

WHAT UNITES US: MUSIC AS HUMAN EXPRESSION

HONR 193 Spring 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION



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Office Location: UCA 305A

Office Hours: MW 2-3PM



I provide a safe space for all my students, where conversations are confidential and take place without judgment. As a Safe Zone Ally, I can help you connect with resources on campus to address problems you may face that interfere with your academic and social success on campus as it relates to issues surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Humans use expressive activities and creative outlets for a variety of purposes, including building community and a sense of individual identity, expressing happiness or grief, and influencing political and social change. Listening to and creating music has been a function of human expression, community-building, and validating a sense of identity and belonging for as long as we have recorded history. This course will direct students to engage with music on a level deeper beyond noticing whether something is enjoyable or not. Listening to music beyond the superficial aesthetic requires a knowledge of technical musical components in addition to those that are extra-musical – what you, as a listener, experience that is not the actual sound. Through writing, presenting, and discussing, this course encourages students to consider what associations or memories they have with types of music, to explore how other cultures express these concepts, and to consider how that experience connects each of them with other humans around the planet.

Required Text

1. All required reading materials will be provided by the instructor and posted on Canvas.

Suggested Text

2. Lipson, Charles. *Cite Right*. Third edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.
This text is a well-respected guide to referencing Chicago, MLA, APA, CSE, ACS, and AMA formats, among others. Within it, you are provided information to help you learn the specific citation styles and practices you will need throughout your academic career.

Canvas Platform

Class materials, homework assignments, discussion assignments, oral presentation, research paper, grades, and other information critical to your success in this course are located on Canvas – You will need to use this frequently. To avoid having to dig for information within the menus, our home page is designed to provide quick access to all content delivered within the modules.

ASSIGNMENTS

Class Participation

Attendance is mandatory. Honors seminars are intended to assist student competencies in critical thinking; creativity and problem solving; interdisciplinary learning integrated with global &/or cultural viewpoints and professionalism, interpersonal skills, & emotional intelligence. For this to happen, students need to be present and receptive to interacting with one another. Please come prepared to share and to listen. Any absences must have prior approval by the instructor, and unexcused absences incur zero points for that day. Participation is graded bi-weekly throughout the semester according to the criteria in the Participation Rubric (visible on Canvas). If you have six (6) or more unexcused absences during the semester, you will fail the course, regardless of your current grade or scores on papers and discussions.

Discussion Assignments

Discussion (informal writing assignments) will be submitted on discussion response papers I have created to guide our in-class analyses and chats about assigned reading material. I will provide physical copies of these. Informal writing assignments like these are collectively worth 25% of your final grade. All prompts are found in Canvas, and students are expected to process assigned reading

material, make discussion points supporting with cited examples from readings, and bring them to class for group discussion. I will collect everyone's talking points that day for grade entry.

This assignment addresses the University Honors Program competencies of critical thinking; creativity and problem solving; and professionalism, interpersonal skills, & emotional intelligence.

Oral Presentation

Oral communication skills are practiced and mastered through discussions of written assignments on the readings and individual persuasive speeches. Furthermore, this course is designed to be a discussion-based seminar, thereby fostering more opportunities for students to participate in both small group and class discussions. The seminar teaches persuasive speaking and requires a formal persuasive speech 7-8 minutes in length, complete with full sentence outline and bibliography. Beginning in **Week 14**, students will present a persuasive speech elaborating on a musical example of their choice, **taken from research intended to be used for their end-of-semester paper**. Each speaker will analyze and present up to 90-seconds of one song or work that serves the purpose they have chosen, and they will persuade the class that your example epitomizes the expression of that specific component of humanity. These arguments will contain thorough technical analyses of the song, include information regarding the culture's musical trends and how they reflect human experiences within their music, and have the goal of convincing the audience that their song choice reflects its use. **Students will choose a topic with instructor's approval in Week 7.**

This assignment addresses the University Honors Program competencies of critical thinking; interdisciplinary learning integrated with global &/or cultural viewpoints; and professionalism, interpersonal skills, & emotional intelligence.

