

THE INTERSECTION OF 20TH-CENTURY AND 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC AND VISUAL ART

Spring 2025

Instructor:	Rolando J. Gómez	Time:	Tues Thur 14:00 – 17:00
Email:	musicalroly@gmail.com	Place:	Music Bldg.

Course Pages:

1. <http://www.rolandojgomez.com/>

Office Hours: After class, or by appointment, or post your questions in the forum provided.

Objectives: This course examines the dynamic relationships between 20th- and 21st-century composers and visual artists, focusing on how their works intersect through shared aesthetic concerns. By exploring the creative processes and innovative techniques of these musicians and artists, students will gain insight into the complementary roles of sound and image in the development of modern aesthetics. Each unit pairs a composer with a visual artist, creating a thematic exploration of ideas such as primitivism, minimalism, surrealism, indeterminacy, violence, and the sublime. Through readings, listening assignments, and visual analysis, students will explore how composers and artists have challenged and expanded upon traditional boundaries of their respective media, often blending elements from multiple genres or disciplines. The course emphasizes the cross-pollination of ideas across artistic fields, where one medium informs and inspires the other.

Prerequisites: An undergraduate-level understanding of either music history or art history.

Tentative Course Outline:

Modest Mussorgsky and Viktor Hartmann Week 1

■ Exploring the concept of musical representation, this unit focuses on how Mussorgsky's piano suite *Pictures at an Exhibition* translates Hartmann's visual works into sound.

Igor Stravinsky and Pablo Picasso Week 2

■ Examining how Stravinsky's compositions and Picasso's paintings reframe traditional forms through primitivism and neoclassicism, and how they collectively reinvented Western art and music.

Claude Debussy and Claude Monet Week 3

■ Analyzing the relationship between Debussy's impressionistic music and Monet's visual landscapes, focusing on their shared use of atmosphere and sensory experience.

Charles Ives and Romare Bearden Week 4

■ Exploring Ives's collage-like music, which incorporates American folk and popular music, alongside Bearden's use of collage to comment on American identity and cultural memory.

Philip Glass and Bridget Riley Week 5

■ Studying the use of repetition and patterns in Glass's minimalist compositions and Riley's optical art, and how both artists explore the interaction between perception and structure.

Steve Reich and Donald Judd Week 6

■ Analyzing how Reich's use of repetition and phase shifting in music mirrors Judd's exploration of structure, space, and objecthood in visual art.

Morton Feldman and Mark Rothko	Week 7
<p>■ A deep dive into how both Feldman and Rothko explored stillness and atmosphere, using minimalism to evoke the sublime in their works. John Cage and Jackson Pollock – Indeterminacy, Process, and the Role of Chance in Art and Music Investigating the role of chance and indeterminacy in Cage’s music and Pollock’s painting, and how both artists embraced process over product.</p>	
Charles Mingus and Jean-Michel Basquiat	Week 8
<p>■ Investigating how Mingus’s music and Basquiat’s artwork express chaos, emotion, and social commentary, addressing issues like race, identity, and power.</p>	
Julius Eastman and Felix Gonzalez-Torres	Week 9
<p>■ A study of how both artists employ minimalism to convey powerful messages about identity, desire, and political struggle.</p>	
Thomas Adès and Salvador Dalí	Week 10
<p>■ An exploration of the surrealist movement through Adès’s music and Dalí’s painting, focusing on their shared use of distortion, illusion, and the uncanny.</p>	
Mark-Anthony Turnage and Francis Bacon	Week 11
<p>■ Focusing on the emotional intensity of Turnage’s compositions and Bacon’s paintings, this unit explores their shared depiction of violence, alienation, and the psychological depths of human experience.</p>	
Louise Andriessen and Piet Mondrian	Week 12
<p>■ Exploring the principles of De Stijl in both Andriessen’s music and Mondrian’s paintings, focusing on their pursuit of pure form through geometric abstraction and structure.</p>	
In Class Presentations	Week 13-14
<p>■ Students will present their final projects. This will either be the creation of a collaborative work with another classmate or an investigation on how music and art are intersecting in cyberspace.</p>	

Grading Policy: Homework (20%), participation (20%), Midterm (30%), Final Project (30%).

Important Dates:

Midterm #1	March 4th, 2025
Project Deadline	May 4th, 2025

Course Outcomes:

1. Identify connections between 20th- and 21st-century music and visual art, particularly in relation to themes of aesthetic innovation, cultural commentary, and shared techniques.
2. Analyze how composers and artists use form, texture, and material to express ideas such as violence, chaos, stillness, sublime beauty, and surrealism.
3. Develop comparative analyses of works from multiple disciplines, considering how music and visual art influence one another.
4. Explore the historical and cultural contexts that shaped the work of composers and visual artists, with particular attention to how these contexts influenced their creative processes and craftsmanship.

Academic Honesty: Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation.