

# Music 219: Techniques in Composition

Fall 2023 | Ben Carson | UC Santa Cruz

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*Basics:*

**Wednesdays 4:00 - 7:00 PM + TBD for individual lessons**

*Office Hours / Appointments:*

**Mondays 10:30 - 11:30 AM [via Zoom](#); Wednesdays at noon [in person](#) (in my office) and by appointment.**

(If others are in the meeting when you join, I may ask you to wait briefly while another conversation finishes. Thank you for your patience.)

## About this course

### **Description:**

**Music 219: Techniques in Composition** is an ongoing discussion of music composition, informed by the compositional practices of its participants. The thematic focus for us in Fall 2023 is to think about techniques for *rhythm* and *duration*, or of time's passing, through a variety of compositional approaches and results, and to discuss their relationship to musical experience.

Students will produce **one short composition** and one incomplete but thoroughly conceived **larger composition plan**, with excerpts to point toward its completion. The first assignment will be a work for solo clarinet, to be completed by November 6, and to be performed December 6 by [Joshua Rubin](#). The second, to be begun in late October, will, by the end of the quarter, consist of complete plans for form, rhythm, and time, in a larger work with a scope and forces at your discretion. Although the work itself will not be complete, at least three defining passages or components should be drafted in detail, and a complete prospectus for the work's intentions and formal dimensions should be submitted. (This, of course, might be subject to change as the work progresses.) The second work may be informed by performance opportunities soon to be announced for the Spring Quarter.

Readings in the course support discussion of compositional technique, with an emphasis on the relationship between technique and experience, variously defined: by phenomenologists, philosophers of aesthetics, poetics, and ethnographic thinking about experiences of time, music, and culture.

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### **Seminarian responsibilities:**

- I. [Participation](#) (prepared & active attendance, except where excused, at all 11 meetings): 50%; about 75 hours
- II. [Solo work due November 6](#): 30%; about 45 hours
- III. [Larger work prospectus due end-of-quarter](#): 20%; about 30 hours

I. *Participation:*

- 1. Toward your compositional projects: In weekly seminar work, accumulate thorough note-taking and annotation of relevant texts, building text excerpts from relevant scholarship, artist statements, and prospecti, that support both our in-seminar discussions, and your prospectus for creative work.
- 2. Serve as “interlocutor”: for two of our meetings, please build thorough notes and questions to help frame discussion of a reading or listening.
- 3. Offer two 20-minute presentations pertaining to your compositions—depending on your timing, these presentations may vary in terms of the degree of completion expressed.

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## COURSE CALENDAR

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### Week 1 (4 October): Introduction / [Time and development](#)

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### Week 2 (11 October): [HAGL / Radical Empiricism](#)

- 1. **LISTEN:** Heroes Are Gang Leaders. (Featuring poet [Thomas Sayers Ellis](#), and saxophonist [James Brandon Lewis](#).)
  - [THE DAY WE GAVE THE GLOBES BACK](#), A SING ALONG!
  - [Hurt Cult](#) (from Artificial Happiness Button)
- 2. **READ:**

**Dewey, John.** “[The Live Creature](#),” Ch. 1 of *Art as Experience*, New York: TarcherPerigee, 2005 [Originally University of Michigan: Minton, Balch, 1934.]

+ [ [BLC notes](#) on Dewey’s *Art as Experience* ]

{ *Optional:*

“[Having an Experience](#)”, *ibid.* Chapter 3

Brodsky, Seth. “[Listening in, hearing back](#).” (UC Press Blog) }
- 3. **Practices/ Premises:**
  - Each seminarian, please prepare a 10-minute description of a *compositional practice* or a *compositional premise* that you might apply to some future composition. More simply: “Tell us something you are inclined to do.” (As a composer.)

- Identify 2-5 readings (not only the readings I've listed below!) that might interest you as foci in weeks 3-7. In other words: tell us what you want to read in order to develop your technique as a composer.

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## Week 3 (18 October)

**LISTEN:** Iannis Xenakis, [Charisma](#) (1971)

Clarinet: Sebastian Langer / Violoncello: Rebekka Stephan (July 1922)

**READ:**

Heather Roche, [Heatherroche.net](#). [Web resource for clarinet techniques / blog]

Xenakis, Iannis. "[Concerning Time](#)." In *Perspectives of New Music*. Winter 1989, vol. 27, no. 1 (Winter 1989), pp 84-92.

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## Week 4 (23 October) - (Monday this week only, 5 pm)

**LISTEN:** Fay Victor, [Compound Piggies](#) (International Contemporary Ensemble, 2022)

**READ:**

Joshua Rubin, [Composition resources for clarinet](#) [spreadsheet]

Bergson, Henri [1913]. "The Multiplicity of Conscious States: The idea of duration." Chapter 2 (pp. 75-139) & (optionally) "The intensity of psychic states." (pp. 1-74) Chapter 1 of [Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness](#). Trans. by F.L. Pogson. New York: MacMillan, 1913.<sup>1</sup>

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## Week 5-6 (1 November; 8 November)

**LISTEN:**

Skidmore, Tiffany.

