

**PSYCH/MUSICCOG 3MB3: Cognitive Development & Music Education**  
**The School of the Arts and the Department of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour**  
**Winter 2014**

Tuesday: 11:30-12:20; Thursday 11:30-1:20; CNH 106

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**Overview:** This course will explore a number of fascinating questions, including: How do children learn to “understand” music? What does it mean to “understand” music, anyway? When does musical development begin? What is the relationship between language and music? Why does music regarded as “beautiful” in some cultures sound “painful” to our ears? Is western tonal music “better” than other forms of music? Does music make us smarter?

**Course Objectives:** The objectives of this course are:

- 1) To survey and discuss research on the acquisition of musical ability
- 2) Discuss ways in which this research can be used to inform current musical practices
- 3) To build critical reading, writing, thinking, and research skills

**Required Text:** None. A list of readings will be posted to *Avenue to Learn* and all articles can be downloaded for free from on campus. In the past pdfs of the reading have been posted on Avenue, but given changes in copyright laws this is no longer possible.

**Prerequisites:** MUSICCOG 2A03 or PSYCH 2MA3 and registration in any Music Cognition program (B.A., B.Mus., B.Sc.) or Honours Music; or MUSICCOG 2A03 or PSYCH 2MA3, two of PSYCH 2D03, 2E03, 2F03, 2H03, 2NO3, 2TT3 and registration in any Honours program.

**Email Policy:** You will be responsible for all information sent via email, as it is the preferred form of communication for the course. University policy dictates that all email communication between students and instructors must originate from their official McMaster University email accounts. This policy protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information and confirms the identities of both the student and instructor.

**Website Policy:** You are expected to check *Avenue to Learn* regularly for announcements, updates, and other information. It is your responsibility to keep up with the information provided on this site. Use of the website’s discussion boards is strongly encouraged, and, in the case of non-private inquiries (questions about course content and the running of this course, but *not* emails reporting illness or other private matters) is preferred to email.

Finally, students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. Continuation in

this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

**Policy for Written Work:** Work should be submitted in class on the day that it is due. Late work (not submitted during the specified class), should be turned into the Psychology department main office, PC-102, to be time- and date-stamped. Late assignments will not be accepted via email without prior arrangements. Late work is subject to a penalty of 3% per calendar day (i.e., an assignment due on Thursday submitted the following Monday would receive a deduction of 12%).

### **Course Requirements and Assessment**

**Assessment:** Your final mark will be based on your performance on two written exams (20% and 30%, respectively), a capstone paper and oral presentation (35%), a media analysis assignment (5%), and your participation in the online and in-class discussions (10%). The exams will cover lecture material *and* assigned readings, even if readings are not discussed in class.

**1) Exams (50%):** We will have two exams in the course. The first will be in class on Thursday, February 13, and the second will be scheduled by the registrar during the final exam period. The final exam will be cumulative, but with an emphasis on the second half of the course. The exams will consist of free responses to questions distributed in advance. You are permitted to work together in preparation for your exams, however the exam itself must be completed on your own. Notes, articles, and other materials are not permitted when taking the examinations. Note that if your cell phone rings or buzzes during an exam, then you will be docked 5% on that exam.

Exams are graded anonymously. Therefore, it is imperative that you write your name on a blank page at the end of the exam (separate from any page on which there are answers to be graded), rather than the front of the exam. Failure to do so will result in a deduction of up to 10 points.

**Missed Tests Policy:** If you experience a sudden medical condition that prohibits you from writing the exam, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor by email prior to the exam itself.

Additionally, McMaster has adopted a self-report tool, the McMaster Student Absence Form, to be used to report some (but not all) absences. The MSAF can be used, once per term, if you are absent from the university for a medical reason lasting fewer than 5 days. Longer absences or absences due to non-medical reasons must be reported to your Faculty or Program office, with documentation. Note that relief from term work may not necessarily be granted. Please make yourself familiar with the terms of using the MSAF at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>

Please note that a doctor's note to the Dean's office, with out without an MSAF report, does not exempt you from writing the exam, although medical documentation will be required of anyone requesting an alternate exam time.

