Graduate Music History/Musicology Diagnostic Exam
Overview, Take-Home Response, & Study Guide

Purpose
Unlike a music history exam that requires you to recall and recite dates and factoids, the overall purpose of this exam is to assess independent critical thinking and written communication skills, as well as your ability to synthesize and assess information and draw substantive conclusions about music and culture. The exam will help us direct you toward resources and supports that will facilitate your success in academic coursework. It will also provide valuable information for faculty, allowing us to develop effective and rewarding learning experiences in our musicology courses that address individual student needs.

Part I: Reading Response (to be prepared and submitted before diagnostic exam)

Berger, Karol. "The Ends of Music History, or: The Old Masters in the Supermarket of Cultures." *Journal of Musicology* 32, no. 2(2014): 186-198.

Over the summer, please read and respond to the article cited above (included in your welcome letter) in a short essay of approximately 500 words. Please email your response as an electronic document (PDF, Word, etc.) to Amanda Wiebe at amanda.wiebe@umanitoba.ca by 4:00 p.m. on August 29, 2025.

Your response may take any number of forms, from a critical assessment of Berger's essay as a whole to an exploration of one or some of the issues raised in the article. Don't worry, there's no single "right answer." The primary criteria for success in this part of the exam are the following: 1. Evidence of a clear understanding of Berger's article; 2. Active, deep engagement with the ideas presented; Evidence of creative, critical thinking; 3. Clear, cogent writing that appropriate in style, structure, and mechanics for graduate-level academic work.

Part II: Listening Response
During the diagnostic exam, you will compare and contrast two pieces of music in a short essay of 300-400 words. The exam administrator will play audio recordings of the music, and you will be provided with a score or other appropriate written musical notation for reference. Your response might address a variety of topics, including genre, style, and other musical features, socio-cultural context, issues of performance practice and reception, and so on. This is not a listening identification quiz; you are not required to identify the specific pieces of music.

Part III: Topical Essay
During the diagnostic exam, you will respond to one of the following topical prompts in a short essay of approximately 400-600 words. You can choose any one of these topics and prepare an outline and/or some notes over the summer. These prompts are intentionally open-ended to allow you to draw on your individual knowledge, experiences, and interests, as well as to provide an opportunity to assess your proficiency at constructing cohesive and focused lines of inquiry independently. Although you will write the essay in the exam, you may prepare 1 page of reference material (2-sides of a letter or A4 size sheet of paper) to bring into the exam with you (e.g. essay outline, other reference information, etc.).

Genre: Explain the concept of genre. Why is this an important concept? In what ways may genre shape one's experience or knowledge of music? Illustrate your response with an example drawn from any kind of music.

Music and Community: Among its many possible social purposes, music may act as a kind of bonding agent which helps establish, strengthen, or sustain all manner of communities. Discuss an example you have learned about in your previous music history or musicology studies.

Music, Gender, and Sexuality: Music, gender, and sexuality intersect in a number of ways. Not only can musical discourse be shaped by gender and sexuality, but sexuality and gender identity can be portrayed, represented, performed, and created through music. Examine these concepts using two contrasting examples.

Music, Race, and Class: As in the previous question on music, gender, and sexuality, music, race, and class intersect in many ways. Race and class can be portrayed, represented, performed, and created through music, and musical discourse can be shaped by race and class. Choose two contrasting examples to examine these concepts.

Musical Borrowing: From medieval and Renaissance *contrafacta* and 18th-century quodlibets to sampling, cover songs, and jazz standards, histories of music are rife with examples of borrowing. Compare and contrast two disparate examples of this phenomenon. You might choose pieces from different time periods, for example, or works from different styles or musical traditions. The most important criteria are that they are different in significant ways and that they allow you to explore the idea of musical borrowing. Consider addressing issues of authorship and homage, meaning, compositional techniques, and so on.

Preparation

We don't envision you spending your summer preparing furiously for this diagnostic exam, and we don't intend for you to stress out about writing the response for the Berger article or outlining your other essay. To prepare for this exam, we recommend that you review the course materials for the music history and musicology courses you completed as an undergraduate student, and we're always in favour of you doing some background reading on musicological topics of special interest or relevance for you. Don't feel compelled to limit yourself to the Western art music tradition. For example, if you've studied or have expertise in jazz, popular music, or various global music traditions, we're excited to see how that is reflected in your intellectual approach.

As you prepare for the exam, please don't hesitate to direct any questions to Colette Simonot-Maiello at colette.simonot-maiello@umanitoba.ca. Below you will find a selected bibliography of standard textbooks that may be useful in your review. Any of these survey texts will provide a solid overview of its subject, and you likely have one or more of these from your undergraduate work. Again, though, the focus of this diagnostic assessment is not on memorization and recall of data, but rather on critical thinking and effective communication.

Selected Surveys of Western Music History

Bonds, Mark Evan. *History of Music in Western Culture*, 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2013.

Burkholder, J. Peter, et al. *A History of Western Music*, 10th ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2018.

Seaton, Douglass. *Ideas and Styles in the Western Musical Tradition*, 2nd ed. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2007.

Stolba, K. Marie. *The Development of Western Music*, 3rd ed. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1998.

Taruskin, Richard and Christopher Gibbs. *Oxford History of Western Music, College Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Selected Surveys of Jazz History

DeVeaux, Scott Knowles and Gary Giddins. *Jazz*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2009.

Gioia, Ted. *The History of Jazz*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Gridley, Mark C. *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2009.

Tirro, Frank. *Jazz : A History*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1993.

Selected Surveys of Popular Music

Charlton, Katherine. *Rock Music Styles: A History*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill, 2008.

Covach, John Rudolph. *What's That Sound?: An Introduction to Rock and Its History*. 2nd ed., W. W. Norton, 2009.

Garofalo, Reebee. *Rockin' out : Popular Music in the USA*. Upper Saddle River, NJ : Pearson, 2011.

Starr, Larry, and Christopher Alan Waterman. *American Popular Music: From Minstrelsy to MP3*. 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Selected Global Music Surveys

Fletcher, Peter. *World Musics in Context: A Comprehensive Survey of the World's Major Musical Cultures*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Miller, Terry E., and Andrew C. Shahriari. *World Music: A Global Journey*. 2nd ed., Milton Park, UK: Routledge, 2008.

Titon, Jeff Todd. *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples*. Belmont, CA: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2009.