degree of structure and technical rigor. This course will show that by using a **nonlinear and rhizomatic overview**, it is possible to have access to stylistic elements, musical devices, and aesthetic frameworks that are out of reach to those with a linear perspective, or whose focus is fixed on harmony as their primary musical device.

Additionally, this course will show students how the properties of free music have been applied over the past decades and how we can continue to use them in new and creative ways. The main goal of this course is to increase the repertoire of each player and to enable them to perform completely improvised music with anyone while having the ability to instantly adjust to the particulars of the situation, while at the same time investigating how students can include this material in their arsenal of improvisational and performance techniques.

This 13-week course will be part lecture and part workshop. Students will be expected to play in various sized groups, and unaccompanied solos. Expect about 50 percent lecture/discussion and 50 percent playing. There is a good possibility that this syllabus will be taken out of the scheduled order, or accelerated or slowed down as the instructor sees fit.

### **Syllabus**

#### **Week 1: Introduction to the course “The Properties of Free Music”**

Counterpoint — Basic Groupings of Pulsation —Basic Contrapuntal Motions

Interaction                      Structure/Chaos

Analysis / Improvising / Performing for **Week 2**

“Free”    “For Danny P., Summer 2016”

## **Weeks 2, 3, 4 and 5: Melodic Structure, Pulse and Form; Further Interaction**

Further Scales, Neueme-shapes, Dissonation, Heterophony

## **Weeks 6 & 7: *Manifesto***

**Approach. Development of Technique, Platform, Aesthetics and Community.** We will examine the way in which Free Music musicians consider and present aesthetic values to support their approach and the myriad of aesthetic values that are at work in music that can be classified under the “Free Music” heading. We will pay particular attention to the analysis and demonstration of the particulars of Synthesis, Interpretation and Invention.

**Week 7 Assignment:** Prepare a short paper “Manifesto” (300-600 words) about your own idea of your current approach. Include a statement of your current aesthetic posture and how you render it in technique.

## **Week 8: Approaching the music of Ornette Coleman**

Harmolodics and Motivic-Chain Association

*Architecture In Motion* - Ornette Coleman YouTube <https://youtu.be/FutdXQkBVko>

*Dialing Up Ornette* Bill Shoemaker

<http://www.pointofdeparture.org/archives/PoD-9/PoD9TheTurnaround.html>

## **Week 9: Approaching the music of Cecil Taylor**

*Unit Structures* and solo piano, various

We will watch highlights from the video “*All the notes.*”

<http://www.medicivt.com/en/documentaries/cecil-taylor-all-the-notes-christopher-felver/>

## **Week 10: Approaching the music of Anthony Braxton**

Tri-Axiom Theory

*What I call a sound*, Anthony Braxton’s *Synaesthetic Ideal and Notations for Improvisers*, by

Graham Lock <http://www.criticalimprov.com/article/view/462/992>

<http://www.restructures.net/index.html>

## **Week 11: European Free Improvisation.**

<http://www.efi.group.shef.ac.uk/>

## **Week 12: Melodic Structure, Pulse and Form REVISITED!**

## **Week 13: FINAL EXAM.**

Updated *Manifesto* due in class.

Student performances in class.

Students should demonstrate adherence to updated *Manifesto* during performances

## **EVALUATION**

### **Students will be evaluated based on:**

- Attendance and Participation in class discussion 20%
- Ability to play the material on their instruments 30%
- Completion of assigned work 30%
- Final class performance 20%

Please note: Playing the material will mostly be evaluated on the demonstrated understanding of the technical material derived from the methodologies studied in the course. “Quality” and “Artistry” will also be considered, but to a lesser extent.

Due to the 50% in-class performance element of this class all students are expected to attend every week. More than three absences will result in a failing grade.

Homework assignments must be prepared before the beginning of class.

Excessive tardiness will result in a deduction on your grade—we will not wait for late students.

Please show respect for the material, the instructor, and your fellow students.

Students are required to present original work that meets the standard of the assigned material. Considering that we will be listening to specific material and using it as a point of reference for assignments it is imperative that your work should be an *interpretation* of that work and not a copy.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

### **ON RESERVE AT BAKALAR LIBRARY:**

*Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns* by Nicolas Slonimsky, MT 45 .S55

### **Audio Recordings — two initial salvos; take notes!**

#### **Listening for Sept.13, 2017:**

Ornette Coleman “Lonely Woman” “Chronology” “Free Jazz” (double quartet)

Cecil Taylor “Steps”, “Enter Evening (soft line structure)

John Coltrane “Leo”

Sun Ra “Calling Planet Earth”

Albert Ayler “Ghosts”

#### **Listening for Sept.20, 2017:**

Jimmy Giuffre 3 from *Free Fall* --- “Spasmodic” “Propulsion” “The Five Ways”

Anthony Braxton *Composition 105b*

Derek Bailey (anything!)

Anthony Braxton + Derek Bailey - *The First Set: Area 1*

Misha Mengelberg & Han Bennink *Duo - Improvisation*

## **Other Text Materials available on the web**

*Wadada Leo Smith A vital life force*, Lyn Horton

<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/wadada-leo-smith-a-vital-life-force-wadada-leo-smith-by-lyn-horton.php>

*John Butcher*, Interview by Dan Warburton

<http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/interviews/butcher.html>

## **Web Articles, video and recorded interviews.**

*Derek Bailey interview with Henry Kaiser KPFA 2-7-87*

<https://youtu.be/iO5Deulh8JA>

*Evan Parker Interview by Dan Warburton*

<http://www.paristransatlantic.com/magazine/interviews/parker.html>

### **Regarding Academic Honesty** (from the Conservatory Catalog):

Academic integrity is critical to the school's ability to realize its educational mission, as effective teaching and learning are dependent upon the fair and equitable assessment of student achievement. Academic dishonesty is not only wrong from a moral and ethical standpoint, it also undermines the very process of education. It is a breach of trust which devalues the efforts of other students as well as instructors, distorts the institution's educational standards, threatens the school's reputation, and ultimately, calls into question the value of the degrees and diplomas it confers. Longy School of Music of Bard College expects its students to adhere to high standards of academic integrity and takes very seriously violations of these standards, regardless of whether they are committed deliberately or out of ignorance.

### **Regarding Incompletes** (from the Conservatory Catalog):

All coursework must be completed by the last day of the Examination Period of each semester. Students may formally petition their instructor to receive a grade of Incomplete. This grade may be recorded only when a student is unable to complete primary course requirements on time due to illness or other compelling circumstances. An Incomplete may not be given primarily to allow a student to raise his or her grade to a passing grade for the course, ensemble, or lessons in question. Incomplete work must be remedied by the end of the subsequent semester. An "F" will be recorded for courses remaining incomplete after one semester or after petitioned extensions have expired.