**2) Media Analysis assignment (5%):** This short assignment is intended to get you critically evaluating music cognition research. You will be required to find one media article from a mainstream media source (newspaper, news magazine, popular science magazine, online/radio news source) discussing a music cognition research publication, as well as the original peer-reviewed publication. You are required to submit the article and publication, along with a short

write-up (three pages, double-spaced, size 12 font) on Thursday, January 16. Your write-up should evaluate the design, findings, and interpretation of the original experiment, and then discuss the strengths, weaknesses, interpretation, and misrepresentations (if any) of the media coverage.

**3) Final paper (35%):** As a “capstone” course, the major requirement will be a 15 page (double spaced, 12 point font) paper exploring a topic of the student’s choice related to the cognitive development of musical capacities. Paper topics may align with those discussed in class, be completely independent of those discussed in class, or some combination of the two. Note that topics must be approved by the instructor beforehand. In addition to summarizing and synthesizing the relevant literature, the papers should include 2 well-thought-out experiments relevant to this topic. You are not actually required to run these experiments, but they should be theoretically possible for you to complete in a year, if you chose to do so.

To help prepare for this assignment, students will be required to submit first a 1-paragraph summary including at least 3 references (February 6), and later a one-page summary with 5 references (February 27). The final paper will be due at the beginning of class on March 24. Each student will also be given time to present the results of their paper during the last few weeks of class. This presentation will count as 10% of your final grade.

To avoid the stress of procrastination, students should follow this timeline:

- **Jan 9-23th:** Start to think about potential topics. What aspects of cognitive development and music acquisition are you particular interested in? Try skimming through the syllabus and/or reading list and searching academic databases via the McMaster library.
- **Thursday, Jan 30<sup>th</sup>:** We will have an in-class discussion of potential topics. Have at least 3 proposed topics ready for discussion. It is highly recommended that you begin searching for literature on potential topics prior to this date so that you can be sure that there is sufficient research in this area.
- **Thursday, Feb 6<sup>th</sup>:** Submit a one-paragraph summary of your topic along with at least three references, of which at least two are not on the class reading list.
- **Thursday, Feb 27<sup>st</sup>:** Submit a one-page summary of your topic, including at least 5 citations/ references (at least four of which are not on the class reading list), as well as at least one proposed experiment on your topic. Note that this summary will be graded, and account for a portion of your final paper grade.
- **Tuesday, March 11<sup>th</sup>:** Peer-editing exercise in class, using a full draft of your paper.
- **Tuesday, Mar 25<sup>th</sup>:** Final paper due (beginning of class).

**4) Class participation (10%):** Thoughtful dialogue forms an essential component of mastering complex material. To this end, class participation is an important component of the course, and factors directly into final grades. Participation involves two aspects:

a) Submitting weekly discussion material to the TA via email no later than noon (12 pm) on Wednesday. The email should two questions that you would like to discuss further in class, and the third item should be something from the reading that you would like further clarification about. Please include “3MB3” in the subject line of your message to assist the TA with email management. Please do not email these items to the instructor.

b) Active participation in weekly class discussions. This includes contributing to discussions as well as actively listening to your peers. The expectation is that discussion will be

respectful and thoughtful. Comments or behaviours that are rude, disrespectful, or otherwise disruptive will NOT be tolerated.

The purpose of this component of the course is to (a) give you an opportunity to critically reflect on the readings/topics prior to class, so that you arrive ready to contribute to discussions, (b) allow students to take an active role in shaping the course narrative, and (c) to give you practice in discussing research with your peers.

**Grading Scale:** (The scale may change as necessary, but not without prior mention in class)

Grading for the class will be done according to the official McMaster University grading scale. Please note that “excellent” assignments warrant a grade of “A,” corresponding to a numeric value of 85-89. Only “outstanding” assignments warrant a grade of “A+,” in the range of 90-100.

90-100	85-89	80-84	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	57-59	53-56	50-52	0-49
A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F

**Note:** The instructor reserves the right to adjust final marks up or down depending on overall performance in the course. Students who do not pass the final exam will *not* have their mark adjusted up under any circumstances. Note that your final mark is nonnegotiable, unless a marking or mathematical error has been made.

**Academic Integrity:**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. The academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism (submission of work that is not one's own/for which other credit has been obtained)
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of this course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites regularly during the term and to note any changes.