

## MUS 433: *Development of Italian Verismo Opera*

Fall Semester

3.0 Credits

Location: On Campus (as safety precautions permit)

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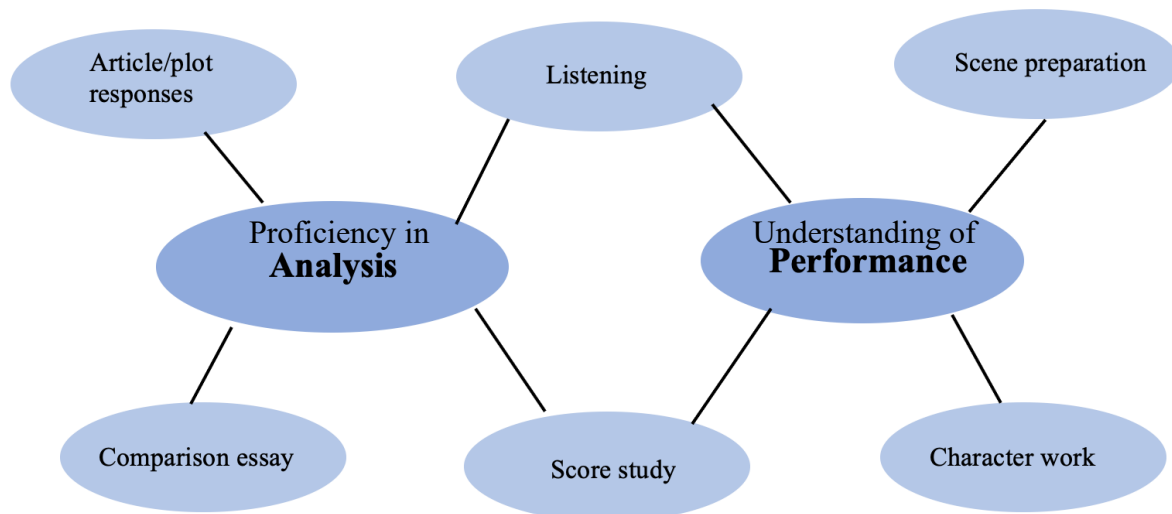
### **Course Description:**

A survey of Italian *verismo* operatic repertoire written in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries through discussion, analysis, and listening.

### **Course Objectives:**

We will discuss the elements of *verismo* opera, its development, and its impact on the trajectory of opera into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

Students will gain a working knowledge of *verismo* operas, composers, and themes, and how to apply them to current performance practice.



### **Class Format and Expectations:**

- In order to be successful in this class, students should come prepared. This includes completing readings and plot responses, preparing for discussions, listening to excerpts, and preparing music ahead of time. What you have to say matters. Your voice is needed in class!
- We will listen to excerpts almost every day in class, but please listen outside of class, too. A listening journal entry is due for each opera covered in class.
- All assignments are due to their corresponding dropbox on eCourseware. If you have issues with your eCourseware, please contact university tech support.

- Please check your eCourseware and university email on a regular basis for changes in the course. All communications to me should take place over the university email platform.
- After Week 8, I will send an optional anonymous feedback form via email so that I can learn how to better serve you. Please consider completing the form.
- Questions are always welcome. If I can clarify anything, I am more than happy too. Plus, it may lead to a great discussion with your classmates!
- There may be themes within the operas covered that are taboo or uncomfortable. If this will somehow limit your participation in the course, please let me know as soon as possible so we can work out a solution.
- If you feel overwhelmed or need help with anything, please do not hesitate to reach out! Your success is important to me.

**Inclusivity Statement:**

The University of Memphis community includes members with a rich variety of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. As your professor, I am committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. While working together to build this community, I ask you to be open to the views of others, honor their uniqueness and beliefs, communicate with one another in a respectful manner, and use opportunities this course provides to further support inclusivity across the university community.

**Academic Support:** See <https://www.memphis.edu/academicsuccess/about/index.php> for information about academic support programs and services

**Required Text:**

Students will need orchestral and vocal scores for the following operas:

- *Tosca* (Puccini)
- *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Mascagni)
- *Pagliacci* (Leoncavallo)

Ability to read music is helpful, but not necessary for this course. Students are welcome to purchase hard copies; however, scores can be found in the public domain on IMSLP. All other readings will be provided through eCourseware.

**Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to attend every class. This is a discussion-based course, and participation of each student is vital. Please email me at least 24 hours in advance of an absence. Students with 3 or more absences will see their letter grade lowered (A to B, B to C, etc.)

**Grading Scale:**

A = 90-100  
 B = 80-89  
 C = 70-79  
 D = 60-69  
 F = below 60

### **Evaluation/Assessment:**

1. **Participation – 20%:** This is an interactive class. Students are expected to come prepared and ready discuss.
2. **Reading/Plot Responses– 10%:** While there is not a required textbook for the class, students will be expected to submit a 1-page response for every article or reading assigned, and a 1-page response to the plot/libretto we study each week.
3. **Comparison Essay (Midterm) – 20%:** Students will choose a *verismo* opera and composer and compare it to another opera by the same composer that is not considered *verismo*. (Example: Puccini- *Tosca* vs. *Gianni Schicchi*) Students will write a 4-6 page essay on their findings and prepare a brief (7-10 minutes) presentation for the class. Students may use visual aids (Prezi, PowerPoint, etc.) if they so choose.
4. **Scene Performance/Character Study – 15%:** In cooperation with their studio teacher, students will be assigned a brief scene from an opera to perform with their classmates. Music and a pianist will be provided, but students will be responsible for staging and costuming (street clothes are fine). Students will also be asked to write a 2-4 page essay on the character they are singing, including information about the character's role in the plot and musical highlights.
5. **Listening Journals – 15%:** Students will be asked to listen to sections from each opera we cover and respond with their thoughts. Please write 250-500 words for each opera.
6. **Take-Home Final and Listening– 20%:** The final will consist of 4 essay questions on various topics covered. Students will pick 2 questions to answer in the form of a 3-5 page essay for each question. The listening portion will cover excerpts covered **in class** and will take place during the last class meeting.

