

Sound and Sense - K20.1071
Fall 2009
Tuesday and Thursday 3:30-4:45
Prof. Lisa Goldfarb

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In "Sound and Sense" we will study the correspondence between the world of sound and the world of words. While the analogy between poetry and music reaches back to the origins of poetry, in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, poets, philosophers, writers of fiction and composers breathed new life into the relationship between these arts. Our inquiry will concentrate on why there was such a rebirth of interest in the expressive possibilities born of the intermingling of these art forms.

From classical literature through the twentieth century poets, philosophers, and musicians have probed this relationship by asking some of the questions that will guide our study: What kind of special bond is there between the arts of music and literature? How might we begin to define this bond? What is the primary role of figurative language, and does figurative language have a necessary relationship to pure sound? Do we use such language to persuade others by relying solely on meaning, or do we use the sound values of language to do so as well?

As you can see from the description and the syllabus, this course investigates the relationship between music and literature largely through the writings of poets, philosophers, writers of fiction and composers. Yet, as we move through the various readings, we will also add a musical/listening component to the course. When we read Jane Austen, we will listen to Mozart and, as we study Nietzsche, we will listen to Bizet and Wagner. Certainly, as we study the Symbolist poets, we will be sure to listen to Debussy, and as we turn to Hughes, we will add the rhythms of blues and jazz to our readings. We will work together through the readings and our listening to consider how these poems, novels, and musical texts reflect upon one another.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Plato: *Phaedrus* (Hackett)
Aristotle: *Poetics* (Hackett or Library of the Liberal Arts)
Austen: *Emma* (Penguin)
Nietzsche: *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner* (Vintage)
Baudelaire: *Selected Poems from The Flowers of Evil* (Dover)
Valéry: *Selected Writings* (New Directions)
Hughes: *Selected Poems* (Vintage)
Forster: *A Room with a View* (Bantam Classics or Vintage)
Stravinsky: *Poetics of Music in 6 Lessons* (Harvard UP)
Copland: *Music and Imagination* (Harvard UP)

All books should be available at the NYU Bookstore.

*Please note that as we move through the course, there may be additional short readings distributed.

READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

To ensure that our discussions are lively and meaningful, each week students will write a critical response to the week's reading in which s/he addresses questions regarding each text, and observations about how the reading relates to our theme of study, as well as a few questions to raise in class. I will collect reading responses at the end of each Thursday meeting.

* Please note that at the end of the syllabus you will find the list of poems to read for particular sessions. I am asking that you read all the poems listed carefully; each one expresses an aspect of the theme we are studying, and together they provide a good overall sense of the poet's work. However, you should read closely those that are starred, as we will focus more closely on the starred poems in class.

There are three required papers for the course, two papers of roughly 5 pages and a final longer paper of about 8 pages. I will be handing out suggested topics on which to write before the papers are due. The final paper may be an essay developed on a topic of your own design; however, please discuss your ideas for topics with me before you begin. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides and documented according to the *MLA Handbook*. The first and second papers may be revised as long as students resubmit the paper no later than one week after they have been returned to you.

* Please note that plagiarism of any kind will be taken with the utmost seriousness. Plagiarized work will result in a failing grade for the assignment and a failing grade for the course.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

"Sound and Sense" is a seminar course that develops through class discussion. It is crucial that you attend class regularly, and that you arrive on time. If, due to illness or emergency, you cannot attend class, please be sure to inform me. Also, please be sure to consult the syllabus and speak to someone in class so that you can be sure to be prepared for the next class. Your participation in class is vital to the success of the class, as is your timely submission of all papers.

Grades are based on the quality of your written work and class participation. Please note that excessive absences (more than two unexcused absences) can jeopardize your course grade.

OFFICE HOURS

My office is in room 804 (715 Broadway – 8th floor) and my office phone number is 998-7325. You can also reach me most easily by e-mail at lg3@nyu.edu or lisa.goldfarb@nyu.edu

My office hours are:

Monday: 11:00-12:00

Thursday: 11:00-12:00

SYLLABUS

WEEK 1

September 8 Introduction / Ovid's "Orpheus" in *The Metamorphoses* and
Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*
10 Ovid's "Orpheus" and Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus*

WEEK 2

15 Plato's *Phaedrus*
17 Plato's *Phaedrus*

WEEK 3

22 from Aristotle's "Politics"
Listening: James Galway's "Dances for the Flute"
24 Aristotle's *Poetics*

