Music 3: Sacred Sound
—Jeffers Engelhardt

Course Information

Arms Music Center 212
Tuesday, Thursday 10:00-11:20

Assistant Professor Jeffers Engelhardt
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Course Description

Sacred Sound examines the relationship between music and religion in broad comparative perspective. In the context of major world religions, new religious movements, and traditional spiritual practices, we will address fundamental issues concerning sacred sound: How does music enable and enhance the ritual process? How is sound sacred and what are its affects? What happens as sacred sound circulates globally among diverse communities of listeners and in secular spaces? Listening, reading, and discussion will include Sufi music from Pakistan, Haitian Vodou, the songs of Ugandan Jews, Orthodox Christian hymns from Estonia, Islamic popular music from Malaysia, Chinese Buddhist chant, spirit possession music from Bali, and the music of Korean Shamans. We will also benefit from visiting performers and the sacred sounds of religious communities in and around Amherst.

This semester, you will engage literature in ethnomusicology, anthropology, religious studies, and ritual studies. You will learn to identify sacred sounds, compare them to one another, and explain their significance in a critical manner. Finally, you will become fluent in speaking and writing about sacred sound, its embeddedness in ritual and systems of belief, and its place in the world.

In Weeks 1-3, we will explore themes and issues central to the study of sacred sound. This part of the course will culminate with you writing a statement paper. In your statement paper, you will draw on our readings, listenings, discussions, and encounters with sacred sound in order to define it and articulate the problems and possibilities of studying religious musics. Your statement paper is a provisional attempt at understanding sacred sound. You will want to be in dialogue with it and revise your thinking as the course progresses.

In Weeks 4-14, we will explore the sacred sounds of global religions and spiritual practices. Each unit will begin with you doing a fair amount of background reading,
listening, and watching to familiarize yourself with the historical origins and contemporary beliefs of each tradition while paying particular attention to the status of sound. Building on this, you will write a brief critical response to one or more bits of scripture or doctrine dealing with music and sacred sound. You will have a brief listening quiz in each unit and discuss one or two scholarly articles as well. Finally, each unit will culminate with a discussion/demonstration led by a distinguished visitor who is intimately involved with the practice, teaching, and tradition of the sacred sounds of their tradition. In preparation for each visit, you will come up with a question you have about the practice and experience of sacred sound within a given tradition and post it on the course website. After each visit, you will write a short response piece. In each of the units, you will want to relate the themes and issues raised in the first weeks of the course to the sacred sounds you encounter in order to broaden our comparative experience.

In Week 15, we will hear final project presentations. Each participant will contribute media (a track or video) and a brief description to an online compilation that we will jointly produce. Your contribution will come from the larger final project that you will submit at the end of exam period. Your final project will be original research that makes a critical contribution to the themes and issues of the course by shedding new light on and asking new questions about the phenomenon of sacred sound.

Throughout the semester, you will be expected to contribute to the collaborative course blog and participate in social bookmarking as well.

All weekly readings and listenings that are not in texts required for purchase will be accessible as .pdfs and .mp3s on the course website.

**Course Requirements and Expectations**

Your work in this course will be challenging, rewarding, and varied. I will hand out guidelines and rubrics for all the work you will do in order to make my expectations and standards for evaluation completely clear. Needless to say, preparation for, attendance at, and active participation in every class meeting is essential. No unexcused absences are permitted. Graded in-class work cannot be made up; no exceptions. In order for an absence to be excused due to illness or an exceptional and unavoidable personal conflict, you must be in touch with me well beforehand. An email sent after an absence is polite, but it does not excuse that absence. All assignments must be submitted to me as an email attachment in .doc or .pdf format or posted on the website by their due date. I do not accept hard copies. Finally, I welcome and encourage you to speak with me at any time about any aspect of the course. Remember: the more you give to this course, the more I can give to you individually and as a group; the more you speak and listen critically and creatively, the more you will learn.

Our work in this course will be done according to Amherst College’s Statement of Intellectual Responsibility:

<https://cms.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/policiesprocedures/sir>
Here are dates to keep in mind:

Performance by Nektarios S. Antoniou and Schola Cantorum, Friday February 13 at 8:00

Statement paper due Tuesday, February 17 at 8:00

For the first Tuesday of each unit: background readings
For the first Thursday of each unit: brief critical responses due Wednesday at 8:00
For the second Tuesday of each unit: listening quiz, article discussion
For the second Thursday of each unit: questions for guest due Wednesday at 12:00
Your short response pieces are due the Monday after each unit concludes at 8:00

Final project proposal: Monday, March 30 at 8:00

Compilation contribution and description: Monday, April 27 at 8:00

Final project presentations: May 5 and May 7 in class

Final project: Friday, May 15 at 12:00

Your grade will be determined as follows:

