

## **Music 478Q Musical Cultures: Worlds of Music in London**

### **Syllabus for Study Abroad Program in London**

**Fall 2025 or Spring 2026**

**Prof. R. Anderson Sutton**

#### **Course description**

This course will engage students in active and collective exploration of the diverse range of musical life in contemporary London. I choose the title “worlds of music” to convey the global nature of London and an inclusive approach that focuses not just on the most typical or most visible or most popular, but suggests instead a panoramic perspective (London’s “musical landscape”). As one of the world’s most international cities, London boasts a multi-cultural breadth that is nothing short of spectacular. One of the best ways to come to “know” this is through first-hand experience of its diverse music as performed in a variety of social contexts. London’s musical offerings are numerous, of course--from its operas, symphonies, and chamber music performed in famous concert halls and its sacred anthems, evensong, and hymns in historic churches and cathedrals, to folk music and contemporary jazz in pubs and clubs, and, beyond these, its range of musical styles from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean at festivals, cultural centers, and other venues. It can be baffling at times to navigate this complex set of musical worlds, but the course is structured to provide students with the tools to do so. And it is guaranteed to be an exciting and rewarding experience. The readings, discussions in class, and group and individual experiences outside the class will combine to create awareness and appreciation for new musical sounds, confidence and sensitivity in how to engage with people (musicians and audience members) of varied cultural backgrounds, and informed cultural relativity, grounded in tolerance and understanding of cultural difference.

#### **The Setting: London, A Global City**

One could scarcely think of another city anywhere that offers as much cultural diversity as London. For centuries it was the largest city in the world and the nucleus of the British Empire. The twentieth century saw the gradual end of formal colonial rule, but the ties established and the sheer economic powerhouse that London has been, and still is, to a great extent, have drawn peoples from many parts of the former empire and beyond. Just as one can find almost any kind of food from around the world in London, so, too, can one find an enormous variety of music that is not English, or British, or Western. And for many of the cultures represented in London, we can find skilled musicians, presenting some of the highest quality music of their respective traditions. Of course, there is no shortage of venues to hear Western music of almost any type, from the Royal Albert Hall and Wigmore Hall, to clubs and pubs, and museums—even the National Gallery offers occasional free concerts on rare instruments held in its collection. Beyond these are cultural centers, universities, and embassies that host musical study and musical performances. Among those I am most familiar with from recent trips to London are (1) the Barbican, for a range of performances, with frequent concerts of Indian music; (2) the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London), which offers occasional concerts and workshops in a variety of music from Asia and Africa; (3) the Indonesian Embassy, which houses

a magnificent set of Indonesian gamelan instruments and an active study group; (4) the Korean British Cultural Exchange, which presents performances and workshops in Korean popular and traditional music.

### **Course Objectives:**

- By the end of the semester, students will know through experience the musical diversity of the city of London, including traditions of English folk, classical, popular, and sacred music, along with a representative variety of other music—from Asia and other world regions.
- They will know through experience how to learn about music as an ethnomusicologist does--by attending performances and rehearsals, and by talking to those involved (the musicians, students, and audience members).
- They will have produced written reports about specific musical encounters they have experienced (some carried out with all class members) and a final project resulting from their independent project research).
- They will have participated in regular discussions with other members of the class about various aspects of their musical encounters (the musical sound and the social circumstances in which music is performed and learned).
- They will emerge with a sense of the magnitude of London's cultural riches, an appreciation for the varieties of meaning and value that music has in people's lives, and—enhanced by new experience—a new level of acceptance and respect for cultural diversity and individual difference.

### **Study Abroad Program Objectives:**

These objectives correspond closely with the Program Learning Objectives specified for Study Abroad (SAC PLOs): that students participating in Study Abroad should gain 1) a deeper knowledge and understanding of other cultures and their environments; 2) different perspectives in regard to other nations; 3) increased capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints; and 4) increased respect and tolerance for differences.

- The readings, discussions, and musical encounters outside the classroom are clearly aimed to lead to the deeper knowledge and understanding of other cultures (SAC PLO #1).
- The class-related activities, together with living in London for a semester, will bring into sharp focus different perspectives in regard to other nations—not just towards the UK/ England but towards the many diasporic cultures we will encounter in London (SAC PLO #2).

- Their analytical capacity will be greatly enhanced by bringing together the class readings and listening assignments to critically assess and discuss their lived experiences out in various parts of the city (SAC PLO #3).
- All of this, plus the inevitable adjustments to living in a global city in a foreign country, will result in increased respect and tolerance of difference (SAC PLO #4).