WEEK 4

October 29 Aristotle's *Poetics*
1 Austen's *Emma* (through Chapter 25)
Listening: Mozart Piano Sonata in C major

WEEK 5

6 Austen's *Emma* (complete)
*Paper due
8 Nietzsche's *The Case of Wagner*

WEEK 6

13 Nietzsche's *The Case of Wagner*
Listening: Wagner - Overture to *Tannhauser* and selection from
Bizet's *Carmen*
15 Vendler – "Describing Poems" and "The Play of Language"

WEEK 7

- 20 Poe – “The Poetic Principle”
Baudelaire – “Tannhauser” (essay) and poems (attached)
- 22 Baudelaire – poems (see attached)
Listening: Debussy – Five Poems of Charles Baudelaire

WEEK 8

- 27 Mallarmé and Verlaine - poems (attached)
Listening: Debussy – “Prélude to the Afternoon of a Faun”
- 29 Mallarmé and Verlaine poems (attached)
Listening: Selections from Ravel (tba)

WEEK 9

- November 3 Valéry, poems and essays (see attached)
Listening: Debussy’s “La Mer”

5 CLASS CANCELED

WEEK 10

- 10 Valéry – *poems and essays* (see attached)
Stravinsky’s *Poetics of Music*
- 12 Stravinsky’s *Poetics of Music*
Listening: “Rite of Spring,” “Firebird”

WEEK 11

- 17 Forster’s *A Room with a View* (Part I)
Listening: Beethoven – Piano Sonata 10 in G major
- 19 Forster’s *A Room with a View* (Part II)
Listening: Schumann, Sonata 1, Opus 11

WEEK 12

- 24 Hughes poems (see attached) and Baldwin’s “Sonny’s Blues”
Listening: Robert Johnson, “Crossroads”; Bessie Smith, “Empty Bed Blues”; Ethel Waters, “West End Blues”; Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong, “St. Louis Blues”
- 26 THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

WEEK 13

December

- 1 Stevens poems and essays (attached)
- 3 Stevens poems and essays

WEEK 14

- 8 H.D. and Marianne Moore poems (tba)
- 10 Copland's *Music and Imagination*
Listening: Copland (tba)
* Final paper due

WEEK 15

- 15 Copland's *Music and Imagination*
Review of course

POETRY ASSIGNMENTS

Please be sure to read the following poems and essays in preparation for class discussion. As we get closer to the dates on which we will be discussing the poetry, it is also quite possible that I will add to the following list. This list, however, includes poems we will either discuss in class or poems which should inform class discussion and about which you might consider writing:

- Baudelaire (October 20, 22): "To the Reader," "The Albatross," "Elevation," "Correspondences," "Former Life," "Beauty," * "Hymn to Beauty," * "De Profundis Clamavi," * "Evening Harmony," * "An Invitation to Voyage," "Song of Autumn," "The Broken Bell," "Heautontimoroumenos," "The Swan," "The Voyage"
- Mallarmé (October 27, 29): * "Apparition," "Sea Breeze," "Sigh," "Sainte," * "The Afternoon of a Faun," "Will new alive the beautiful today," * "The Bell Ringer"
- Verlaine (October 27, 29): * "Moonlight," "Green," * "It weeps in my heart," "In the interminable," * "Autumn Song," "The sky, above the roof"
- Valéry (November 3, 10): "A Distinct Fire," * "The Spinner," * "The Footsteps," * "Psalm on a Voice," "The Sleeping Beauty," "How Calm the Hour Is," * "As on the Shore of the Ocean," Extracts from "A Discourse on the Declamation of Verse"
- Hughes (November 24): * "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," * "The Weary Blues," * "Harlem Night Song," "Night. Four Songs," * "Song for Billie Holiday," "Stars," "To Be Somebody," * "Trumpet Player," "Misery," "Dream Dust," "Monroe's Blues," "Shadow of the Blues," "Fantasy in Purple"

• Stevens (December 1, 3): “The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words,” and from “The Effects of Analogy,” “Peter Quince at the Clavier,” * “Tea at the Palaz of Hoon,” * “Sea Surface Full of Clouds,” “To the Roaring Wind,” * “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,” “To the One of Fictive Music,” * “The Idea of Order at Key West,” “Mozart, 1935,” “Variations on a Summer Day,” * “Of Modern Poetry”

• H.D. and Marianne Moore (December 8): tba