All assignments are due at the beginning of the first class of their assigned week, unless otherwise noted. **Late work** is accepted for up to one week past the original due date. 10% will be deducted for each day past the due date.

### **Course Schedule:**

**Week 1:** History of Opera, 1600-1860

**Week 2:** *Bel canto*- Bellini, Donizetti/Late Romantic Opera- Verdi, Massenet, Wagner, Strauss

**Week 3:** What is *Verismo*?/Exploring the literature movement of the same name

Read: “Verismo: Truth and Realism” Article

Due: Article Response

**Week 4:** *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*

Please have access to your scores for this class

Due: *Pagliacci, Cavalleria Rusticana* responses (1 for each opera)

Scene studies/roles assigned

**Week 5:** *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*

Read: “Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci: Betting It All on Verismo”

Due: Article Response

Prepare to discuss your thoughts on the pairing of these two operas

**Week 6:** *Andrea Chenier*/Guest Speaker

Due: *Andrea Chenier* response

Please come prepared with at least one question to ask the guest speaker.

**Week 7:** *Adriana Lecouvreur*/class time for scene preparation

Due: *Adriana Lecouvreur* response

**Week 8:** Midterm Presentations

Due: Midterm Essay

**Week 9:** Pre-*verismo* verismic operas- *Carmen*, *La Traviata*, *Boris Godunov*

Prepare to discuss: Although these came before the “beginning” of *verismo*, should they be classified as such?

Due: *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Andrea Chenier*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Pagliacci* listening journals

**Week 10:** Puccini/*Il Tabarro*

Due: *Il Tabarro* response

Prepare to discuss: Is *Suor Angelica* *verismo*? *La Bohème*? *Madame Butterfly*?

**Week 11:** *Tosca*

Please have access to your scores for this week

Read: “Opera and cultural change: Understanding the “*verismo*” of *Tosca*” (no response due)

Due: *Tosca* response

Prepare to discuss this week’s article

**Week 12:** *Verismo* singers, technique, and “Golden Age” singing/Use of *fach* in *verismo*

Prepare to discuss: Why didn’t the genre last longer?

**Week 13:** *Porgy and Bess* and modern opera

Due: *Porgy and Bess* response

Prepare to discuss operas written in the last 75 years that might be considered *verismo*.

**Week 14:** Scenes Presentations/Guest Speaker

Due: *Il Tabarro*, *Tosca*, *Porgy and Bess* listening journals

Please come to class prepared with at least one question for the guest speaker.

**Week 15:** Review Day/Listening Exam

Due: Final (due at the beginning of class on listening exam day)

**Academic Dishonesty Statement:**

It is the expressed policy of the University of Memphis that every aspect of academic life—not only formal coursework situations, but all relationships and interactions connected to the educational process—shall be conducted in an absolutely and uncompromisingly honest manner. The University affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity.

Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Student Conduct Policy published in the Student Handbook (<https://www.memphis.edu/osa/pdfs/csrr.pdf>). Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

Please visit and review the University's online guide to understanding and avoiding plagiarism: <https://libguides.memphis.edu/academicintegrity>

The essence of academic integrity is that you must never represent another person's work as if it were your own, whether that person is another student in the class, the author of a published book or article, or the creator of a website. In some types of assignment, you may consult another person's published work, but you must indicate clearly where you found your information, and if you copy the actual words, you must put them in quotation marks and state exactly where they came from in a way that would enable your reader to find that passage in the source you used.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:**

The University of Memphis is committed to providing reasonable academic accommodations for all students with disabilities. Your success in this class is important to me. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible—preferably before the drop/add deadline—so that we may work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

Students must take the following actions to obtain disability accommodations and services:

- Register with Disability Resources for Students (<https://www.memphis.edu/drs/>) and provide appropriate qualifying medical or psycho-educational documentation that establishes the existence of a qualifying disability and provides a rationale for reasonable accommodation, if applicable.
- Make their disability related needs and specific requests known in a timely manner to the appropriate people, such as their Student Disability Services Coordinator, their professors, or other relevant staff; and
- Follow the established procedures of the University for acquiring needed services, reasonable accommodations, and adjustments.

The University is not responsible for providing services or making academic accommodations or adjustments until the above conditions have been met. Disability accommodations are not retroactive but go into effect at the point these conditions have been met.

### **Copyright Notice**

Throughout this course, we may use copyrighted materials in compliance with U.S. copyright laws. Under those laws, materials may not be saved to your computer, revised, copied, or distributed without permission. They are to be used in support of instructional activity as part

of this course only and shall be limited to the duration of the course, unless otherwise specified by the instructor or owner of the material. You may only download or print materials at the direction of your instructor, who knows which materials are copyrighted and which are not.

**Syllabus Changes**

The instructor reserves the right to make changes as necessary to this syllabus. If changes are necessitated during the term of the course, the instructor will immediately notify students of such changes both by individual email communication and posting both notification and nature of change(s) in eCourseware.