**American Studies 101:**

**Classical Music and American Mass Culture Between the World Wars**

MW, 4:00 p.m.—6:00 p.m.

Valley Life Sciences 2038

Dr. David H. Miller

Morrison Hall 226

Office hours MW 2–3:30 or by appointment

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**Course description:**

Classical music was big business in the United States in the years preceding the First World War, but not for American composers. As audiences flocked to performances of music by European composers, the most famous work of "American" classical music was not American at all: Czech composer Antonín Dvořák's New World Symphony. But all that would soon change. Over the course of the 1920s and 30s, a new wave of composers redefined what American classical music could be by responding to the distinctly American experiences of their time. Black composers like Florence Price and William Grant Still blended symphonic forms with blues and spirituals. “Ultra-modern” composers like Ruth Crawford Seeger and (UC Berkeley alum) Henry Cowell wrote radical music to match their increasingly radical politics. And Aaron Copland crafted what would become known as a quintessentially American sound, but only after drawing inspiration from the folk-music-infused works of Mexican composer Carlos Chávez.

While all of these composers reached out to audiences by incorporating popular music idioms and/or addressing topical issues, this era also marks the beginning of classical music’s diminished role within mainstream American culture. A century later, classical music is arguably less popular in the United States than ever before. By considering the political, social, and cultural forces that shaped these composers' music, we will seek to better understand this seeming paradox, and to explore divergent visions of America's past, present, and future. No prior knowledge of classical music or music notation is required.

**Texts:**

You are not required to purchase any texts for this course. All readings will be made available on the course website unless otherwise noted. All audio and video recordings for the semester can be found on the course YouTube playlist: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCjLxVmAF7FaRSkzDYkxtnqDcbaQvWvKl>.

**Course outline:**

* Weeks 1–3: Introduction: Americanness, the mainstream, and modernism
* Weeks 4­–5: The Great Migration
* Weeks 6–8: The Roaring Twenties/The Jazz Age
* Week 9: MID-SEMESTER INTERLUDE (see below)
* Weeks 10–13: The Great Depression/The New Deal
* Week 14: THANKSGIVING (NO CLASS)
* Weeks 15–16: WRAP-UP/REVIEW/PRESENTATIONS

**Tentative repertoire list:**

* Antonin Dvořák—Symphony No. 9, “From the New World”
* Amy Beach—Symphony No. 1
* Edward MacDowell—“From an Indian Lodge,” from *Woodland Sketches* and “Indian Idyl,” from *New England Idyls*
* Charles Ives—“The Alcotts,” from Piano Sonata No. 2, “Concord Sonata” and “Putnam’s Camp,” from *Three Places in New England*
* Henry Cowell—*Dynamic Motion* and *The Voice of Lir*
* Florence Price—Symphony No. 1 and Piano Concerto No. 1
* William Grant Still—*And They Lynched Him On A Tree*
* George Gershwin—*Rhapsody in Blue* and *Porgy and Bess*
* James P. Johnson—*Yamekraw (A Negro Rhapsody)*
* Duke Ellington—*Symphony in Black: A Rhapsody of Negro Life*
* Ruth Crawford Seeger—*Two Ricercari*
* Carlos Chávez—*Sinfonía india*
* Aaron Copland—*Appalachian Spring*

**Course requirements and grading:**

1. **Attendance, participation, and engagement: 25%**—See below for details of my attendance policy. “Participation” and “engagement” refer only to contributing to class discussions, but also to active listening, attending office hours, corresponding with me via email, etc.
2. **Critical Writing Assignments (3): 25%**—Due at the beginning of class on Monday, September 13, Monday, October 11 and Monday, November 8.
3. **Term paper prospectus and annotated bibliography: 10%**—Due Wednesday, October 27
4. **Term paper presentation: 5%**—Presentations will be held during review week, on Monday, December 6 and Wednesday, December 8.
5. **First draft of term paper: 15%**—Due Monday, November 22
6. **Second draft of term paper: 20%**—Due Wednesday, December 15

There are no exams or quizzes in this course.

