MUET 4500 / 5500
INTRODUCTION TO ETHNOMUSICOLOGY
Tuesday / Thursday: 3:00-4:20pm, MUS 322

Instructor: Vivek Virani
Office: Music Building 146
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs by appointment
Email: Vivek.Virani@UNT.edu

COURSE OVERVIEW
This course introduces students to the history, theory, and practice of ethnomusicology. It includes foundational texts from the discipline and current literature on emerging issues and topics. Students will be exposed to multiple perspectives from ethnomusicology and its related disciplines, including musicology, anthropology, folklore, critical theory, and cultural studies.

The primary objective of this course is to provide students with a richer understanding of the various roles, meanings, and functions of music in human life. Furthermore, students should leave the class with a diverse analytical toolkit for their own music-related research endeavors.

EXPECTATIONS
The content and level of discussion within this course are targeted toward senior-level undergraduate and Masters-level graduate students. Students are expected to attend class regularly having completed the assigned reading and prepared to engage in an informed discussion. Written assignments should demonstrate a level of command over language and content befitting a student near completion of a Bachelor’s degree. The course includes a wide spectrum of cultures and ideas; students are expected to keep an open mind and to consider the benefits of a wide range of intellectual approaches.

Required Reading and Responses
Weekly readings will be posted on Canvas. In addition, students are expected to obtain the following book, from which several chapters will be assigned as course readings:


Every week, students will submit a brief (2-3 paragraph) but insightful response based on the week’s reading(s) by 8pm on Monday evening.

Assignments and Evaluation
Unless otherwise noted, assignments are due by 11:59PM on the Thursday of the specified week.

1. Small Writing Assignments
   a. “Deep Listening” Writing exercise (Week 2) – 30 points, details on page 7
b. “My Musical Life” Interview (Week 5) – 50 points, details on page 7-8

2. Ethnographic Research Project – 450 points, details on page 6-7
   a. Site Proposal – 20 points (Week 7)
   b. Fieldwork Report – 100 points (Week 10)
   c. Abstract & Outline –30 points (Week 13)
   d. Presentation – 100 points (Weeks 12-15)
   e. Final Paper – 200 points (Week 15)
      i. Undergraduate: 7-10 pages double-spaced
      ii. Graduate: 13-16 pages double-spaced

3. Weekly Reading Responses – 150 points (15 points each)
   a. Weekly Responses (Due by 8pm every Monday)
   b. Discussion responses posted between 8pm Monday and 12pm Tuesday will receive half credit. Responses after 12pm Tuesday will not be accepted.

4. Student-led Article Presentation / Discussion – 100 points, details on page 8
   a. Students will lead presentations and in-class discussions based on current topics in ethnomusicology
   b. Presentations will take place on Thursdays, Weeks 5-12

5. Attendance and Participation – 150 points (5 points per class)
   a. Students earn participation points each class by attending and participating in discussions.
   b. Participation points may be deducted for habitual lateness or inattentiveness
   c. Each unexcused absence beyond the first will result in 40 point deduction from the student’s overall grade.
   d. After 5 unexcused absences, students will be advised to withdraw from course
   e. Absences are determined “excused” or “unexcused” at instructor’s discretion. In non-emergency situations, they are automatically considered unexcused if instructor is not notified within three hours BEFORE CLASS. (Unexcused absence due to sudden illness may be overturned if doctor’s note is provided).

6. Critical Ethnography Review (Graduate Students Only, Due Week 12), details on page 9
   a. All graduate students must read an ethnographic monograph write a critical review.
   b. The monograph may be on any genre, but should ideally connect to the student’s broader research interests or their final project.
   c. Monographs must be approved by instructor.

**Total Points:** 930 (Undergraduate), 1030 (Graduate)
COURSE OUTLINE

The first part of the course (Weeks 1-4) focuses on the development of ethnomusicology as an academic discipline. During the second part of the class (Weeks 5-12), we will focus on major issues and intellectual approaches in modern ethnomusicology (roughly 1990-present), both through the study of major theoretical works and through case studies presented by students.

