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 Minor (https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/music/music-theory-cognition/music-theory-minor/)

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 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 322-2 Rhythm and Meter II (1 Unit) Among the most remarkable developments in the music theory of recent decades have been the rapid advances in the study of rhythm and meter. This course combines close readings of canonical texts and innovative work in this field with analysis of rhythm and meter in common-practice repertoire.