**Important dates:**

* *Monday, September 6*: NO CLASS (Labor Day)
* *Wednesday, September 8*: Class held in Morrison Hall 128 for live performance by pianist Jacqueline Chew of music by Ives and Cowell
* *Monday, September 13*: Critical Writing Assignment #1 due
* *Wednesday, September 15*: In-class Zoom session with pianist Michelle Cann
* *Monday, September 27*: Dr. Christine Palmer guest lecture
* *Wednesday, October 6*: *Porgy and Bess* film screening during/after class (details TBA)
* *Monday, October 11*: Critical Writing Assignment #2 due
* *Wednesday, October 20* and *Monday, October 25*: NO CLASS (Dr. Miller away)
* *Wednesday, October 27*: Term paper prospectus and annotated bibliography due by the beginning of class.
* *Monday, November 8*: Critical Writing Assignment #3 due
* *Thursday, November 18 at 7:30 p.m.*: San Francisco Symphony concert, with music William Grant Still and Aaron Copland (*tentative, details TBA*, *optional but recommended!*)
* *Monday, November 22*: NO CLASS—First draft of term paper due.
* *Monday, December 6* and *Wednesday, December 8*: Final paper presentations
* *Wednesday, December 15*: Second draft of term paper due.

**Attendance, extension, and late work policies:**

Each student is permitted 2 unexcused absences over the course of the semester. Further unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your final grade. That being said, I tend to be generous with excused absences, especially when given advance notice. *If there is a legitimate reason you cannot attend class (including but not limited to illness, mental health challenges, family commitments, job interviews, and travel for work or sports), please let me know at least a few days in advance. I will very likely grant you an excused absence, and your grade will not suffer as a result.*

Along similar lines, *I am very happy to grant extensions when given appropriate notice*. If an extension of a day or two would make your life significantly easier (for example, if you have an exam in another class on the same day an assignment for our class is due), please do not hesitate to contact me. Assignments submitted late without an extension will result in a lowered grade, with assignments submitted more than a few days late resulting in a zero unless a prior arrangement has been made.

**How to listen to music for this course:**

This course will introduce you to a lot of great music, but you can’t get to know it if you don’t listen to it! Here are some tips for making the most out of your listening:

1. Listen to each assigned song/work a minimum of three times, and on at least two different days—of course, it is always helpful to listen more than that!
2. Engage in “active” listening, setting aside time to listen without distractions. Follow along with the lyrics or score as appropriate to focus your listening.
3. While I generally recommend “active” listening, “passive” listening (that is, having the music on in the background) can also be helpful, so consider listening to the class playlist as you cook, exercise, or drive your car.

**A note on writing, proofreading, and citations:**

Please make every effort to ensure that your writing is clearly organized and free of typos. Before handing in any piece of writing, take a few moments to proofread what you have written. In addition, note that we will be using the Chicago Manual of Style in this course to format citations and references to musical works. For further details on this, please take a few moments to read “Music Writing Style Guide” (posted in the “Files” section of the course website) prior to completing your first writing assignment.

**Technology policy:**

Laptops and tablets are permitted in class, and you should plan to bring one of these devices with you to every class so that you can refer to the assigned readings (if you prefer, you could also print out hard copies of the readings). Please do your best to use your device only for this purpose and for note-taking during class.

**Disability accommodations:**

Students with disabilities that affect their ability to participate fully in class or to meet all course requirements are encouraged to notify me so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged. Further information is available from the Disabled Students’ Program website at

<http://dsp.berkeley.edu>.

**Academic misconduct and plagiarism:**

Any instance of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will result in a referral to the Office of Student Conduct. According to the Berkeley Campus Code of Conduct, “Plagiarism includes use of intellectual material produced by another person without acknowledging its source.” Furthermore, “All persons engaged in research at the University are responsible for adhering to the highest standards of intellectual honesty and integrity in research. This statement is available at the website on official campus policies and procedures at <http://campuspol.chance.berkeley.edu/index.cfm>, under the keyword “plagiarism.”