1. *Tharmas the father/Enion the mother*, for sopranino saxophone; [[score](#)], [[video](#)]
2. '[cistern . anechoic . sonolucent](#)'

**READ:**

The three articles below might be construed as starting places for the problem I outlined briefly (23 October) of thinking 'meter' technically as a provisional *scaffold* (not to be ascertained as an independent musical element in a resulting musical experience) as opposed to a conventional

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<sup>1</sup> *Other relevant reading:* Bergson, Henri. "On the selection of images for conscious presentation. What our body means and does." [Chapter I of [Matter and Memory](#).] Trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul & W. Scott Palmer. New York: MacMillan, 1913; pp. 1-85, with emphasis on "Realism and Idealism" (pp. 14-17), "The nature of affective sensation" (pp. 55-59), and "Approach to the problem of matter" (pp. 73-81)

view of meter in which measures, working generally as periodically repeated structures, should be a musically present frame, not only for playing, but for listening.

1. Please *briefly* assess Nauert's claims about how division- and additive- models for rhythm might impact your own compositional method—we'll discuss this in an introductory way on Nov. 1; we may or may not continue Nov. 8
2. Assess the introductory paragraphs of 2-3 of the other five articles, and report on your sense of their usefulness to your method.
3. *Optional*: Please suggest your own resources, too, for thinking about the role of meter, in your own music or that of others.

Nauert, Paul. "[Division- and Addition-Based Models of Rhythm](#) in a Computer-Assisted Composition System." *Computer Music Journal* Vol. 31, No. 4 (Winter, 2007), pp. 59-70.

leal, jonathan. "[layered time](#)" Ch. 2 of *Dreams in Double Time: On Race, Freedom, and Bebop*. Duke University Press. (2023) { see also [leal in conversation](#) with Nate Sloan; he plays examples and its very illuminating }

Deleuze, Gilles (1975). "[Making Inaudible Forces Audible](#)," in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*. Cambridge: MIT Semiotext(e), 2006. pp. 156-160. [[BLC's notes](#)]

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## Week 7 (15 November)

*GUEST*:

Sean Connors of Third Coast Percussion

**LISTEN**: *Seminarian submissions* (project updates Week 7)

**READ**:

Choose 2 (pairs of seminarians on each, for comparative presentation)

Daniela Vallega-Neu, "[Disseminating Time](#): Durations, Configurations, and Chance." *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (Feb 2017), pp. 1-18 (Also see De Leeuw's "Rhythm"<sup>2</sup>, in optional readings below.

Tenzer, Michael. "[Generalized Representations of Musical Time and Periodic Structures](#)." *Ethnomusicology*, 55/3 (Fall 2011), 369-386.

Thompson, E.P. Excerpts of "[Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism](#)." In *Past & Present* No. 38 (Dec., 1967): read Section I (pp. 56-57), and III (pp. 63-70). (See notes in comments below.)

Vargas, Deborah. "[Punk's Afterlife in Cantina Time](#)" In *Social Text* (2013) 31 (3 (116)): 57-73.

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## Weeks 8 and 9 (22 & 29 November, 4-7 PM)

**READ**:

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<sup>2</sup> *Other relevant reading*: De Leeuw, Ton. "[Rhythm](#)." In *Music of the Twentieth Century: A Study of Its Elements and Structure*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005.

Stockhausen, Karlheinz. "[The Concept of Unity in Electronic Music](#)" trans. by Elaine Barkin *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1962), pp. 39-48. Levinson, Jerrold.

+ Choose one:

Born, Georgina. "[The dynamics of pluralism in contemporary digital art music](#)," Ch. 8 of *Music and Digital Media: A planetary anthropology*, 2022, pp. 305-377.

Poudrier, Eve. "[Tapping to Carter: mensural determinacy in complex rhythmic sequences](#)," In *Empirical Musicology Review* Vol. 12, No. 3-4, 2017

Carson, Benjamin. "[Perceiving and distinguishing simple timespan ratios without metric reinforcement](#)," In the *Journal of New Music Research* 36/4 (December 2007), 313-36.

Amatzia Bar-Yosef, "[A Cross-Cultural Structural Analogy Between Pitch And Time Organizations](#)" in *Music Perception*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (February 2007), pp. 265-280

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## WEEK 10:

TBD by seminarians, in support of presentations

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## ADDITIONAL COURSE RESOURCES

TIME/SENSATION *Phenomenological or Empirical Approaches*

Bergson, Henri. [Matter and Memory](#). Trans. by Nancy Margaret Paul & W. Scott Palmer. New York: MacMillan, 1913.

