



# *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

## *Syllabus*

### *Postmodernism and the Music of the Present - 23922*

*Last update 22-10-2017*

*HU Credits: 2*

*Degree/Cycle: 2nd degree (Master)*

*Responsible Department: musicology*

*Academic year: 0*

*Semester: 1st Semester*

*Teaching Languages: Hebrew*

*Campus: Mt. Scopus*

*Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Assaf Shelleg*

*Coordinator Email: [shelleg.assaf@mail.huji.ac.il](mailto:shelleg.assaf@mail.huji.ac.il)*

*Coordinator Office Hours: Tuesdays (by appointment)*

*Teaching Staff:*

---

Dr. Assaf Shelleg

Course/Module description:

"Postmodernism and the Music of the Present" is an attempt to map the compositional approaches in Art music from the 1970s to the early 2010s using recent scholarly literature pertaining to both semiotic analysis and cultural historical perspectives. The seminar wishes to reexamine phenomena labeled as "postmodern" and acquire a new balance in which cultural theories do not substitute for compositional practices, since it is the latter that elucidate why postmodernism is discussed today in past tense. Doing so we would also survey the cultural, technological, political and fiscal key variables that affect contemporary compositional writing, in addition to composer's own aesthetic and semiotic choices (as these tend to collapse any taxonomy).

The first five sessions of the seminar will deal with the contexts and practices of compositional attitudes labeled "postmodern" so as to order to better understand the way these attitudes have proliferated unrecognizably and non-differentially after 1989.

To do so we will read Gloag and Rutherford-Johnson's books in their entirety alongside additional musicological literature.

Kenneth Gloag, *Postmodernism in Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Tim Rutherford-Johnson, *Music after the Fall: Modern Composition and Culture since 1989* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017)

Course/Module aims:

To familiarize students with late modernist developments, including the post-postmodernist discourse, while developing an alternative vocabulary for contemporary music and its place in our cultural and political discourse.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

To map the myriad compositional aesthetics of the last fifty years and to be able to formulate articulate texts on these topics.

Attendance requirements(%):

90%

---

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: lecture, class discussion, and students' referats.

Course/Module Content:

1. Introducing postmodernism
2. Postmodern musicology – postmodern music
3. From anti-modernism to postmodern nostalgia
4. The challenge of the past
5. The music of George Rochberg: from modern serialism to postmodern pastiche
6. The music of John Zorn: 'a postmodernism of resistance'
7. Blurring the boundaries
8. The music of Sofia Gubaidulina (and others): 'as if the history of music were at an end'
9. Repetitions and revisions: from bebop to hip hop
10. 1989 and After
11. Mediation and the Marketplace
12. Permission: Freedom, Choice, and the Body
13. Fluidity: Digital Translations, Displacements, and Journeys
14. Mobility: Worldwide Flows, Networks, and Archipelagos
15. Superabundance: Spectacle, Scale, and Excess
16. Loss: Ruins, Memorials, and Documents
17. Recovery: Gaps between Past and Present

Required Reading:

Kenneth Gloag, *Postmodernism in Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012)

Tim Rutherford-Johnson, *Music after the Fall: Modern Composition and Culture since 1989* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017)

Additional Reading Material:

see syllabus

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 0 %  
Presentation 0 %  
Participation in Tutorials 20 %  
Project work 0 %  
Assignments 25 %  
Reports 0 %  
Research project 55 %  
Quizzes 0 %

---

*Other 0 %*

*Additional information:*