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<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Introduction – Defining Music and Ethnomusicology</th>
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<th>Week 2</th>
<th>What Does it Mean to Study Music?</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 3 &amp; 5</td>
<td>“Musicking”; The role of the ethnomusicologist; Components of “music culture”; Comparative Musicology</td>
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<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Early Ethno-musicology</th>
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<td>September 10 &amp; 12</td>
<td>18th-19th ethnography; studies of “primitive” and “folk” musics; research on “evolutionism”; Bartok and cultural nationalism</td>
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<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Post-War American Ethnomusicology</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 17 &amp; 19</td>
<td>Lomax, Merriam, Hood; Anthropology of music, bi-musicality, “Cantometrics,” Musical functionalism</td>
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<th>Week 5</th>
<th>How Musical is Man?</th>
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<td>September 24 &amp; 26</td>
<td>“People making music”; musicality; music cognition</td>
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<td>Reading: Blacking (1973) “Humanly Organized Sound”</td>
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<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Field Research</th>
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<td>October 1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Choosing a site; documentation; participant-observation</td>
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<td>Reading: Jackson (1987) chapters from Fieldwork</td>
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<td>Student-Led Discussion I: Commodification and Consumption</td>
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<td>Student-Led Discussion II: Cultural Tourism and Travel</td>
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### Week 7
October 8 & 10

**Semiotics of Music**  
*Music as symbol; music and meaning; Peircean semiotics*  
Reading: Turino (2008) Chapter 1; McDonald (2009) “Poetics and the Performance of Violence in Israel/Palestine”

Guest Lecture: Dr. Steven Friedson

### Week 8
October 15 & 17

**Writing Music and Culture**  
*Ethnographic writing; Interpretive writing, “Thick Description”*  
Reading: Geertz (1973) “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”

Student-Led Discussion III: Gender and Sexuality

### Week 9
October 22 & 24

**Music as Social Life**  
*Participatory & Presentational music; Musical Cohorts*  
Reading: Turino (2008), Chapter 2

Student-Led Discussion IV: Globalization and Glocalization  
Student-Led Discussion V: Media, Technology, and Technoculture

### Week 10
October 29 & 31

**Self, Identity, and Culture**  
*Musical socialization; music and self-integration; music and identity construction*  
Reading: Turino (2008), Chapter 4

Student-Led Discussion VI: Nationalism and Transnationalism

### Week 11
November 5 & 7

**Postmodern Critique of Ethnography**  
*Subjectivity; reflexivity; feminist ethnography*  
Reading: Clifford (1986) “Partial Truths”

Student-Led Discussion VII: Place and Embodiment  
Student-Led Discussion VIII: Racial and Ethnic Identities

### Week 12
November 12 & 14

**Writing Workshop**

Student-Led Discussion IX: Music and Political Action

### Week 13-15
November 19 & 21  
November 26 & 28  
December 3 & 5

**Student Final Presentations**

**FINAL PAPER DUE THURSDAY DECEMBER 5**
POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Academic Integrity

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam [or specify alternative sanction, such as course failure]. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term “cheating” includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

http://facultysuccess.unt.edu/academic-integrity

Writing Lab

Strong writing skills are an important asset in academic and professional life in every field. During class, we will work to improve student writing skills through instructor feedback and group workshops. However, many students will benefit from intensive focus on writing skills that we will not have time to provide during class. I encourage all students who wish to further develop their writing skills to work with the UNT Writing Lab.

http://writinglab.unt.edu/

Office of Disability Accommodation

College life poses different challenges for students with disabilities. If you’ve been diagnosed with a learning difference such as dyslexia, or if you need a physical accommodation, the Office of Disability Accommodation will make sure you receive the support you need to succeed at UNT. You can apply for services or find out if you qualify for services online by visiting the office in Sage Hall, Suite 167, or calling 940-565-4323.

