

# MUCT 514: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Analysis (3 Credit Hours)

## 20<sup>th</sup> Century Innovators: John Cage

### Syllabus, Fall 2003

College of Musical Arts, Bowling Green State University

**COURSE MEETING TIME:** Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 12:30-1:20pm

**LOCATION:** MMAC 2117

#### REQUIRED TEXTS:

Pritchett, James. *The Music of John Cage*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. ISBN 0-521-56544-8

Cage, John. *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage*. New Hampshire: Wesleyan University Press, 1973. ISBN 0-8195-6028-6

#### ADDITIONAL MATERIALS:

Supplemental handouts will be provided.

Listening assignments and other readings will be available in general circulation on reserve in the Music Library, and/or on Blackboard.

**INSTRUCTOR:** Dr. Elaine Lillios, Phone: 419.372.9482–Office: MMAC 2139

Email: lillios@bgnnet.bgsu.edu–Office hours: Monday 1:30-2:30; Tuesday & Thursday 2:15-3:30; other times by appointment.

**OBJECTIVES:** Students enrolled in Contemporary Music Pro Seminar will expand their knowledge and understanding about one of the most influential yet controversial 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Composers, John Cage. Students will demonstrate their growing knowledge of Cage's life and creative output by completing reading and listening assignments, keeping a written journal, completing individual and small group assignments, creating compositions, analyzing and/or performing Cage's music, and completing research papers and/or presentations.

#### GRADING:

Student grades will be determined as follows:

10%	Attendance and general in-class participation
20%	Individual journal entries
20%	Group participation and journal entries
20%	Group in-class presentations
30%	Final project

#### ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend the course on a regular basis, as successful assimilation of the material is fairly difficult to accomplish without consistent attendance and participation. Students who must miss class for any reason should contact the instructor 24 hours prior to class when possible, via email and/or phone. In the case of serious illness, course assignments and readings may be made up with a doctor's note. Students missing three classes or greater will be docked accordingly.

#### CAGE JOURNAL

Students are required to keep a "Cage" journal, which will be turned in for assessment after each course module has been completed. The instructor will assign all required journal entries. Additional entries are welcome, however, and may consist of notes on pieces you've listened to, critiques on student assignments, critiques of your own work, and any other entries you wish to make (i.e. commentary on the readings or things talked about in class).

Each journal module is worth 100 points individually, and 100 points for your group entries. Journals will be docked in the following way for tardiness: Subtract 10 points if not turned in during class on the day due. Subtract 10 additional points for each day (including weekends) that journal is not turned in prior to 2:00pm.

#### COURSE MODULES

The course is divided into five modules, each focusing on an aspect of Cage's artistic development and output. Students will spend time investigating these important "Cage components", creating journal entries, researching writings and scores, creating compositions, and/or presenting class performances of appropriate works. Course modules are listed below:

## **COURSE MODULE 1: Indeterminacy/Music of non-intention/I-Ching**

In small group settings and individually, students will investigate the I-Ching, learning about how Cage employed it as a guide for composing.

Journal Entry:

- Small group
  - As a group, devise a question to ask the I-Ching. Consult the I-Ching for an answer, and discuss possible interpretations as a group. Create a 10-minute in-class presentation illustrating your process and outcome.
- On your own
  - Devise a question to ask the I-Ching. Consult the I-Ching for an answer, and think about what this answer might mean to you in your life. Document your process as a journal entry.

Module presentation:

- Small group
  - As a group, select a piece in which John Cage employs indeterminacy. As a group, research the background of the piece, find a score and recording, and prepare an analysis of the composition, focusing on how Cage employed indeterminacy. Create a 20-minute in-class presentation on the piece, including its factual information, a brief listening excerpt (or performance), and your analysis.

## **COURSE MODULE 2: New Notations**

In small group settings and individually, students will investigate Cage's alternate notation systems.

Journal Entry:

- On your own
  - Reflect on the notational system Cage employs in the piece your group analyzes in this module. Comment on the following: What (if anything) does the alternate notational system accomplish that could not be accomplished via traditional notation? Is the alternate notational system necessary? How does this notational system help/hinder performance? Is this system a viable system of notation, or is it simply a way of avoiding traditional notation? Compose a thoughtful 2-page essay considering these questions and any others you might devise.

Module presentation:

- Small group
  - As a group, select a composition in which Cage employs alternate notation. Create a "notation and performance guide" for the work, explaining the notations and how to interpret them in performance. Create a 20-minute in-class presentation on the piece, including its factual information, a brief listening excerpt (or performance), your guide to performing the piece, and detailed notational discoveries. You may not select a piece already completed by your group, nor by another group.

## **COURSE MODULE 3: Cage's Writings and Lectures**

In small group settings and individually, students will investigate Cage's many writings and lectures.

Journal Entry:

- Small group
  - As a group, select the name of a composer, performer, or other important historical or contemporary figure. Create a mesostic on this name in the spirit of John Cage. Use creative fonts and layouts in purposeful ways to illustrate your mesostic.
- On your own
  - Select a name of your choice. Create a mesostic in the spirit of John Cage. Use creative fonts and layouts in purposeful ways to illustrate your mesostic.