### **Study Abroad Course Student Learning Objectives:**

More specifically, the structure of the course, its assignments (reading, listening, and ethnomusicological field project), its method of delivery (primarily discussion in class; observation and interaction outside of class), map well onto the following Study Abroad Course Student Learning Objectives.

- The course as structured and conceived, amplified by residence in London, to address SAC SLO #1: *that students will become more aware of their own cultural values and biases*--not only in their opinions, but also in their musical tolerance and taste.
- Almost all activities this course involves will contribute directly to SAC SLO #2: *that students demonstrate knowledge of diversity with a focus on the population or topic of interest in the specific Study Abroad program*. All of the music covered and the experiences out in the city will focus on the topic (the music of London, including varieties of British music and music of other cultural origins performed in London) and the population (different peoples of London).
- The discussions in class, and especially the interaction with musicians and audience members at events the students attend and report on in written assignments and oral presentations directly address SAC SLO #3: *that students learn to communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse individuals and groups*. One of the most important take-aways from the ethnographic approach to the study of musical traditions of different ethnic and national origins is that it requires such communication skills; and we will hone those skills as the semester progresses.
- Discussions of the theoretical and cultural background readings, coupled with the interactions students will have while doing their ethnographic work will require that they achieve SAC SLO #4: *to be able to demonstrate an increased capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints*. Instructor feedback on written projects and discussion in class will contribute to this capacity.

### **Preparation and Prerequisites for this course**

No previous formal training or experience in music performance is required, nor is the ability to read musical notation. Everyone knows something about music (and usually more than they think they do). We all have musical tastes, music we like in certain situations, music to listen to privately, or to hear in live performance, often with friends or family. In short, we all have “musical background.” That, coupled with an interest in learning about music and experiencing new varieties of music in new contexts, qualifies you for this course!

## Method/Approach

This course emphasizes interaction and experiential learning: discussion in the classroom and engagement the music communities we encounter London. Each week, students are expected to complete assignments before class and to come to class regularly, prepared to discuss the assigned readings and listening in relation to their own experiences and opinions. Attendance and active participation in class are mandatory. More than 2 unexcused absences will result in a reduction in points toward the grade for the course. There will be some lecturing to introduce new material and to explain terminology, and there will be some in-class participatory activities. The assignments, in-class discussions, and lectures will be geared toward preparation for and follow-up after the live musical experiences in the city. *NOTE:* This syllabus offers a likely scenario, but will need to adapt to the schedules of actual performances students can attend during the semester and these will not be publicized until closer to the beginning of our semester in London. Some of the activities, though, are regular throughout the year and for these I already have commitments from my network of contacts in London.

## Course Requirements and Grading/Assessment

The course grade is based on written assignments (two short papers and a formal research project), attendance and participation in class discussions, a mid-semester report on the research project, with class discussion, and a presentation near the end of the semester covering key points findings from your research.

1. The first of the two short papers is a reflective musical autobiography (**2-3 pages**), in which you write about the music that is and has been meaningful and enjoyable to you, now and in the past, what aspects of these kinds of music you like, and who and what experiences have shaped your preferences. This can include talking briefly about kinds of music you do not like! And, in line with our plan to experience a variety of music in London, reflect in this paper on the aspects of your own musical life that may contribute to your preparation to encounter and try to understand new kinds of music. (SAC SLO #1)
2. The second of the two short papers will be a report (**2-3 pages**) on one of the musical events we have attended as a class. You are expected to draw on the vocabulary you have developed from readings and discussions to describe the musical sound, the physical and social setting, and performer and audience behavior. Comment on how this event compares/contrasts with any recent event you experienced before coming to London. (SAC SLO #1, #2, and #4)
3. The final written assignment is a paper based on your independent research project, **10-12 pages**, excluding bibliography and any supplementary audio-visual material, such as video clips from your field research. The paper should demonstrate the knowledge you have gained about the particular genre or type of music you have chosen to investigate and also convey the ethnographic fieldwork methodology you used, and what you learned culturally from your interactions. (All four SAC SLOs, esp. #2 and #4)

4. In-class discussions of readings and listening, and brief oral reports on research in the city. These discussions and feedback from oral reports are opportunities for each student to assess and rethink their understanding of the theoretical issues in the readings, and to sharpen their approach to their individual field research. Sharing thoughts and opinions orally in the classroom will improve the students' ability, in situations where contrasting opinions will be aired, to engage and communicate effectively with others. (SAC SLOs #2 and #3)
5. In addition to oral interchanges in class (described above in item 4), each student will prepare and deliver a 10-15-minute oral presentation, aimed at communicating to the class the findings of the research project and the ways in which it relates to the issues that have formed the focus of the class, the challenges encountered in conducting the research, and the take-aways that the presenter intends to convey to the other students. (SAC SLOs #1, #2, and #4)