http://disability.unt.edu/

Student Counseling and Testing Services

It is important to us for students to excel academically, but it is far more important that you maintain your physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Students face many demands and responsibilities from their academic and personal lives and sometimes the stresses or anxieties can be overwhelming if not dealt with. UNT provides professional support services, free to students, at Chestnut Hall. If in doubt, I urge you to make an appointment with them – if they are not the best
Instructor: Virani

people for your specific concerns, they will help you find the right resources. Additionally, as your instructor, I am happy to be a part of your support network, and you are welcome to discuss your concerns with me during office hours.

http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-testing-services

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Ethnography Project

Your main project for this course will be a small-scale music ethnography, culminating in a final presentation and an academic paper. You will conduct fieldwork in a site of your choice, which may be a specific community or space (all site proposals must be approved by instructor). You will document music / sound, conduct interviews, and interpret your findings to formulate a clear argument or thesis about people’s practices of making and/or listening to sound at your site.

Your goal is NOT simply to report your observations in the manner of a magazine article, but to provide your own interpretation and attempt to draw a broader cultural or social conclusion.

Project requirements

- You may NOT use a site with which you are already familiar or have already visited multiple times, nor a musical group/community of which you are already a member.
- You must engage in multiple site visits. In most cases, a minimum of three site visits will be necessary, although there may be some exceptions (e.g. a music festival) to be approved by instructor.
- Documentation in one or more of the following forms: field notes, photographs, audio recordings, video recordings.
- Conduct a minimum of two interviews of participants at the site/community.
- Present your project (including photos / recordings) during final three weeks of class

Fieldwork Report

During Week 10, you will submit an update about the progress of your ethnographic research project. Be sure to include:

- Details about the fieldwork you have done. How many visits have you made? What did you observe/participate in during those visits? With whom did you speak?
- Include excerpts from your field notes (unedited is fine!) and recorded media (photos, sound recordings, etc.)
- What have you learned musically/culturally/philosophically through these visits?
- What are some questions you would like to address in your final project?
- You may also include “thick descriptions” or poignant ethnographic passages that you intend to reuse in some way in your final paper.
• The assignment is not expected to be a perfectly structured or organized paper – it can include lots of sketches/brainstorms. However, proper grammar and spelling are expected, as always.

Final Paper
During Week 15, you will submit a final paper that should include the following:
• 12-pt Times New Roman font, 1-inch page margins,
• 1700-2400 Words (approximately 7-10 pages) for undergraduates
• 3000-4000 Words (approximately 13-16 pages) for graduate students
• A list of references formatted in a consistent style (Chicago Author-Date style preferred).
• A title that describes the central idea of your paper (not simply the name or date of the event).
• Ethnographic description of a musical event(s).
• Background research related to the community, genre, or theoretical ideas you are exploring in your paper. Include a minimum of three citations.
• Description of the sound / music itself in some form.
• Your own analysis / interpretation.
• Graduate students: your analysis must engage with at least one body of theory (from class discussions or outside scholarship)
• A THESIS

Deep Listening Assignment
Your assignment is to sit in two different locations for a minimum of 25 minutes each and describe, in as much detail as possible, all the sounds that you hear. Do NOT simply list the sounds, but try to communicate every quality of the sound to the reader using whatever language you find effective.

The written submission should be a minimum of 3 pages, double-spaced, and should adhere to the guidelines specified in the FORMATTING GUIDELINES PDF
• One of the two locations should be a "quiet" space (e.g. library, empty classroom, closet).
• You may choose to write your descriptions while sitting in the locations, or to take notes about the sounds you hear and compile them into a single narrative after..
• You may be as objective or subjective as you like in your description of sounds; quantitative descriptions and poetic descriptions are equally welcome.