Peer Evaluation

For formal writing assignments, students will collaborate with peers via pre-assigned groups in Canvas to edit and comment upon each other's papers one week prior to each due date. For speeches, each student will be evaluated by their classmates as assigned by the professor, and each student is expected to complete the grading rubric during that speech. Feedback will be given directly to the speaker at the end of class on their presentation day.

Written Assignments

This course includes two written assignments (5-6 pages plus a bibliography). Each written assignment requires a one-paragraph topic description, complete with an underlined thesis to be submitted at least two weeks before the deadline. You will receive feedback on your topic of choice, the variety and merit of your sources, and the quality of your writing in the annotations. In the first of these two assignments (due in **Week 6**), you will be asked to attend a live performance and comment on the live music experience, using course material and other sources to support your observations. Guidelines, formatting requirements, and the grading rubric will be made available to you in advance via Canvas.

In the second of these assignments (due in **Week 10**), you will be asked to choose one cohort (including, but not limited to: women, minorities, BIPOC, religious, LGBTQIA2S+, persons with disabilities, and any geographic/regional communities and cultures) and explore how that cohort expresses identity through their musical practices. The cohort you choose can be one with which you feel a closeness or kinship, or it can be one about which you are curious. Guidelines, formatting requirements, and the grading rubric will be made available to you in advance via Canvas.

Research Paper

For the final paper (8-10 pages plus a bibliography), due during Finals Week, you will focus on one function of music (celebration, dancing, history preservation, etc.) and explore the similarities and differences in how two distinctive cultures (at least one culture that is unfamiliar to you) express this function through sound. You are expected to use technical musical terminology to describe the musical characteristics of the examples you choose and provide historical context in your discussion. A one-page proposal for this paper, accompanied by an annotated bibliography, will be due at the end of Week 10. Guidelines, formatting requirements, and the grading rubric will be made available to you in advance.

EVALUATION

Seminar Assignment	Percentage
Participation	15%
Discussion/Informal Writing Assignments	25%
Formal Writing Assignments (2)	15%
Final Research Paper (1)	25%
Formal Speech/Oral Presentation (1)	20%
Total	100%

Grade distribution:

A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	D	F
> 96.5%	96.4 – 92.5	92.4 – 89.5	89.4 – 86.5	86.4 – 82.5	82.4 – 79.5	79.4 – 76.5	74.5 – 69.5	69.4 – 59.5	< 59.0

Incomplete

The grade of “I” is a temporary grade awarded to indicate that *for reasons beyond your control or that you could not have reasonably anticipated*, you are unable to complete the requirements for the course. When a professor assigns an “I,” we must specify in writing the requirements you shall fulfill to complete the course. After one year, or at the end of the semester in which you graduate (whichever comes first), an “incomplete” grade will automatically change to an “F” unless your work has been completed and the grade change submitted. You must be in good academic standing in the class to receive an incomplete. (CSU Faculty Council policy)

COURSE POLICIES

Etiquette

I will gladly honor your request to address you by an **alternate name or gender pronoun**. Please advise me of this immediately so that I may make appropriate changes to my records, and we can work together to make sure RamWeb (and Canvas, by extension) is updated for future professors.

Unless being used for an activity or for an official accommodation, I prohibit the use of screens (smart phones, tablets, laptops, etc.) during class. Students who fail to adhere to these standards will receive both verbal and written requests before we schedule a meeting together with the Honors College.

I have both a personal and professional responsibility to treat all students with understanding, dignity, and respect, to guide discussions, and set reasonable limits on the way we express our opinions, and I expect anyone participating in class to do the same. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, and nationalities.

Late Work

You are given **one free late submission** for any assignment except the speech and final paper. Please write “LATE PASS” in the comments section of the assignment you need to submit late. *All other late work will receive a 25% deduction per day.* No other late work will be accepted for full credit unless an arrangement has been made with the instructor *at least twenty-four hours prior* to the due date or a valid doctor’s note or CSU-sanctioned excuse letter is presented.

