



MUCS 3000 Seminar in Critical Studies in Music & Society
Music and Neuroscience | David Schwarz, Spring 2026
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Course Description

In this class we will explore the relationships between neuroscience and music. I assume we have much greater knowledge of the latter (music) than the former (neuroscience). To close that gap we will read a basic textbook in Neuroscience throughout the semester so that by its end we shall all have a basic grasp of the scope and function of our neural processes. In addition we will read a recent book devoted to relations between neuroscience and our topic—music. Each day we shall move through both of these books (the introductory Neuroscience text and the book devoted to neuroscience and music) and focus on one work of music each day.

Policy on Generative AI

Generative AI may be used in writing your seminar paper for this course, but all uses must be documented as to the scope and nature of their use. Students are responsible for all dimensions of their written work including aspects of syntax and grammar as well as content.

Course Structure

We shall focus on learning the basic nature of neuroscience and how it has been linked to musical functions for the first half of the semester. Roughly after Spring Break, we will shift to in-class student presentations in support of your final seminar paper.

Course Requirements

You must come to class prepared with questions and / or comments on the readings and pieces of music under discussion. The following books (in red) are required; the books in green are recommended:

- Robert Zatorre, *From Perception to Pleasure* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2024)
- Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2006).
- Aniruddh D. Patel, *Music, Language, and the Brain* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- Daniel J. Levitin, *This is your Brain on Music* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006)

Grades will be determined as follows:

Attendance and In-class participation: 20%

In class presentation in Preparation for Seminar Paper: 20%

Seminar Paper: 60%

Course Objectives

By the end of the course

- you will have a thorough knowledge of the basic structures and functions of our neural networks
- you will have a sense of how music relates to the structures and functions of our neural networks
- you will have done research in a specific topic of interest to you that represents a thorough exploration of one aspect of our neural network and how, precisely, it relates to the musical language, history, and context of a work of music

My Teaching Philosophy

I believe in making this course interesting, relevant, culturally sensitive and thorough in terms of teaching you professional level mastery of the relations between music and neuroscience. I believe in asking questions even if they seem difficult or even impossible to answer.

Resources for You:

UIT Help Desk: [UIT Student Help Desk site](http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm) (<http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm>)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

See: [Academic Integrity](#)

LINK: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

See: [Student Code of Conduct](#)

Link: <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>

ACCESS TO INFORMATION – EAGLE CONNECT

Your access point for business and academic services at UNT occurs at my.unt.edu.

See: [Eagle Connect](#)

LINK: eagleconnect.unt.edu

ODA STATEMENT

See: [ODA](#)

LINK: disability.unt.edu. (Phone: (940) 565-4323)

Health and Safety Information

Students can access information about health and safety at: <https://music.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness>

Registration Information for Students

See: [Registration Information](#)

Link: <https://registrar.unt.edu/students>

Academic Calendar, Summer 2025

See: <https://catalog.unt.edu/content.php?catoid=35&navoid=3982#summer>
<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/spring-registration-guide.html>

Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress

Undergraduates

See: [Financial Aid](#)

LINK: <http://financialaid.unt.edu/sap>

RETENTION OF STUDENT RECORDS

See: [FERPA](#)

Link: <http://ferpa.unt.edu/>

COUNSELING AND TESTING

See: [Counseling and Testing](#)

Link: <http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>.

For more information on mental health issues, please visit:

See: [Mental Health Issues](#)

Link: <https://speakout.unt.edu>.

ADD/DROP POLICY

Drop Information: <https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/spring-registration-guide.html>

Student Resources

Link: <https://success.unt.edu/aa-sa-resources>

CARE TEAM

See: [Care Team](#)

Link: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care-team>

