

Musicology Comprehensive Exam Guide
School of Music
University of Missouri
(last update: August 2019)

I. Goals and Purpose of the Exam

To partially ensure that the student completing the course requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Musicology has an adequate command of basic historical knowledge of the musical style eras, can identify a musical score by the presence of characteristics of those eras, and has the ability to discern critically those features of an era and its music that act as identifiers to place aesthetic and stylistic elements as well as composers and their artistic creations reliably within a certain timeframe and cultural context.

A second part of the exam (designing a university course to be prepared in advance) is intended to offer a practical experience with a target audience that the student will likely confront at some point in their professional career. This assignment also requires critical knowledge-appropriate decisions based on the target audience at each juncture of the task.

II. Advance Assignments

A. Design a university course on [a topic of the student's special interest agreed upon with the faculty as soon as decision to take the comprehensive exam is made] with the following conditions:

- 1) for non-music undergraduates at the University of Missouri
- 2) to be completed in five weeks
 - class will meet Monday, Wednesday, Friday
 - class will meet for 50 minutes per session
 - class will meet for 15 class sessions
 - *four out-of-class assignments due on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Monday
 - *the last class will take the form of a written exam with a listening component. Provide final exam questions with instructions in appropriate format.
- 3) *Prepare a syllabus for the course with the following documents:
 - the expressed goals of the course
 - a bibliography of required readings
 - a required listening list
 - a calendar of class sessions with the topic for each session along with the identification of compositions to be studied during each

*Prepare these items in hard copy to be submitted at the comprehensive exam. You will also be asked to defend your strategy and decisions for the course construction orally during the exam.

II. Advance Assignments (cont.)

B. Style pieces

Prepare one composition you find to be the most compelling expression of historical style for each of the seven so-called eras in the history of music: Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classic, Romantic, Modern, and Post-Modern. You will be asked to defend your choices and explain each work in terms of its stylistic features and perceived importance for the period in question. The discussion will be orally, but you can bring notes to help you stay organized.

III. 60 minutes before the exam

You will be presented with a collection of score copies and a list of terms one hour before the oral portion of the comprehensive exam.

TERMS – select 12 from list of 15 to discuss with us.

SCORES – select 11 from packet of 12 to discuss with us. Put the selected scores into chronological order from earliest to most recent in terms of composition date.

Prepare for your discussion by considering matters of style, historical context, possible time period, and composer of the work (as well as the name of the piece if you recognize it).

IV. Breakdown of time reserved for oral exam (2 to 2.5 hrs.)

Approximately as follows: 1 hour or so to discuss the musical scores you have been given, 1/2 hour to present your representative style pieces you prepared before the exam, 15 minutes or so for the definitions, and 15 minutes for you to present your ideas for a university course. You can bring notes, of course, for the representative style pieces and class syllabus you have prepared ahead of time along with the materials you will present to us at the exam.

All of the exam will be oral. You may make notes from your score study and definitions considerations in the hour preceding the exam to guide your responses, but no access to Internet or other help aids will be allowed as you are preparing.

V. Results

Exams will be graded pass/fail, and no follow-up projects to remedy weaknesses exhibited during the exam will be permitted. If a student does not pass the exam, he/she will be allowed one retake the next semester (not including summer).