

A Guide to Independent Work in Music

2013-2014

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Table of Contents

Overview of Music as a Field of Study	3
Independent Work in Music	4
Musicology	5
Composition	5
Musicology Thesis with Performance Component	5
Timeline for 2013-2014	7
Junior Year	7
Junior Seminar	7
Second Junior Paper	8
Senior Thesis	10
The Process of Writing an Independent Work Project	11
Brainstorming	12
Exploring the field	13
Establishing a plan.....	14
Drafting chapters	15
Revising and rewriting	16
Wrapping it all up.....	16
Resources	17
Your adviser	17
Mendel Library and the Music Librarian	19
The Writing Center	19
The Senior Thesis Writing Group	20
Research Support.....	20
Institutional Review Board (IRB)	21
Grading principles	22
Musicological theses	22
Criteria for evaluation.....	22
Grading Scale	23
Compositions	24
Criteria for evaluation.....	25
Grading Scale	25
The grading process	26
Appendix: Forms for Independent Work	28

Overview of Music as a Field of Study

Many of us first study music as performing musicians—we learn how to play an instrument or sing. When we explore music as an academic subject, we address a wide range of aesthetic, philosophical, or socio-historical questions. For example:

- What makes one piece sound more interesting than another? To whom?
- How has music helped to shape personal or group identity?
- What role has music played in political or social situations? How has music been affected by political or social forces?
- How do musical aesthetics differ among various cultures or historical periods?
- How do I compose or create instruments on a computer?
- How are aspects of composers' lives embedded in their music?

The Department of Music at Princeton offers courses in three broad categories: musicology, composition, and performance. Taking the word "musicology" to mean the academic study of music in the broadest sense, we offer courses representing three different approaches, which have many overlaps:

- Music history, which considers music in its socio-cultural aspects or aesthetics, in the context of its place in history. The field can be subdivided into historical periods (e.g., Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, 20th/21st century) or approach (e.g., gender studies, biographical studies, etc.).
- Music theory, which is musical analysis and the theorizing of elements of music (e.g., pitch, harmony, rhythm, timbre, etc.). Examples of analytical methods include Schenker and pitch-class sets. Subfields of music theory include the history of music theory, music cognition, music and mathematics, music and philosophy, semiotics, etc.
- Ethnomusicology, which is the study of music in its socio-cultural context. The emphasis is on understanding music as a social process—what music means to performers and listeners, and how it communicates those meanings. The field draws on theories from anthropology, sociology, linguistics, race and ethnic studies, cultural studies, area studies, and other disciplines in the humanities and

social sciences. Ethnographic fieldwork typically plays an important role in the methodology.

Of the three fields, ethnomusicology is the one most often associated with non-canonical (i.e., not Western classical) music, such as traditional music in various countries and popular music; on the other hand, the majority of music historians and music theorists are specialists in Western classical music. Nonetheless, both music historians and music theorists also work in non-canonical musics, such as popular music or jazz, while ethnomusicologists also write about music in classical idioms or historical matters.

In the field of composition, the department offers courses and advisement on composition of a large variety of styles and methods, including electronic and computer synthesis. As noted below, independent projects in composition have ranged widely, from string quartets to operas and theatrical works to the building of instruments.

Independent Work in Music

As a music major, you will write two junior papers (JP), one in each semester of the junior year, and one senior thesis. The first JP, written as the final paper of the Junior Seminar, is often a proposal for a research project of about 10–15 pages in length. The second JP and senior theses are essays of original research; they can also be original compositions. While papers and compositions can vary greatly in length, the second JP, if an essay, is typically about 20–40 double-spaced pages in length, while the senior thesis, if an essay, typically runs about 120–180 double-spaced pages. While perhaps a yardstick of work performed, sheer length is not a good predictor of quality: a short thesis may make its arguments well and concisely, while a lengthy thesis may be a symptom of disorganization.

Your research essay or composition can address any genre, popular or classical, and any methodology. Here is a sampling of titles of senior theses over the past few years:

Musicology

- Techniques and Ethics of the Appropriation of Three African Musical Idioms in a Composition for Small Jazz Ensemble
- Links to Fantasy: The Music of *The Legend of Zelda*, *Final Fantasy*, and the Construction of the Video Game Experience
- Statistical Perspectives on Renaissance Music
- Post Bop: Free and Modal Jazz in the Works of Herbie Hancock, Jackie McLean, and Andrew Hill
- Music in Victorian London: Collective Nostalgia and the Cultivation of National Tradition
- Sentiments, Form, and Composer's Intent: An Emotion-Based Theory of Structural Deformation in Sonata Form

Composition

- Sound Exhibit: Sunrise at the Long Island Salt Marsh
- Ideology Suite for Jazz Band & Chamber Orchestra
- MooDi: A Musical Object Oriented Drawing Interface for Laptop Performance and Etch-a-PLOrk: A Composition using MooDi for the PLOrk Ensemble
- Rosaleen: A Musical Drama
- Hedging Alphabets for Violin, Viola, Cello, and Piano

Musicology Thesis with Performance Component

The department offers a range of courses that are either entirely devoted to musical performance or are a synthesis of academic work and performance study. We do not offer degrees in performance; instead, we offer a Certificate in Musical Performance and a Certificate in Jazz. Recitals are required to qualify for these Certificates; however, they are generally not admissible as Independent Work for the Major.