“My Music” Interview
Your assignment is to conduct an interview with a friend, fellow student, or family member (outside of your immediate family) and to write a description of this person’s relationship with music from multiple viewpoints (minimum 4 pages, double-spaced). The interview itself should be at least 40min to an hour, but you are free to conduct a longer interview if your interviewee does
not mind the time (doing so may provide more information for you to write your paper). Ideally, the interview subject should be someone who does not consider themselves to be a musician primarily. At the end of your paper, include a transcription of 5-10 minutes of the interview as an appendix.

In the paper, you will draw from the ideas of Alan Merriam and Christopher Small in describing:

1. The interviewee's conceptions of or ideas about music.
2. Interviewee's behaviors related to music.
3. The role music plays in your interviewee's social relationships.

Questions that might help you answer these questions in sufficient depth include:

• What music do you listen to when you are by yourself? What do you listen to when you are with your friends?
• What music makes you remember your childhood?
• Why is X your favorite band/artist? What do they do differently from other bands/artists?
• What music do you really NOT like? What do you not like about it?
• What does music mean to you?
• Are there any songs you associate with memories of special times or places?

Your paper should use quotations from the interview to illustrate statements, but should not consist primarily of long block quotations. Quotations should be chosen selectively to illustrate specific points - you will find that your peers can be remarkably poetic when they talk about music.

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**Student-Led Article Presentation and Discussion**

On Thursday of your assigned week, you will present the article (using Powerpoint, Keynote, Prezi, etc) leading into a class discussion. Your presentation should include:

1. Your names and article title
2. Research Review: Mention important articles or scholars who have dealt with these issues in the past (this may require a bit of searching!)
3. Important terms or concepts related to topic or used in the article.
   1. Cultural Terms - "insider" names of specific ideas/principles discussed in the article.
   2. Conceptual / theoretical terms - usage might be coined by the author, or might refer to larger bodies of cultural/social theory.
4. Description of the author’s main argument.
5. Relevant audio / video / YouTube examples. These examples should be discussed and explained within the context of the article – do not just show tangentially related videos!
6. Final slides should contain quotes or questions for class discussion.
7. Discussion should include critique or expansion of the authors’ arguments. Think of questions to engage your classmates and challenge them to think about the author’s arguments in broader contexts.
Critical Ethnography Review (Graduate Students Only)

Your assignment is to read an ethnographic monograph (i.e., a book by a single author that is based on ethnographic fieldwork) in the discipline of ethnomusicology and to write a critical review. Critical reviews usually follow this general structure:

1. (1-2 paragraphs) Introduction: background information about the author and topic. Include information about the author’s research methods (where and when did they do research, etc.) and their main topic. Be sure to address what is new/different about this book and what issues the author is centrally interested in exploring.

2. (1 paragraph per chapter) Chapter-by-chapter summary – this will make up most of your review. Describe the main ideas of each chapter, and remark on what evidence the author provides to support these ideas. You may also comment on how effective you think the author’s arguments are.

3. Concluding thoughts: comment on your overall thoughts about the book: what are some ideas that resonated with you? Did the book change your thinking about any issues or open you with new questions and ideas?

Remember: the key to critical review is that you assess the strengths and weaknesses of the author’s arguments. The basis for critique is not merely personal opinions, but an analysis of the author’s logic and use of evidence.

The best way to get a sense of how to write a review is to read a few of the book reviews in the *Ethnomusicology* journal. You can find issues in the library or at [www.jstor.org/journal/ethnomusicology](http://www.jstor.org/journal/ethnomusicology) (you will need to access the site from the UNT network or VPN). You may even find other reviews about the same book that you are reviewing. You are welcome to discuss some of those reviewers critiques and comment on whether or not you agree with them, or if there are issues you found interesting that the other reviewers decided not to comment on (be sure to cite these reviews at the end of your review).

If you are having trouble finding an ethnographic monograph you would like to review, a great place to start is the list of works that have won the [Alan Merriam Prize](http://alanmerriamprize.com), the yearly award for best monograph published in the field of ethnomusicology. Alternatively, if you are interested in finding a monograph on a specific musical genre or conceptual topic, you may work with the instructor or the music librarians to find options.