MUCP 6465: Time and Rhythm in Contemporary Music

Instructor: Jon Nelson, jon.nelson@unt.edu, 940-369-7531  
Time & Location: MF 2:00-3:20 PM, Music 250

Objectives: Students in this course will consider the variety of approaches to managing the temporal domain in contemporary classical compositions. We will consider various theories of the temporal aspects of modern music, survey a variety of compositional techniques that have developed in the last hundred years, analyze compositions that exhibit unique temporal/aesthetic perspectives, and evaluate a wide variety of rhythmic notational practices.

Grading:
- 33% Class Participation
- 33% Paper and Presentation
- 34% Final Composition Project

Class Participation: Regular attendance is necessary and expected. There will be regular class assignments including readings as well as listening and analysis of a number of contemporary scores. Students will be assigned to provide short presentations in class throughout the semester. Please provide advance notice of any possible absences. It is the student’s responsibility to make up any missed work and obtain information about missed materials. The value of this course is greatly enhanced with a high level of participation and discussion among its participants. You will be expected to actively engage in topics of discussion. More than two unexcused absences will result in a lower final course grade.

Paper and Presentation: Each student will choose a paper topic in consultation with the instructor. Each paper will focus on a theoretical aspect of the temporal nature of contemporary art music or will provide an analysis of the temporal aspects of a contemporary composition. During the final two weeks of class, students will provide a class presentation on their paper topic. Papers will be between 10-15 pages in length and will follow proper citation guidelines (MLA or Chicago Manual of Style).

Final Composition Project: Each student will compose a work that explores temporality in consultation with the instructor. Students are encouraged to push themselves to explore an aspect of temporality that lies outside of their comfort zone. Students will present their ongoing compositional work to the entire class (seminar style) on a periodic basis as per the course outline below.

Course Materials: Course materials from the library are found in carrel 453. Other materials will be accessed online or posted as files on the class Blackboard site.
Detailed* Course Outline:
(* reading assignments will be provided on an ongoing basis)

Jan. 23 syllabus, introductory materials

Jan. 26 modern techniques survey (part 1—Bartok, Stravinsky, Webern, etc.)

Jan. 30 modern techniques survey (part 2—Messiaen, Babbitt, etc.)
Composition Project Proposals due

Feb. 2 Survey of current contemporary theories (part 1)

2/6 Survey of current contemporary theories (part 2)

2/9 algorithmic pattern generation and transformation:
Iannis Xenakis—Psappha and Achorripsis

2/13 Mechanical Time:
Conlon Nancarrow—Study No. 41 for Player Piano
Paper Proposals due

2/16 Sound Mass and Mikropolyphonie:
Gyorgi Ligeti—Melodien
Witold Lutoslawski—Mi Parti
Krysztof Penderecki—De Natura Sonoris 1

2/20 composition project seminar day

2/23 Moment Form:
Karlheinz Stockhausen—Hymnen and Plus Minus

2/27 Temporal Multiplicity:
Charles Ives—Central Park in the Dark
Elliott Carter—Pentode and Enchanted Preludes

3/2 Interrupted Time:
John Zorn—For Your Eyes Only and Cat O’ Nine Tails

3/6 Complex Time:
Brian Ferneyhough—Time and Motion Studies, Unity Capsule

3/9 Electroacoustic Time:
Denis Smaley—Base Metals (spectromorphology)
Jean-Claude Risset—Computer Suite from Little Boy (infinite time)
Paper Draft Due
3/13 composition project seminar day

March 16-22 spring break

3/23 Interactive paradigms and live electronics:
   Pierre Boulez—dialogue de l’ombre double and Anthèmes II
   (interactivity)
   Kaija Saariaho—Lichtbogen (live electronics)

3/27 SEAMUS Conference (likely that Nelson will be out of town)

3/30 Timbre in Time:
   Gerard Grisey—Partiels

4/3 Slow Time and minimalism:
   Morton Feldman—Triadic Memories
   Steve Reich—Vermont Counterpoint

4/6 Repetition and transformation:
   Franco Donatoni—L’Ultima Sera

4/10 composition project seminar day

4/13 Developing Repetition:
   Bernhard Lang—Differenz/Weiderholung 1.2 and DW8

4/17 The Complexity tradition:
   Chaya Czernowin—Anea Crystal
   Evan Johnson—Positioning in Radiography

4/20 Notated Time (action-based notation)
   Helmuth Lachenman—Gran Torso and Pression

4/24 Alternate Concepts of Time and Structure
   Beat Furrer—Voicelessness, Phasma and Concerto for Piano and Orchestra

4/27 Odds and ends

5/1 paper presentations

5/4 paper presentations

5/11 1:30-3:30 final examination time (final composition projects are due)
Partial Bibliography:


***Note: Only some of these materials are available in the library. All available library materials are found in carrel 453.***
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