

NOTATION OF MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE MUSIC, MUH 7411

University of Florida

Section 16C4; T, 1:55-3:50, R: 3:00-3:50

Office hours: T, R: 10:40-11:30 or by appointment

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COURSE CONCEPTS

It was once thought impossible to write sounds. Yet for a millennium, western art music has been transmitted on paper. What are the implications of writing music that once was transmitted orally/aurally? What can the earliest musical notations teach us about that music's priorities and practices and their development? How does reading original notation transform our musical understanding? How can understanding the process of notation inform your awareness of later (and all) notations – their powers, values, and limitations? We depend on written musical sources as our main window into music of other times and places. Scholarship in many disciplines has begun to understand the inadequacy of translation. What does this mean for musicians and music scholars who depend on edited (translated) music? What is lost in translation? How can we understand music on its own terms?

COURSE CONTENT

We will survey the major notational systems of plainchant, modal notation, and mensural notation. Our concern will be with understanding these systems, the music they served, the musical qualities and practices they engendered, and the scholarly thinking that surrounds them. The course prepares class members to have an adequate understanding of the notation of each of these important musical styles that will enable them to teach music history with understanding, to form a foundation for more advanced study of notation if that is desired, to consider the relationship between reading and performing music, and to consider the meaning and implications of writing.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will gain

- Experience in reading and transcribing the notation of the music of the Middle ages and Renaissance;
- An understanding of the theoretical and performance implications of notational practices and systems;
- An understanding of the relationship among theory, notational practices, performance, and musical style;
- Prepare students for more advanced study of notation.
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CLASS ACTIVITIES:

The two-hour class on Tuesdays will normally be devoted to exploring new material and concepts, discussing readings, and considering questions raised by class members. Most Thursdays will allow in-class practice, feedback, collaboration on transcriptions, and other hands-on work.

RECOMMENDED: Music writing software (Sibelius, Finale, etc.)

Skill in using music writing software will greatly ease your assignment preparation and will equip you for many professional tasks not related to this course.

LITERATURE AND TEXTBOOKS ON MUSICAL NOTATION

The literature addressing musical notation ranges from conceptual to technical, from broad in scope to highly focused. Nothing quite suits our course perfectly, so we sample from quite a few sources. The most compatible introduction and guide to understanding the music we'll study in the class is this one:

*Rastall, Richard. *The Notation of Western Music*. Leeds University Press, 1998.

Rastall's book provides a clear exposition of how to read and write all of the notations we will consider this semester as well as later ones.

Available in our library. ML431 .R27 1983

Highly recommended as an introduction:

Kelly, Thomas Forrest. *Capturing Music: The Story of Notation*. New York: Norton, 2015.

This is not a technical book or a textbook; rather “it points out the conceptual ideas behind the various technological discoveries and advances that allowed our system of music writing to evolve. . . . And second, the book situates this technology, and the music it encodes, in its cultural, artistic, and intellectual context.” (XIV) Each chapter of this highly readable and inviting book treats a problem to be solved, dwelling in the wonder and delight of each type of music and notation considered. The book addresses all of the notations we will study. If you can get your hands on it, read it ASAP.

One copy in our library ML431 .K45 2015 (will be placed on reserve)

New Grove: “Notation, Editing.” “Sources.”

Valuable overviews

The following books are out of print, but are available used or in reprints at reasonable prices.

*Rastall, Richard. *The Notation of Western Music*. Leeds University Press, 1998.

Parrish, Carl. *The Notation of Medieval Music: The Development of Notation from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Centuries*. New York: Norton, 1957, 1959.

This book does not completely cover the latest notation that we study, but it does include plainchant and modal notation.

Available in our library as a hard copy and an e-book. ML431 .P37 1959

Apel, Willi. *The Notation of Polyphonic Music*, 5th ed. Cambridge: Medieval Academy of America, 1961 (or whenever).

This book is the standard, classical text for learning notation. It covers, in some depth, tablature and ensemble notation (no plainchant) from about 1200 – 1550. It has been re-issued numerous times; the later editions are better than earlier ones.

Available in our library as a hard copy and an e-book. ML431 .A6 1961

And here’s a thorough study in French; it seems readily available from online vendors:

Colette, Marie-Noëlle, Marielle Popin, Philippe Vendrix. *Histoire de la Notation du Moyen Âge à la Renaissance*. Tours, France: Centre d’Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Minerve, 2003.

Covers the exact notation that we do in this class in three equal sections.

Plainchant

Hiley, David. *Western Plainchant: A Handbook*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993. Available as PDF: http://epub.uni-regensburg.de/25558/1/ubr12760_ocr.pdf

This is the bible of plainchant; it includes far more than you want to know right now, but download the PDF. We will read parts of it, and it has some great charts.

Atkinson, Charles M. *The Critical Nexus*. AMS Studies in Music. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Scholarly book at an advanced level; the “nexus” is tone system, mode, and notation. Available in our library as a hard copy and an e-book. ML 174 .A85 2009

Rankin, Susan. *Writing Sounds in Carolingian Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

Available in our library as a hard copy and an e-book. ML174 .R26 2018

Source readings:

Strunk’s *Source Readings in Music History*. Leo Treitler, General editor. New York: Norton, 1998.

Excerpts from primary source documents, including theoretical treatises, from all the standard periods of music history. This book is essential for musicologists and useful for anyone studying the history of music and musical thought.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS: Many of these as well as other materials may be placed on reserve in the music library.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION: Expect daily assignments; these will be the basis for class discussion about problems and techniques for representing the music. It is essential that they be completed on time.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: No academic dishonesty will be tolerated. Plagiarism is presenting the work of another as your own. Offenders will be subject to procedures and penalties as stated in the university bulletin and student handbook. **Strictly enforced!**

Students with disabilities are strongly encouraged to use the resources offered by the University of Florida Dean of Students Office to assist anyone who qualifies. To learn more, see <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/as.htm> or visit the office: Disability Resources Program, P202 Peabody Hall, Email: accessuf@dso.ufl.edu, :352-392-1261, Fax:352-392-5566, TDD:352-392-3008
Students who need extra help with writing should make use of the campus writing center. Students who use the writing center must submit all drafts of the paper, including the suggestions and revisions from the center. Information about the center is available at <http://www.at.ufl.edu/r&w/>. If you are asked to use the writing center, you will be expected to do so and to submit all drafts of the paper.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is required and essential for your success in the class. See evaluation criteria.

CLASSROOM POLICIES: Class begins promptly; come prepared, come on time, stay the whole time.

EVALUATION:

Components of evaluation for the class:

1. Attendance
2. Assignments--There is no good way to catch up, therefore, completion of daily assignments is essential. Be prepared with your questions and problems about each assignment.
 - Applied notation activities (transcription, interpretation)
 - Readings
 - Notes – key concepts; discussion points
 - Annotated bibliography
 - Portfolio—will represent all of your work for each unit
 - When graded assignments have been returned, please correct them and save them in a portfolio.
 - Annotated bibliography of assigned readings
 - Notes on readings: key concepts and discussion points
 - Assigned essays
3. Accuracy in completion of transcription homework
4. Demonstrated understanding and application of theoretical readings through class participation and assignments.
5. Final project, such as creating a fully edited scholarly or performing edition, a theoretical paper that includes analysis and transcription, or other project agreed upon by the student and the professor.

Distribution of credit:

1. Attendance and meaningful class participation: 25%
2. Daily homework: 25%
3. Portfolio submitted at the end of each of the three units: 25%
4. Final project: 25%