Module presentation:

- Small group
  - Share your mesostic with the class in a 10-minute presentation. Project the mesostic via an overhead or computer-projection. Read the mesostic and discuss how the group made decisions (using the I-Ching? Using intuitive decisions? Using some other indeterminate or chance operation?) to select the name and text of the mesostic.

- Select one of Cage's lectures. Prepare a 30-minute in-class presentation on the lecture, including background on the lecture (date, location, reason, etc.). Select one or two group members to read the lecture (or a significant excerpt if the lecture is long), or present a recording of Cage reading the lecture himself. Set the stage appropriately, presenting the lecture in the spirit of Cage. Share your research/analysis/findings on the lecture, including meaning, non-meaning, sub-meaning, etc.

## **COURSE MODULE 4: Exploring New Sounds, Silence, and Electronics**

In small group settings and individually, students will investigate Cage's explorations with new sounds, silence, and electronics.

Journal Entry:

- Small group
  - Using the I-Ching or another chance operation, select from among the three topics listed above: new sounds, silence, or electronics. Document the procedure by which you select a single topic. Once you have selected this topic, discuss as a group what this topic means relative to Cage. In your journal, take notes on the discussion.
- On your own
  - What does silence mean to you? Discuss in a thoughtful 2-page essay the role of silence in the music of John Cage, citing one or two specific pieces you have studied on your own or in a group. Is John Cage trying to help us listen to/think about silence differently? What is the role of silence relative to sound? to performance? to composition? Discuss your experiences with silence and how your view of silence has changed since studying the music/writings of Cage.

Module presentation:

- Small group
  - Select a composition by John Cage that focuses on the topic your group selected. Analyze that composition, discussing in detail how it represents an important facet of Cage's evolution as a composer/philosopher. Include relevant information such as his writings (or other writings) on the piece, new notational systems implemented, and whether it employs indeterminacy and/or choice/chance operations. Prepare a 20-minute in-class presentation on the piece, discussing it stylistically, formally, sonically, and etc. Include a performance or recording (excerpt if the piece is lengthy).

## **COURSE MODULE 5: Collaborations/Influences**

John Cage was inspired by and worked with many authors, artists, and other composers. This module explores his influences and collaborations. (a sample list will be provided in class)

Journal Entry:

- Small group
  - Once your "topic" has been assigned, meet as a small group and create a bibliographic list concerning your given collaborations/influences. Include scores, recordings, films, concert dates (if applicable), books, writings, videos, documentaries, web sites and/or any other fixed item that references your topic. You may include criticisms or writings by other individuals about Cage and his influences/topics. Each group member should contribute at least 5 resources to this effort. The group will compile its information in a logical fashion and prepare a printed list to share with class members.
- On your own
  - Reflect on Cage's collaborative efforts. How did collaborating with others expand Cage's own creativity? Compose a thoughtful 2-page essay on Cage's collaborations and how they affected him creatively, musically, artistically, and philosophically. You may speak in general terms or focus on one particular collaborator/influence (different from the one your group selected).

Module presentation:

- Small group
  - As a class, we will use the I-Ching or another chance operation to select a collaborator/influence for each group to explore. Once your "topic" has been assigned, do research on Cage's influence by or interactivity with that person, group, etc. Present a 25-minute in-class presentation, outlining Cage's relationship with that person/group. Discuss pieces and/or writings he created for/with that person/group. You may present videos, films, pieces, lectures, readings, or other pertinent items related to your topic. In the event that there is one particular piece, performance, or lecture that stands out as exemplary of Cage's collaboration/influence with/by your "topic", you should discuss it in greater detail, providing an analysis or recreating a performance.

## **FINAL PROJECT**

Students may select (by purposeful choice or using indeterminacy) from among the following final project options:

- Composition/Procedural Analysis/Discussion
- Composition/Performance/Discussion
- Performance/Discussion
- Research paper/presentation

More detailed information on final projects will be provided as the semester progresses. Final projects are due at the beginning of the final exam time, Wednesday 17 December, 1:15. Each student will present his/her project to the class during the final exam time. Time allocations will be provided later in the semester.

Students enrolled in MUCT 514 will also complete a second final project smaller in scope. Details will be provided as the semester progresses.

## **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

The College of Musical Arts complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodation for qualified students with disability. If you have an established disability as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act and would like to request accommodation, please see me as soon as possible. My office hours and office number are shown on this syllabus.

## **CHEATING**

Cheating of any type will not be tolerated in this course and will result in an automatic grade of "F" in the course, the removal of the student from the course, and immediate reporting of the student's actions to the Office of the Dean of Students and to the Office of the Dean of the College of Musical Arts. Cheating includes collaboration on any outside assignments that might be made on an individual basis for a grade, including regular homework assignments and preparation of case materials for submission. It also includes plagiarism, unauthorized preparation of notes for examinations, use of such notes during an examination, looking at another student's examination answers, allowing another student to look at your own examination answers, or the requesting or passing of information during an examination.

⇒ **FINAL PROJECTS DUE/FINAL PRESENTATIONS:  
WEDNESDAY, 17 DECEMBER, 2003–1:15-3:15pm**