

# PH371-15 The Aesthetics of Music

**21/22**

**Department**

Philosophy

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 3

**Module leader**

Matthew Nudds

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

The core aims of this module are to introduce students to philosophical debates in the aesthetics of music. These debates have addressed a number of questions. The first set of questions address the nature of music, in particular what makes something music and what distinguishes it from mere noise; what is the nature of the different elements - melody, rhythm, form, expression, etc. - that make up a piece of music, and are they essential to it? Related to the question of what is music is question of the nature of musical works - what is their ontological status? That debate has turned in part on the question of authenticity in music, and in particular the question of whether music should be played on particular kinds of instruments. The next set of questions focus on our understanding and appreciation of music. What is it to understand a piece of music? What makes a piece of music good or bad? Is it just a matter of our enjoying it, or is there something more to it than that? If so, what more? Music is often taken to be expressive, in particular to be expressive of emotions. What is it for music to express emotion? More generally, what is it for music to have meaning - does it have meaning in a metaphorical sense and, if so, what account should we give of it? Finally, there are questions about the role of music in film, about the nature of recorded music, and about whether there are important differences between different genres of music, e.g. contemporary vs. classical music.

### Module aims

By the end of the module students should have an understanding of the central debates in the aesthetics of music, and should be able to clearly articulate the opposing positions in those debates. They should be able to provide arguments in support of those different positions, and to be coherently set out and defend those arguments. They should have a sound understanding of the key literature, and have a good understanding of the central concepts that frame the debates. They will be able to identify and draw on additional literature beyond the key literature discussed in class.

## **Outline syllabus**

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

1. Introduction. What is music? The concept of music, and what distinguishes music from noise.
2. The sound of music. Music as autonomous and the acousmatic thesis. The elements of music - melody, rhythm, form, expression.
3. What is a musical work? The ontology of musical works.
4. Musical performance and authenticity. What makes a performance authentic?
5. Understanding music.
6. Evaluating music. What makes music good? Is it good if it sounds good?
7. Musical expression. What does music express? How does it express it?
8. Music and meaning. Does music have meaning, and if so how? What does music mean? Music and metaphor, music and representation.
9. Film music.

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- By the end of the module students should have an understanding of the central debates in the aesthetics of music, and should be able to clearly articulate the opposing positions in those debates. They should be able to provide arguments in support of those different positions, and to be coherently set out and defend those arguments.
- They should have a good understanding of the key literature, and have a good understanding of the central concepts that frame the debates. They should be able to critically evaluate the arguments for and against the positions defended in the key literature.
- Students should be able to analyse and critically evaluate the key ideas and arguments discussed during the module, and come to an independent assessment of their merits with the aid of key literature. Students should be able to identify and draw on additional literature beyond the key literature discussed in class.
- By the end of the module students should be able to discuss clearly in speech and in writing the issues raised by their reading of the key literature. They should be able to engage with

and evaluate this literature in a way that demonstrates relevant and appropriate philosophical skills. They should be able to identify and draw on additional literature beyond the key literature discussed in class

- Students should also to be able draw connections between the key ideas and arguments in the debates in the aesthetics of music to wider debates in aesthetics.

### **Indicative reading list**

Kivy - Music, Language, and Cognition

Kivy - Introduction to the Philosophy of Music

Levinson - Contemplating Art - essays in section II

Levinson - Music, Art, and Metaphysics - essays in part 3

Davies - Themes in the Philosophy of Music

Budd - Music and the Emotions

Scruton - The Aesthetics of Music

Scruton - Understanding Music - part 1

### **Subject specific skills**

The ability to understand, analyse and criticise philosophical ideas and arguments. The ability to develop an understanding of key philosophical debates in the aesthetics of music.

### **Transferable skills**

The ability to argue, analyse complex ideas, and write clearly. The ability to grasp complex ideas and arguments, identify their strengths and weaknesses and write about them in a structured manner.

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## **Study**

### **Study time**

<b>Type</b>	<b>Required</b>
Lectures	9 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Seminars	8 sessions of 1 hour (5%)
Private study	124 hours (83%)
Total	150 hours

### **Private study description**

No private study requirements defined for this module.

## **Costs**

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

### Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
1250 word Essay	50%	
3 x 1,250 word essays (each of the best two essays count for 50% of the module mark)		
1250 word Essay	50%	
3 x 1,250 word essays (each of the best two essays count for 50% of the module mark)		

### Feedback on assessment

Student will have their essays returned with detailed comments and have the chance of a consultation over their performance in each of their essays.

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
  - Year 3 of V700 Philosophy
  - Year 3 of V700 Philosophy
- Year 4 of UPHA-V701 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of UPHA-V702 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Work Placement)

This module is Core option list A for:

- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 3 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic

and Foundations

This module is Core option list B for:

- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
  - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 2 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Core option list C for:

- Year 4 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations

This module is Option list A for:

- UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
  - Year 2 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
  - Year 3 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
  - Year 2 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
  - Year 3 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature