

## CLASSICAL MUSIC IN AN AGE OF POP

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### Course outline

Here are the main topics we'll discuss in this course:

*The crisis in classical music:* How bad is it? Will the audience disappear? Will classical music institutions go out of business? What caused the crisis?

*What classical music is:* Why is classical music valuable? What does it express? How does it relate – or not relate – to the rest of our culture?

*Classical music in the past:* Classical music wasn't always as formal as it is now. In past centuries, classical musicians improvised. And – to judge from written reports, and from early recordings – they played with winning individuality. The audience was younger than we see today. And in Mozart's time, people applauded – during the music! – the moment they heard something they liked. What can we learn from all of this? Could classical music ever be this free again? Would we want it to be?

*Pop music:* What's its relationship to classical music? Is it only entertainment, or can it be another kind of art?

*Fixing the crisis:*

*Changes:* The classical music world is exploding with change. What have people done to make classical music new again, and to find a new audience?

*Entrepreneurship:* What can you do for yourselves, as students and in your professional careers? Can you help find a new audience for yourself, and for classical music? We'll talk about entrepreneurial ways of doing that. And we'll end the course with a look at ways for all of you to create your own brand. You all have your own unique and deeply personal approach to making music. If you can tell the world what that is, you can make people care about the music you make.

You'll see that I have ideas, sometimes strong ones, about most of these things. And I'm sure you have ideas of your own. If your ideas are different from mine, feel free to disagree with me! Nobody knows all the answers. And all of us, in our different ways, are working toward a future in which we hope classical music can thrive.

**Assignments (full details online, at the [course website](#)):**

This is a course in questions, not answers, so the most important part of our work will be the discussions we'll have in class.

But of course you'll have things to read, music to listen to, and videos to watch, all related to the topics we'll discuss. You'll also have two informal short papers to write. One is about why you think classical music is valuable. And in the other you'll plan a concert to appeal to people who don't normally go to classical performances.

And you'll make one presentation in class. In it, you'll take a stab at branding yourselves, presenting words and images that in some way show what you're like as a musician. As I've said, this is one way to help you build your career, especially if you build it in new, entrepreneurial ways. You'll learn how to describe yourself to the world, so people will know who you are, and why they should go to performances you give.

**How you're graded:**

As I've said, the most important part of this course is what happens in class. I often present things in class that aren't in your reading assignments. And beyond that, in the discussions we have in class all of us can work out our thoughts on the issues we'll confront. To me, this is the most crucial thing we do. So a large part of your grade will be based on class participation, though the papers and email discussions also count. I won't grade the presentation, because it's very personal, and also because in my experience almost everyone does it well.

Because class discussion is so important, there's no point taking this course if you can't come to class regularly. If you miss more than three classes, you may well lower your grade, and might lose credit for the course. If you know you'll miss many classes, I'd ask you — with regret — to consider not taking the course. But I hope none of you will make this decision. I enjoy getting to know you, and hearing your ideas. And I learn a lot from you. So I hope you'll all take this course!