

PERF 3014 MUSIC AND CRITICAL THOUGHT

Credit Points 10

Legacy Code 102573

Coordinator Michelle Stead ([https://directory.westernsydney.edu.au/search/name/Michelle Stead/](https://directory.westernsydney.edu.au/search/name/Michelle%20Stead/))

Description Music and Critical Thought considers definitions of music and how music is constituted. It asks how we encounter and experience music, and what makes a piece of music aesthetically pleasing and who decides. It asks whether the meanings attributed to music are as much intrinsic as they are cultural. The subject considers emotions and feelings in music, and why we would listen to music if it makes us feel sad. When music is used as an instrument of torture is it still music? How do we view the composer in the musical work? Where does creativity reside in a musical work? Is there a difference between musical thinking and thinking about music? Is music representational or immanent or both? Is music political? The subject provides an historical overview of the important debates and considers the poststructuralist critique of these debates. Students will design a question chosen from the topics covered in the subject, and retrieve and critically evaluate the appropriate literature for their project.

School Humanities & Comm Arts

Discipline Music

Student Contribution Band HECS Band 2 10cp

Check your fees via the Fees (https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/fees/) page.

Level Undergraduate Level 3 subject

Equivalent Subjects PERF 3015 - Music and Meaning PERF 3016 - Music and Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this subject, students should be able to:

1. define key critical terms and concepts in music
2. explain the critical debates in music
3. apply critical thinking to music and to music analysis
4. evaluate the poststructuralist intervention into critical thinking in music
5. design a research project
6. write a proposal for a research project
7. retrieve and provide a literature review for a research project
8. unfold a sustained, critical argument as an essay for a research project
9. Those attending Art of Sound will be able to: Develop, implement and promote Art of Sound activities and projects, guiding and collaborating with students across the Music program to further progress leadership, advanced production and performance skills. Involvement in Art of Sound will culminate in contribution to the program and coordination of the Creativity Unlimited Music Festival.

Subject Content

- What is music?
- What is critical thought?

- The music and meaning debate
- Emotion, feeling and music
- Music and representation
- Musical understanding
- Aesthetics and music
- The composer and the musical work
- Ethics, morality and music
- Music and torture
- Politics and music
- Poststructuralism and music

Assessment

The following table summarises the standard assessment tasks for this subject. Please note this is a guide only. Assessment tasks are regularly updated, where there is a difference your Learning Guide takes precedence.

Type	Length	Percent	Threshold	Individual/ Group Task	Mandatory
Debate	15-20 minutes	35	N	Group/ Individual	N
Short Answer	Weekly, in class	30	N	Individual	N
Essay	2,000 words	35	N	Individual	N
Participatio	Minimum 2 hours per fortnight	S/U	Y	Individual	Y

Prescribed Texts

- N/A

Teaching Periods

Autumn (2025)

Penrith (Kingswood)

On-site

Subject Contact Michelle Stead ([https://directory.westernsydney.edu.au/search/name/Michelle Stead/](https://directory.westernsydney.edu.au/search/name/Michelle%20Stead/))

View timetable (https://classregistration.westernsydney.edu.au/odd/timetable/?subject_code=PERF3014_25-AUT_KW_1#subjects)