### Grading

Musical autobiography	10% (SLO #1)
Initial research project proposal	5% (SLO #2)
Musical event report	10% (SLO #1, #2, and #4)
Class attendance (including events)	15% (SLO #2)
In-class discussion & short oral updates	20% (SLO #2 and #3)
Oral presentation on research	15% (SLO #2, #3, and #4)
Final written paper on research	25% (All SLOs, esp. #2 and #4)
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	100%

### Grading Scale:

97%-100% = A+	77%-79% = C+
93%-96% = A	73%-76% = C
90%-92% = A-	70%-72% = C-
87%-89% = B+	67%-69% = D+
83%-86% = B	60%-66% = D
80%-82% = B-	Below 60% = F

Examples of themes/issues for developing a cultural understanding of music: Music of Everyday Life; Music & Migration; Local Music Communities; Music of Worship and Belief; Music and Dance; Music and Memory/Trauma; Music and Identity (ethnic, racial, national, regional, gender); Music and Politics; Music and the Commercial World.

### Week-by-Week Schedule of Assignments and Activities

NOTE: Students are encouraged to attend as many evening events as possible; but the requirement is one of the first two (Weeks 3 & 4) and any two of the other four (Weeks 6, 8, 9, & 10)

**Week 1:**

Introduction, course expectations, overview of musical activity and venues in London

Ways of listening to music and experiencing musical events

*Read:* Titon 2016: 1-23.

**Week 2:**

Elements of a “Music Culture”: sound, instruments, people, values; and doing “fieldwork.”

*Read:* Titon 2016: 24-32; Wade 2013: 195-204.

- Daytime: visit to the Royal College of Music Museum (S. Kensington)

**Due: Musical Autobiography**

**Week 3:**

Music of the British Isles (I): genres of folk music & dance (English, Scottish, and Irish):

Ballads, bagpipes, and fiddles; jigs and morris dancing

*Read:* Williams 2022: 278-299; Winter & Keegan-Phipps: 78-101.

(Optional: Heaney 2023: 398-421.)

**Due: Research Project Proposal:** topic/title, brief description of project, short bibliography

- Evening: attend a musical event (pub session or concert)

**Week 4:**

Music of the British Isles (II): introduction to classical and sacred music in England

Purcell, Handel, Haydn, Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten

*Read:* Grout and Palisca 2001: 320-323, 407-417, 473-476, 689-692;

Salzman 2002: 81-83, 107-108.

- Late Afternoon or Evening: attend an English concert or church service with music

**Week 5:**

Music in Diasporic Cultures: Introduction

*Read:* Um 2005: 1-13; Ramnarine 2007:1-17

Miller & Shahriari 2012: 145-152 (Thai music)

- Daytime: Visit to the Thai Music Circle, at Thai Buddhist Temple (Wimbledon)

**Week 6:**

Music from South Asia (India, Pakistan, Nepal): basics (in class)

*Read:* Reck. 2016. “Asia/India.” In *Worlds of Music, Shorter Version*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 188-200;

Farrell, Bowmick and Welch 2005: 104-128.

- Evening: Attend a concert of Indian classical music (Barbican or other venue)

**Week 7:**

Individual consultation with instructor on final project field research

**Brief interim oral reports** and discussion in class on field research for final project

**Week 8:**

Music from West Africa and the British Caribbean in London

*Read:* Miller & Shahriari 2012: 334-348; 385-400.

Ghanaian drumming workshop (in class or at SOAS)

- Evening: Attend concert of West African or Caribbean music (Kings Place, N. London)

**Week 9:**

Music from Indonesia in London

*Read:* Mendonca 2002: 151-163; 240-256.

(Recommended: Sutton 2016: 209-242.)

- Evening or Late Afternoon: Javanese Gamelan Group Siswa Sukra (Indonesian Embassy)

**DUE: Second short paper (event report)**

**Week 10:**

Music from East Asia (China, Korea, Japan) in London

*Read:* Choose *one* chapter on Music of East Asia from Rommen & Nettle, eds. 2021. *Excursions in World Music*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed.: “China and Taiwan,” by Lei Ouyang; “Korea,” by Joshua Pilzer; or “Japan,” by Marié Abe.

Introductory workshop on Chinese instrumental music (in class, or at SOAS, Univ. of London)

- Evening: Korean music performance (depending on schedule, popular or traditional)

**Week 11:**

**Oral Presentations** of individual projects, each followed by Q&A.

**Week 12:**

Wrap up Oral Presentations. Summary, review discussion.

**Due: Final written version of field research project**

**Listenings: (List to be distributed to students, with access via Laulima/or new UH LMS)**

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