Benkhe, Elizabeth, "Toward A Description of Integral Atonality"

<<https://issuu.com/omarbojorges/docs/01.-1993-feb>> in *Integrative Explorations — Journal of Culture and Consciousness*, Vol. 1 No. 1, February 1993

Grosz, Elizabeth. "[Chaos, Cosmos, Territory, Architecture](#)", chapter 1 of *ibid.*, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*. New York: Columbia, 2006 [Also in my "Frames of Art Experience" list, below]. [[BLC notes](#)]

Gros, Elizabeth. [Chapter 3](#) (pp 63-103) "Sensation. The Earth, a People, Art" in *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*. New York: Columbia, 2008

James, William [1904] "[A World of Pure Experience](#)". In *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*. Vol. 1, No. 20 (Sep. 29, 1904), pp. 533-543 (11 pages) + My own [introduction to James' idea of Radical Empiricism](#) is written with artists and humanists in mind, and might be of interest.

Peirce, Charles S. (2004) '[What is a Sign?](#)' In Hoopes, J. ed., *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic*. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

CULTURAL/HISTORICAL/SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXTS FOR TEMPORALITY

Stahl, Roger. "A Clockwork War: [Rhetorics of Time in a Time of Terror](#)." In *Quarterly Journal of Speech* Vol. 94, No. 1, February 2008, pp. 73-99.

#### CRITIQUE OF METHOD *Compositional method (or performance practice) as ideology*

Born, Georgina. "[The dynamics of pluralism in contemporary digital art music](#)," Ch.8 of *Music and Digital Media: A planetary anthropology*, 2022, pp. 305-377.

Boulez, Pierre. "[Schoenberg is Dead](#)." *Some Eclats / Notes of an Apprenticeship* 1968; an expansion of "Schoenberg is Dead," in *Score*.

Beckstead, David. "[Improvisation: Thinking and Playing Music](#)." *Music Educators Journal*, 99/3 (March 2013), 69-74.

Lewis, George E. "[Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives](#)" , in *Black Music Research Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring, 1996), pp. 91-122.

Lewis, George E. "[The Situation of a Creole](#)," in "Defining Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Music," forum convened and edited by David Clarke, *Twentieth Century Music* 14:3 (2017): 442-46.

- + LISTEN: George Lewis. [Assemblage](#) (2017), performed 2019 by Ensemble Dal Niente at New College, Sarasota FLA. [[SCORE](#)] & P Multitudinous (2018) Written for Ensemble Evolution; commissioned by Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity 2018 with support from the Gay Mitchell and Archie McIntosh. Creation Endowment Fund. [[SCORE](#)]

#### MUSICAL FORM

Reynolds, Roger. "[The Role of Space \(metaphoric and physical\) in Music](#)" (January 2016) + [ACTIONS](#) (a brief description) { + LISTEN: Reynolds, Roger: [ACTIONS](#); [Whispers Out Of Time](#).

Snead, James A. "[On Repetition in Black Culture](#)." *Black American Literature Forum* 15, no. (1981): 146-54.

Stockhausen, Karlheinz. "[The Concept of Unity in Electronic Music](#)" trans. by Elaine Barkin *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Autumn, 1962), pp. 39-48.

Tenzer, Michael. "[Generalized Representations of Musical Time and Periodic Structures](#)." *Ethnomusicology*, 55/3 (Fall 2011), 369-386.

Xenakis, Iannis. "[Concerning Time](#)." In *Perspectives of New Music*. Winter 1989, vol. 27, no. 1 (Winter 1989), pp 84-92.

#### COURSE POLICIES

##### *Disability Accommodations*

UC Santa Cruz is committed to creating an academic environment that supports its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations to achieve equal access in this course, please submit your Accommodation Authorization Letter from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) to me privately during my office hours or by appointment, preferably within the first two weeks of the quarter. At this time, I would also like us to discuss ways we can ensure your full participation in the course. I encourage all students who may benefit from learning more about DRC services to contact DRC by phone at 831-459-2089 or by email at [drc@ucsc.edu](mailto:drc@ucsc.edu).

### *Gender Non-Discrimination*

Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the Campus Advocacy Resources & Education (CARE) Office by calling (831) 502-2273. In addition, Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) can provide confidential counseling support, (831) 459-2628. You can also report gender discrimination directly to the University's Title IX Office, (831) 459-2462. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD, (831) 459-2231 ext. 1. For emergencies call 911.

### *Academic Integrity*

The cornerstone of intellectual life at UC Santa Cruz is a commitment to integrity in all forms of teaching, learning, and research. [Academic integrity](#) consists of honesty and transparency in all research, creative work, and other demonstrations of learning; that integrity is crucial not only to fairness in academic assessment, but to the integrity of the knowledge we cultivate. Academic misconduct of any kind—including cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of dishonesty in an academic context—violates the standards of our community. In simple terms: students must offer attribution when making use of the ideas or work of another person, and must not attempt to take credit for work that has not resulted from their own learning and labor.

Charges of plagiarism cannot be nullified or avoided through the rephrasing of others' works. In fact, attempts to "re-word" or rearrange borrowed ideas or language may be evidence of a more serious offense, in that it might indicate a more significant effort to conceal an uncited source. Students must properly cite others' work, and recognize collaborations of all kinds; failure to do so can result in an academic misconduct report, the sanctions of which can range from loss of credit for the work in question, to suspension or, in serious cases or repeat offenses, dismissal from the University. For more information, please consult the [UC Santa Cruz Academic Misconduct Policy for Undergraduates](#).