Research and Writing Resources

The CSU Writing Center is an excellent resource to support the development of your writing skills throughout your college career. While students are not required to access services, you are strongly encouraged to seek consultation on your writing projects required for this course. In addition to contact information, there are [useful resources available on their website, linked here](#). Additionally, the Morgan Library reference librarians can direct you to books and articles for the research paper and the oral presentation. I recommend contacting Rob Sica, Social Sciences and Humanities Liaison (Morgan Library 154, rob.sica@colostate.edu).

Absence Policy

If you are ill or unable to attend class, you must contact the instructor in advance. It is your responsibility to contact a classmate to get information discussed in class. It is good practice to always have the phone number and email address of at least two students in your class. This is a difficult course with a demanding workload and too many classes missed will severely hinder your progress. If you are absent for more than three weeks due to illness or any other reason, it is advisable for you to take the course at another time.

Accommodations for Disabilities

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires Colorado State University to provide academic adjustments or accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students seeking academic adjustment or accommodations must self-identify with the Student Disability Center (SDC). You may call for an appointment at (970) 491-6385, [email the SDC](#), or stop in at room 121 in the TILT building. After meeting with SDC staff, and based on their recommendations, students will receive an accommodations letter which is to be shared with professors to communicate appropriate accommodations.

Academic and Professional Honesty Policy

This course adheres to the Academic Integrity Policy of the Colorado State University General Catalog {Page 7} and the Student Conduct Code. Honors students enrolled in this course are held to high standards of integrity, which is expected within all assignments for this course. Students will be required to make an honor pledge to complete this course, published in our Canvas course shell. For more information about academic integrity, please [visit this page on the CSU website](#).

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

All media and readings will be available in Canvas.

WEEK	CONTENT AND REMINDERS
1 Jan 20, 22 <i>Foundations for Analytical Listening</i>	Read your Syllabus and complete the Syllabus Quiz in Canvas. Don't forget, your assigned readings begin this week. See Canvas for details and PDFs. This will continue throughout the semester.
2 Jan 27, 29 <i>What is Music?</i>	Music Cognition and Auditory Stream Separation
3 Feb 3, 5 <i>How Music Moves Us</i>	Writing Assignment 1 concert choice due Thursday.
4 Feb 10, 12 <i>Social Contexts</i>	Work on your Research Paper Proposal this week (due Feb 19). Begin working on your Writing Assignment 1 if you have not yet already. Drafts for peer editing are due in one week.
5 Feb 17, 19 <i>Community & Identity</i>	Your Research Paper Proposal is due by the end of the day on Thursday.
6 Feb 24, 26 <i>Sacred Expression</i>	Your Speech Topic Proposal is due in two weeks.

7 March 3 <i>Music as Medicine</i>	Writing Assignment 1 is due by the end of the day this Tuesday. NO CLASS MARCH 5.
8 Mar 10, 12 <i>Perception & Emotions</i>	Your Speech Topic Proposal is due by the end of the day on Thursday. <i>HAPPY SPRING BREAK NEXT WEEK!</i>
9 Mar 24, 26 <i>Searching for Extremes</i>	Writing Assignment 2 is due next week.
10 Mar 31, Apr 2 <i>Social Awareness</i>	Writing Assignment 2 is due by the end of the day this Thursday. You should be outlining your speech at this point.
11 Apr 7, 9 <i>Calls to Battle</i>	Your speech outline needs to be turned into full sentences this week if you haven't already done this. Your Full Sentence Outline is due next week.
12 Apr 14, 16 <i>Song Covers & Sampling</i>	Your Full Sentence Outline is due by the end of the day on Thursday.
13 Apr 21, 23 <i>Consumer Behavior</i>	Should you want comments on your paper before submitting your final draft, submit to me via email by 4/28 for review. Expect a 1-week turnaround.
14 Apr 28, 30 <i>Formal Speeches</i>	<i>Formal Persuasive Speeches!</i> Editing of your papers should happen this week.
15 May 5, 7 <i>Formal Speeches</i>	<i>Formal Persuasive Speeches!</i> Your papers should be in their final drafts.
Finals	Research Paper due <i>before</i> 5/11 at 11:59PM