Participation in class, including course blog and social bookmarking—15%
Statement paper—15%
Listening quizzes—15%
Short writing assignments and questions—15%
Short response pieces—15%
Final project presentation and compilation contribution—5%
Final project—20%

**COURSE TEXTS** (available at Amherst Books)


**Course Website**

<https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/departments/courses/0809S/MUSI/MUSI-03-0809S>

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**Week 1: Themes and Issues I**

*Required reading throughout Weeks 1-3*


*Required reading for Thursday*


*Listening*

Themes and issues mp3s and listening guide

*Deep Listeners CD*

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**Week 2: Themes and Issues II**

*Required reading throughout Weeks 1-3*


*Required reading for Tuesday*


Additional reading


Listening

Themes and issues mp3s and listening guide

Deep Listeners CD

Film

Work and Pray: Living the Psalms with the Nuns of Regina Laudis (Yale Institute of Sacred Music, 2004)

Sacred Steel: The Steel Guitar Tradition of the House of God Churches (Arhoolie Foundation, 2001)

**Week 3: Themes and Issues III**

**Performance by Nektarios S. Antoniou and Schola Cantorum, Friday at 8:00**

Required reading throughout Weeks 1-3


Required reading for Tuesday


Listening

Themes and issues mp3s and listening guide

Deep Listeners CD

**Week 4: Judaism (class on February 19 will be rescheduled)**

**Statement paper due Tuesday at 8:00**

Required reading for Tuesday


**Additional reading**


**Listening**

Judaism mp3s and listening guide

**Film**

*Chants de sable et d’étoiles* (Éditions Montparnasse, 1999)
WEEK 5: JUDAISM

LISTENING QUIZ TUESDAY IN CLASS

GUESTS ON THURSDAY: BRUCE SELTZER AND DAVID BAUER

Required reading for Tuesday


Listening

Judaism mp3s and listening guide

Abayudaya CD

Film

Chants de sable et d'etoiles (Éditions Montparnasse, 1999)

WEEK 6: CHRISTIANITY

SHORT RESPONSE DUE MONDAY AT 8:00

Required reading for Tuesday


Additional reading


**Listening**

Christianity mp3s and listening guide

**Film**

*Le silence des anges: Terres et voix de l'Orient orthodoxe* (Éditions Montparnasse, 1999)

**WEEK 7: CHRISTIANITY**

**LISTENING QUIZ TUESDAY IN CLASS**

**GUEST ON THURSDAY: SARAH BUTEUX**

*Required reading for Tuesday*


**Listening**

Christianity mp3s and listening guide

**Film**

*Le silence des anges: Terres et voix de l'Orient orthodoxe* (Éditions Montparnasse, 1999)

**WEEK 8: BREAK!**
WEEK 9: ISLAM

SHORT RESPONSE DUE MONDAY AT 8:00

Required reading for Tuesday


Additional reading


Listening

Islam mp3s and listening guide

Film

Mille et une voix, la musique d’Islam. A Thousand and One Voices: The Music of Islam
WEEK 10: ISLAM

FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE MONDAY AT 8:00

LISTENING QUIZ TUESDAY IN CLASS

GUEST ON THURSDAY: MOHAMMED ABDELAAL

Required reading for Tuesday


Listening

Islam mp3s and listening guide

Film


WEEK 11: HINDUISM

SHORT RESPONSE DUE MONDAY AT 8:00

Required reading for Tuesday


Additional reading


**Listening**

Hinduism mp3s and listening guide

**WEEK 12: HINDUISM**

**LISTENING QUIZ TUESDAY IN CLASS**

**GUEST ON THURSDAY: INDIRA VISWANATHAN PETERSON**

**Required reading**


**Additional reading**


**Listening**

Hinduism mp3s and listening guide

**WEEK 13: BUDDHISM**

**SHORT RESPONSE DUE MONDAY AT 8:00**

**Required reading for Tuesday**


Additional reading


Listening

Buddhism mp3s and listening guide

Film

Tantras of Gyüto: Sacred Rituals of Tibet (Sheldon Rochlin and Mark Elliot, 1985)

WEEK 14: BUDDHISM

Compilation contribution and description due Monday at 8:00

Listening quiz Tuesday in class

Guest on Thursday: Mark Hart

Required reading for Tuesday


Additional reading

Listening

Buddhism mp3s and listening guide

**WEEK 15: COMPILATION PRESENTATIONS!**

**SHORT RESPONSE DUE MONDAY AT 8:00**

**FINAL PROJECT DUE FRIDAY, MAY 15 AT 12:00 PM**