

Special Topics in Rhythm Studies (2000-level)

Title: Modalities of Rhythm I

Course Description:

This course provides musicians and non-musicians alike an overview of the multimodal dimensions and applications of rhythm for performative, communicative, therapeutic, spiritual and social purposes.

The first half of the course focuses on the exploration of fundamental questions such as: what is rhythm? Why do humans have rhythm, and how can rhythm be leveraged to facilitate well-being across the lifespan? This investigation emphasizes rhythm as a natural phenomenon not only central to music, but also fundamental to biological systems (diurnal rhythms), physical systems (planetary motion), speech, and performances over time (dance rhythms). Topics include: cosmology and circadian rhythms; biological perception, cognition and production of rhythm; physics of sound (vibration and pitch); multimodality; similarities and differences between rhythm and speech; talking drums and drum language cultural systems.

The second half of the course enables students to deepen their tacit knowledge and embodied practice of rhythm by taking part in the Music Is Healing voice, rhythm & movement practicum. The ensemble focuses on a repertoire of drum texts from different world cultures, while also developing their performance skills and musical vocabulary for production and composition. Through listening, vocalizing, embodying, transcribing and visualizing different rhythms, students will be able to develop their ability to understand complex polyrhythms and apply these skills to their own musical compositions. Hands-on practice involving digital audio workstations, drum machines and programming interfaces, as well as participation in a final performance involving the playtesting and evaluation of new musical interfaces is expected.

Tentative Topics:

Circadian rhythms: nature, cycles and time

Rhythm basics: Tempo, meter and syncopation

The physics of sound: vibration and pitch

The biology of rhythm: production, perception and cognition

Performing Time: The body as a drum

Mindful Drumming: Synchrony & entrainment

Rhythm notation, representation & multimodal symbol systems

Deconstructing the Beat: Race, ideology and discourse

Speech surrogacy, drum language and communication

Rhythm Technologies (drums/controllers/synthesizers/games)

Rhythm Generation: Algorithms and Drum Machines

Music Is Healing Practicum: Voice, Rhythm & Movement

Co-Design Clinic (Design Thinking Primer: Drumball)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03634527109377851>

Benny LeMaster & Ana Isabel Terminel Iberri (2021) Critical performative pedagogical encounters, or “Let’s try that again. But first, let’s breathe”, *Communication Education*, 70:3, 329-332, DOI: 10.1080/03634523.2021.1912791