

MUS 480: Advanced Seminar in Musicological Topics

Current and Upcoming Topics

Fall 2025 **Music and God**

Instructor: Aponte

This interdisciplinary seminar will explore the connection between art music and God. Though the focus will be on 20th-21st-century art music (including works by A. Pärt, G. Ligeti, and O. Messiaen), earlier compositions will be considered. Class assignments and discussion will deal with the aesthetic argument for the existence of God as articulated in the disciplines of philosophy and theology, but channeled from a musical perspective.

Spring 2026 **Sound**

Instructor: Gibson

An in-depth, advanced exploration of sound and how human beings experience it. We will draw on the rapidly expanding field of "Sound Studies," as well as on related areas of philosophy, ecology, acoustics, ethnomusicology, musicology, music theory, physics, and cognitive psychology.

Fall 2026 **Improvisation in World Cultures**

Instructor: Connell

An examination of musical improvisation within various global traditions, including (but not limited to) jazz, Indian ragas, Arabic maqam, Brazilian embolada, Baroque performance practice, the blues, and aleatoric music. In addition to readings and discussions on select musical cultures, students will create and participate in a variety of improvisational games and compositions.

Spring 2027 **TBA**

TBA

Instructor: Zhang

- MUS 480 Seminars are open to all music majors. Consult the JMU Undergraduate Catalog and the School of Music Undergraduate Studies Handbook for the requirements of your degree track and concentration.
- Address any questions to Profs. Aponte, Connell, Gibson, or Zhang
- Feel free to contact relevant faculty members with suggestions for seminar topics you would like to see offered
- We will make every effort to adhere to what appears above, but topics may occasionally change