

HIS 239 Tyrants and Tunesmiths: Opera, Politics, and Society in Modern Europe

Spring Semester 2012
Tuesday and Thursday 12:45-2:05
Bucksbaum #242

COURSE INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the complex relationship between music production and political power in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in four national contexts: France, Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union. We consider specific relationships among composers, politicians, and institutions and seek to understand how such relationships helped to shape both the works themselves and the political and social realities around them in the processes of inception, performance, and reception. In class we analyze a range of sources from personal letters to staging sketches, newspaper articles, aesthetic treatises, political rants, musical scores, costumes, libretti, and poetry. The course also includes DVD viewings of several works and a field trip to the Chicago Lyric Opera's production of Verdi's *Aida*.

Course requirements are comprised of regular, active, and thoughtful participation during discussions, three brief response papers and one optional rewrite, and a final, peer-reviewed presentation on a musico-political topic of students' own devising. Please note that no particular training or expertise in music is required for this class. Curiosity is a great place to start.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Jane Fulcher, *The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (Cambridge University Press, 1987/2002) ISBN: 0521529433 - paperback

Christopher McIntosh, *The Swan King: Ludwig II of Bavaria* (Tauris Parke, 1982/2003) ISBN: 1860648924 - paperback

Solomon Volkov, *Shostakovich and Stalin: The Extraordinary Relationship Between the Great Composer and the Brutal Dictator* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2004) ISBN: 0375410821 - hardcover

Additional readings will be available on P-Web or handed out in class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Although introductory lectures provide the broad historical context for each of the units which we explore, this class otherwise is conducted like a seminar. Our meetings center around discussion of

assigned readings and viewings, and it is through the free and open exchange of ideas that we all benefit the most from the class.

You are expected to attend class regularly, except in case of dire emergency, and with the reading materials in hand. Please note that by definition every absence from class has a negative impact upon the overall quality of our conversations. Your grade will be impacted accordingly. After two uncommunicated absences you will receive an F for the participation portion of the course grade. After three uncommunicated absences you will fail the course entirely.

At the end of the France, Germany, and Soviet Union units for the class, I will circulate an essay topic for a paper of roughly five pages in length. You may **choose two of the three papers** and are expected to write a carefully-crafted response paper analyzing the material which we have covered in readings, discussions, and viewing for that unit only. You also have the **option to rewrite one** of the two papers for an averaging of the two earned grades. Finally, the Italy unit with which our field trip to the Chicago Lyric Opera is associated involves a shorter **performance review paper** required of everyone.

At the end of the semester, each student will be responsible for a **peer-reviewed presentation** of roughly 12 minutes in duration on a substantive, carefully-researched topic of your own devising, developed in consultation with me. Each presentation is expected to take into account political and social context as well as musical style and to incorporate a discussion of one or more of the broader issues raised during the semester. An annotated bibliography recording the research sources for your presentation is also required.

Finally, in this course we also enjoy the added resource of a writing mentor, Briel Waxman. You are **required** to consult with Briel on two occasions over the course of the semester: once when you are in the throes of writing your first response paper, and once as you are developing the first full draft of your annotated bibliography. For the paper, you may consult with her to flesh out your **ideas** as you think through the assignment, to hammer out an overall **structure** for the paper, to discuss the shaping of a coherent and thorough **thesis statement**, to decide on the proper and most convincing **use of evidence** for your paper, to tighten up the style and **clarity** within in your draft, or any combination of these things. As for the annotated bibliography, Briel will be a first set of eyes and advice as you pull together your resources and articulate their usefulness for your final project. You may also work with Briel in the process of your paper rewrite.

Please note that 1) you should make and respect office hour appointments with Briel just as you would with professors or other student colleagues; 2) her role is to serve as a supplemental resource, not as a replacement for the professor, and I am responsible for all of the assessment of your work as with any other course at Grinnell; and 3) you certainly should feel free to consult with Briel on more than the two occasions required of you for the course.

There is no final exam in this class.

Your overall grade will be calculated according to the following formula:

course participation	35%
response papers (15% each)	30%
performance review paper	5%
final presentation	20%
annotated bibliography	10%

COURSE SCHEDULE

January 24 **Introduction**

PART I FRANCE

Jan 26 LECTURE: French Revolutions, 1789-1871

Jan 31 **The Rise of French Grand Opera**
• Fulcher *The Nation's Image* Introduction and Chapters 1 + 2 (pp. 1-121)

February 2 **The Fall of French Grand Opera**
• Fulcher *The Nation's Image* Chapters 3 + 4 and Conclusion (pp. 122-204)

Feb 3-5
VIEWING: Meyerbeer *Les Huguenots* (1836)
• Synopsis of *Les Huguenots* (Fulcher pp. 247-251)

Feb 7 Discussion of *Les Huguenots*
Staging *Les Huguenots*: Behind the Scenes
• Description of the Opera House in Galignani *New Paris Guide* (1839)
• Meyerbeer/Veron Contract (1834) with amendments
• *Mise-en-scène* documents (1835-6)
 all in *First Nights at the Opera*, pp. 201-206 + 222-226
• Meyerbeer letters to Minna (1834-6)
Topic for France response paper handed out in class

Feb 7-13 Individual Consultations with Writing Mentor re: France Response Paper

Feb 9 **Responding to *Les Huguenots***
• Press reviews of *Les Huguenots* (1836)
 Le Monde Dramatique, *Le Ménestrel*, *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*
• Other responses (1836)
 Hector Berlioz, George Sand, Charles De Boigne, Henry Chorley
 all in *First Nights at the Opera*, pp. 212-222
• Newark "Metaphors for Meyerbeer" in *Journal of the Royal Music Association* 127/1
 (2002) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3840478>

