

## CLASSICAL MUSIC IN AN AGE OF POP

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[website for this course, with week by week schedule, and links to all assignments](#)

### Why this course?

This course looks at the future of classical music. How things are changing, why they're changing, and what you can do as things continue to change — what your challenges are, and your opportunities.

Most of us, I'm sure, are aware of the changes. There's a new emphasis on bringing classical music out of the concert hall and the opera house, and into the community. Many performances are more informal than performances used to be. We talk to our audience. Some of us perform the great masterworks in new ways, and find ways to combine classical music and pop.

And there's an emphasis on entrepreneurship, on classical musicians making their careers in their own way, sometimes in new ways.

About why things are changing, that's easy to say. Classical music has been in a crisis for quite a few years. If you want to know how long the crisis has been going on, one way to measure it is by how long I've been teaching this course — for 23 years, ever since 1997. So way back in 1997, there was already a feeling that classical music was having trouble.

And the trouble is easy to define. The classical music audience has gotten older. Fewer tickets are being sold for classical music performances. There's been a growing sense — for more than 23 years — that classical music is losing its relevance in our world. Fewer people listen to it, fewer people care about it. If you go back many decades, and look at how classical music was then, you'll think you're in another universe. The audience was young, and classical music was an active part of mainstream culture, widely broadcast on the radio, even shown on commercial TV.

What I'm saying here — and much of what we do in the course — is focused on how things are in the U.S. From what I've seen when I've traveled, and when I talk to people from other countries, things are pretty similar elsewhere in the world, except possibly in Asia. I'll be interested in hearing from those of you who aren't from the U.S. about how things are in your countries.

But out of all of this comes a new opportunity for any classical musician. If you want to do something new with your music — even something not taught or done at Juilliard! — you can do it. You'll find that other musicians may be doing the same thing, and that there's support for all of you.

So the classical music world may be changing, and the existing audience might be fading away. This is a problem. But in a changing world, you might have a chance to live your dreams.

## 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? How wide is the gap between classical music and the rest of our culture?

*What classical music is:* If we want to save classical music, we need to know why it should be saved. It's not enough just to say that we love it. What can it contribute to our world, why should people who don't now listen to classical music give it a chance?

*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? And if it can be art, why do people need classical music?

*Fixing the crisis:*

*Changes:* As I've said, the classical music world is exploding with change. We'll look at some of the changes, at some of what have people done to make classical music new again, to reach out to the community, 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 web page](#)):

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, toward the end of the course. In this presentation, 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.

I'm required to put Juilliard's class attendance policy into my course materials. Here it is, though I'm sure you've seen it:

Attendance is required for all classes and class-related activities and is factored into each student's final grade. In each semester, grades in courses meeting 1 time per week will be lowered to the next grade level (i.e., A to A-, A- to B+, etc.) with **each unexcused absence after the second**, and grades in courses meeting 2 or more times per week will be lowered to the next grade level (i.e., A to A-, A- to B+, etc.) with **each unexcused absence after the third**. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. Any student who arrives after attendance is taken will be marked "late."

Three late arrivals to class or early departures from class constitute one unexcused absence. Students will receive a grade of Insufficient Attendance (IA) if they accrue more than the following number of **excused or unexcused absences**:

- Courses meeting 1 time per week: 3 absences maximum (excused or unexcused).
- Courses meeting 2 or more times per week: 6 absences maximum (excused or unexcused).

However, **required absences** for rehearsals for Juilliard orchestra, dance, drama, opera, and other major productions (as indicated in official college requests sent to faculty members) are not counted toward the maximum number of allowable absences cited above. On the other hand, absences for lessons, coachings, and unofficial rehearsals are considered unexcused.

If you're given excused absences, I may want to assign you extra work to make up for classes you miss.

**One last word:**

If past years in this course are any guide, our class discussions might surprise all of us. Nothing is off limits, and no opinions are sacred — including my own.