

**Department:** Music

**Course No.:** 105 (H)

**Credits:** 3

**Title:** Music and Nature, Music and the Environment

**Contact:** Glenn Stanley

**Content Area:** CA 1 Arts and Humanities

**Catalog Copy:** MUSI 105 “Music and Nature, Music and the Environment”. Either Semester. Three credits. No previous training is required. No musical training required. An exploration of how 1) musicians have drawn upon nature as a source of inspiration, imitated and glorified nature, and 2) music has been used, in the recent past and continuing today, to call attention to the dangers facing the environment in an increasingly industrialized world with a growing population and patterns of settlement and production that threatens a fragile equilibrium between man and nature.

**Course Information:** This course has will be offered as part of an interdisciplinary block of Gen Ed courses for honors students on the theme “ Nature Transformed: Perspectives on Environment and Culture.” This course will fulfill an Area 1 requirement (Arts and Humanities) of the new general education curriculum. The course has three primary goals: 1) to introduce students to the materials and form of music; 2) to introduce students to the many ways in which composers of “western art” music have thematicized nature in their vocal and instrumental music 2) to introduce students to recent musics that speak out in defense of the environment and that incorporate the actual sounds of nature in their works.

This is a small class with a maximum enrollment of 25. Exams: Mid-term and Final Examination consist of essay, short-answer and multiple-choice questions. Weekly assignments based on readings and musical selections. Students are expected to read and listen in advance of the class in which the material will be discussed. Two 7-10 page papers are assigned: one is a paper on a topic chosen by the student in consultation with the instructor; one is a log of a week of musical experiences in various environments (dorm, classroom, car, etc.)

Within the general goals and objectives, there are three major themes. 1) Students develop listening skills that promote enhanced understanding and appreciation of music. This is undertaken through the detailed study of individual pieces on nature themes, e.g. a Vivaldi's “The Four Seasons”, Beethoven's The “Pastoral” Symphony. 2) Students study how nature has stimulated composers for almost the entire history of “western art” in their vocal and instrumental music. 3) Students learn how environmentally aware musicians have used their art to speak out in defense of nature and incorporate natural sounds and even places in their music.

**Meets Goals of Gen Ed: B. Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility;** Students study a subject about which the great majority has little or no experience, thus broadening their

intellectual horizons. The chronological approach and coverage of music in Western and Eastern Europe and music in the Americas on themes of nature and the environment expose them to many different historically phases of musical and general culture. Students master concepts, technical vocabulary and analytical skills in this new area. **E. Acquire awareness of their era and society;** The last several classes are devoted to twentieth-century American music that speaks in defense of nature and protests neglect and destruction of the environment. **F. Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience;** most of the students know little about this material that extends back into thirteenth-century Europe and explores a great variety of cultures and time periods. **G. Acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge;** The skills developed in critical listening to “classical” music can be taken from the classroom and applied to any music; thus the skills acquired in the course contribute over the long term to their engagement with all kinds of music. The enhancement of the student's consciousness of nature can contribute to their increasing awareness of its significance for culture as well as its fragility.

**CA1 Criteria:** **A. Investigations and historical/critical analyses of human experience;** As specified in the answers to question 1, the course introduces students to one of the major manifestations of human experience. Moreover, it considers music in a broader cultural context, thus emphasizing music's “embeddedness” in more general patterns of human activity and ensuring that music is approached from an “artistic-humanistic” perspective. Moreover, it is part of an inter-disciplinary project that covers other fields (economics, history, visual arts, etc.) **D. Comprehension and appreciation of written, graphic and/or performance art forms;** Music is a performance art. Live performance is integrated into the course.