THURS/FRI

Feb 9-10 **INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES re: FINAL PROJECT**

PART II GERMANY

Feb 14 **FRANCE RESPONSE PAPER DUE**
LECTURE: German unification, 1815-1871

Feb 16 **A German Musical Tradition? / Ludwig II + Wagner**
• Applegate + Potter "Germans as the "People of Music": Genealogy of an Identity"
in *Music and German National Identity*
• McIntosh *The Swan King* Preface + Chapters 1-6 (pp. 1-69)

*Feb 17 **BEGIN WINDOW for Individual Consultation with Writing Mentor***
re: Annotated Bibliography

Feb 21 **Ludwig II + Wagner to the Bitter End**
• McIntosh *The Swan King* Chapters 7-19 + Epilogue (pp. 70-204)

Feb 23 **Wagner the Revolutionary**
• Wagner "Man and Established Society" and "The Revolution" (1849)
• Wagner *Opera and Drama* (1851), excerpts
• Krohn "The Revolutionary of 1848-1849"

Feb 28 **Wagner the Conservative**
• Wagner Preface to the *Ring* libretto (1863)
• Wagner "To the Kingly Friend" and "On State and Religion" (1864)
• Wagner diary entries (1865)

Mar 1 **Preparing for the *Rheingold* Premiere**
• Eyewitness accounts of rehearsals (1876)
all in *First Nights at the Opera*, pp. 284-292
• Press releases from the Bayreuth Festival (1876)

March 2-4
VIEWING: Wagner, *Das Rheingold*
• Wapnewski synopsis of *Rheingold*

Mar 6 Discussion of *Rheingold*
Responding to the *Rheingold* Premiere
• Memoires and press reviews of *Das Rheingold* (1876)
Daily Telegraph, *Manchester Guardian*, *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*,
Neue Freie Presse, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, *New York Tribune*
all in *First Nights at the Opera*, pp. 293-296 + 300-313
• Other responses (1876) – Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Saint-Saëns
Topic for Germany response paper handed out in class

Mar 6-13 *Individual Conferences with Writing Mentor re: Germany Response Paper*

PART III ITALY

- Mar 8 LECTURE: *Aida* and Verdi's "Triangle Trade": Cairo, Milan, Paris
- Verdi letters surrounding the premieres of *Aida* (1869-1872)
 - Mariette Pasha *Letters and Personal Memoires* (1904), excerpts
 - Verdi's terms for the Cairo contract, June 1870

SATURDAY

- Mar 10 CHICAGO LYRIC OPERA's *AIDA* – curtain at 7:30
- synopsis of *Aida*

- Mar 13 **PERFORMANCE REVIEW PAPER DUE**
Discussion of *Aida*
- Anthony Arblaster "Verdi: The Liberal Patriot" in *Viva la Libertà! Politics in Opera* (1992), pp. 91-97, 141-145

- Mar 15 **The Question of Orientalism**
- Essay by unknown scholar on Egyptian antiquity provided to Verdi by Ricordi, July 1870
 - Edward Said "The Empire at Work: Verdi's *Aida*" in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993)
 - Paul Robinson "Is *Aida* an Orientalist Opera?" in *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5, no. 2 (1993) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/823799>

SPRING BREAK

PART IV SOVIET UNION

LECTURE: Russian Revolution and Soviet Union, 1917-1991
GERMANY RESPONSE PAPER DUE

- Apr 3 **Framing the Relationship between Composer and Dictator, I**
- Volkov *Shostakovich and Stalin* Prologue, Chapters I - III (pp. 3-141)
- Apr 5 **Framing the Relationship between Composer and Dictator, II**
- Volkov *Shostakovich and Stalin* Chapters IV-VII and Epilogue (pp. 142-281)
- Apr 6-8
VIEWING: Shostakovich, *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (1934)
- Synopsis of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*
- Apr 10 Discussion of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*

The 1920s + 1930s and the Arts

- Shostakovich letters (1923-1927)
- Mayakovsky + Mandelstam poems (1930s)
- Moskvina *The Soviet Theater* (1939)

Apr 12

Key Articles and Essays

- *New York Times* "New Soviet Opera is Presented Here" (1935)
- *Pravda* "Muddle Instead of Music" (1936)
- *Pravda* "The Opera *The Great Friendship* of V. Muradelli (1948)
- Shostakovich "Art Must Reflect Reality" (1962)
- Shostakovich (with Volkov) *Testimony: Memoirs* (1979)

Apr 17

Alternative Readings of the *Lady MacBeth* Incident

- Fitzpatrick "The Lady Macbeth Affair: Shostakovich and the Soviet Puritans" in *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (1992)
 - Taruskin "Entr'acte: The Lessons of Lady M." in *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (1997)
- Topic for Soviet Union response paper handed out in class*

Apr 18

LAST POSSIBLE MOMENT! for Individual Consultation with Writing Mentor re: *Annotated Bibliography*

Apr 19

**INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCES RE: RESEARCH PROJECTS
PRESENTATION OUTLINE AND DRAFT ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

Apr 24

Peer-Reviewed Presentations - Group 1

Apr 26

Peer-Reviewed Presentations - Group 2

SOVIET UNION RESPONSE PAPER DUE FOR GROUPS 5 + 6

May 1

Peer-Reviewed Presentations - Group 3

May 3

Peer-Reviewed Presentations - Group 4

SOVIET UNION RESPONSE PAPER DUE FOR GROUPS 1 + 2

May 8

Peer-Reviewed Presentations - Group 5

May 10

Peer-Reviewed Presentations - Group 6

SOVIET UNION RESPONSE PAPER DUE FOR GROUPS 3 + 4

WED

May 16

FINAL ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Mears #305 at 12:00 noon