MUSIC THEORY AND COGNITION

music.northwestern.edu/academics/areas-of-study/music-theory-and-cognition

Undergraduates majoring in theory or cognition receive a broad education in music analysis and the cognitive sciences. The emphasis is on cognitive musicology, whereby music is studied using the tools and insights of cognitive science and musicological research.

Programs of Study

- Music Cognition Major (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/music/music-theory-cognition/music-cognition-major/)
- Music Cognition Minor (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/music/music-theory-cognition/music-cognition-minor/)
- Music Theory Major (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/music/music-theory-cognition/music-theory-major/)

Music Theory Courses

MUS_THRY 251-0 Intro to Music Cognition (1 Unit) An introduction to music cognition for music undergraduates as well as students with limited music backgrounds. Readings primarily from secondary sources, with some primary sources as well.

MUS_THRY 313-0 Analytical Approaches to World Musics (1 Unit) Bienen School of Music.

MUS_THRY 316-0 16th Century Counterpoint (1 Unit) Contrapuntal textures from two to four voices. Cadence and form, melodic line and motive, rhythm, simple and complex imitation, and treatment of dissonance in the sacred music of Lassus, Josquin, and Palestrina.

MUS_THRY 317-0 Historical Improvisation (1 Unit) The study of harmony at the keyboard as learned by musicians since the early 17th century. Figured bass is an essential subject for performers of early music (including Bach and Mozart) and a key to the analysis of most pre-20th century European music.

MUS_THRY 318-0 18th Century Counterpoint (1 Unit) Baroque dance suite, chorale prelude, invention, fugue, chiefly involving the music of J. S. Bach. Melodic, harmonic, structural characteristics; contrapuntal techniques.

MUS_THRY 321-0 Classical Form (1 Unit) An examination of phrase-construction and punctuation in the musical forms of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The focus will typically be on Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven’s skillful use of conventional formal structures to engage creatively with listeners’ expectations.

MUS_THRY 322-1 Rhythm and Meter I (1 Unit) Close reading and discussion of key canonical texts from the last three decades’ rich scholarship in rhythm and meter as well as innovative new work. Each student completes a substantial analytical and/or theoretical paper.

MUS_THRY 335-0 Selected Topics in Music Theory (1 Unit) Topics vary; announced before registration. May be repeated.

MUS_THRY 336-0 Selected Topics in Music Cognition (1 Unit) Topics vary; announced before registration. May be repeated.

MUS_THRY 340-0 Analysis of Recorded Performance (1 Unit) Bienen School of Music.

MUS_THRY 341-0 Sound to Structure (1 Unit) Music theory privileges the parameters of pitch (as melody, harmony, and counterpoint) and rhythm (as surface rhythm and meter), but music as experienced is much more than the sum of these. This class engages how musical experience arises from and is shaped by other parameters, notably timbre, register, texture, and dynamics, across musical styles and periods.

MUS_THRY 345-0 Experimental and Empirical Methods in Music Theory (1 Unit) Bienen School of Music.

MUS_THRY 348-0 Corpus Studies (1 Unit) Bienen School of Music.

MUS_THRY 355-0 Analysis of Post-Tonal Music (1 Unit) Techniques for analysis of atonal and nonfunctional tonal music, including serial, set-theoretic, and parametric approaches. Emphasis on music of Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, Stravinsky, and Debussy. Selected readings in analytic literature. Prerequisite: MUSIC 211-3 or equivalent.

MUS_THRY 385-0 Senior Project (1 Unit)

MUS_THRY 390-0 Music Theory Colloquium (0 Unit) (0) Discussion of current research in music theory and cognition.

MUS_THRY 399-0 Independent Study (0.5-1 Unit)