Nonetheless, music majors who are also in the above-named certificate programs are welcome to include a performance component as part of their independent work. The

performance project must be directly related and integrated with the written work, which remains required. Examples of such projects are lecture-concerts, where the student presents his/her analysis and demonstrates its aspects through performance. Such theses from past years include:

- Structural Aspects of Beethoven's *Leonore Overture* No. 3 (with performance by Princeton University Orchestra)
- The Double Life of Zefirino (with full production and performance)

Timeline for 2013-2014

The following timelines for the junior papers and the thesis will give you a sense of your experience over the course of the junior and senior years. They include departmental deadlines that have been established to ensure that key stages of the writing process are completed in a timely manner. These deadlines indicate the latest possible dates by which should have reached specific stages in your work that are compatible with producing a high-quality thesis.

Junior Year

Junior Seminar

All music majors in residence are required to participate in a junior seminar in the fall of their junior year. This seminar does not earn course credit; nonetheless, it accounts for 10 percent of the honors calculation. We recommend that juniors allocate time equivalent to a course for this seminar and to avoid taking more than four courses in addition to it. The meeting place and time are determined during the first week of class.

The seminar introduces juniors to the academic study of music from a variety of perspectives (with particular emphasis on the specialties of faculty from the Department of Music). It also aims to familiarize them with basic research skills and bibliographic sources in music. Weekly assignments will be required, complementing these discussions.

The final project for the junior seminar is at the discretion of the instructor. It is often a proposal for an original research project, testing the student's skills in building appropriate bibliographies, formulating research hypotheses, and proposing research methodologies. One guide to writing proposals is "[On the Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Suggestions for Applicants to Social Science Research Council Competitions](#)" by Adam Przeworski and Frank Salomon, available online at www.ssrc.org/publications. For a junior paper modeled as a research proposal, the thoroughness of the bibliography, which should be notated, is a primary criterion for the final grade. The final project is due on **Tuesday, January 7, 2014**.

For students spending the fall semester of their junior year at the Royal Conservatory of Music (RCM), the grade for the junior seminar will be determined by the grade for the final jury at RCM, in discussion with the Director of the Program in Musical Performance, Michael Pratt, and a final paper. This paper will describe the student's development as a musician and/or a thinker about music during the semester, particularly taking into account the jury process. This paper is due on **Tuesday, January 7, 2014**, and is graded by the Departmental Representative. Upon returning to Princeton, students will be expected to complete a second junior paper, as with other majors. For guidelines regarding semester abroad with other institutions, see below.

Second Junior Paper

For the second junior paper, students work on an original project under close consultation with a faculty member. This project may be either a research paper or a composition; it may be a continuation of a project begun in the junior seminar, such as the execution of the project described in a research proposal.

Juniors are expected to choose their faculty adviser in consultation with the Departmental Representative. Students should meet with their prospective advisers and have them sign the Junior Independent Work Form, with a description of the project and an agreement with the faculty adviser. This form is due on **February 7, 2014**. Students who have not been able to confirm an adviser by that date should submit the form with a description of the project and the names of potential advisers on February 7; the Departmental Representative will assign the adviser by **February 14, 2014**.

In consultation with their advisers, juniors are expected to hand in a Progress Report Form by **March 28, 2014**, summarizing the progress on the project thus far and including any recommendations from the adviser. The due date for junior projects is **Friday, May 2, 2014**. Juniors must hand in copies of their junior project to their adviser, the Program Manager (Greg Smith, gsmith@princeton.edu), and the Departmental Representative.

Students who will be conducting ethnographic work involving human subjects—e.g., interviewing people for information—may need to have their projects reviewed by

the Institutional Review Board (IRB). These reviews involve separate deadlines. Please see the separate section on the IRB under "Resources."

Students spending part of their junior year abroad at another institution must consult with the Departmental Representative and the [Office of International Programs](#) to make arrangements for their junior papers. While a student may work on his/her junior paper with an instructor at the other institution, this work must be conducted separately from courses and tutorials being taken for credit at the institution. In addition, a professor from the Princeton Department of Music must be designated as supervisor; he/she will coordinate with the overseas instructor so that grading criteria and standards match those of Princeton.

Senior Thesis

Majors are encouraged to begin exploring possible thesis topics early in their careers at Princeton. A term abroad during junior year or the summer before senior year is a good time to engage in such exploration. You could, for example, take a specialist course on musical genres not taught at Princeton, conduct fieldwork among musicians or audiences of a music you are researching, visit archives pertaining to your topic, read up on subjects of interest, or familiarize yourself with a repertory. There are funds available to finance your research through the Office of the Dean of the College, as well as the Department of Music. The application is online at <https://odocapps.princeton.edu/strf/>; you can find a sample form at http://www.princeton.edu/studentfunding/docs/SAFE-_-Sample-Project-Senior-Thesis-Research.PDF. The deadline for applications is **around March 24** (check the website for exact dates). There is also an application round in the fall for research conducted during the term or during fall or winter breaks; the deadline is **around November 7**.

Students are expected to choose their own advisers. Ideally, students should meet with the adviser to discuss potential ideas before forming an agreement. Students must complete and file the Senior Independent Work Form, with a description of the project and the signature of the faculty adviser, by no later than **Friday, October 4, 2013**. Students who have not been able to confirm an adviser by that date should submit the form with a description of the project and the names of potential advisers on October 4; the Departmental Representative will assign the adviser by **October 11, 2013**. Please note that it is the student's responsibility to notify the Department Representative and the Program Manager of any difficulties encountered in finding an adviser or working with one. While the Department of Music does not have an explicit rule against it, we encourage students to work with different faculty members for their junior paper and senior thesis, so that they can be exposed to different modes of thinking about music.

In consultation with their advisers, seniors are expected to file a Progress Report Forms on **November 8, 2013, January 10, 2014, and February 28, 2014**, summarizing the progress on the project thus far and including any recommendations from the adviser. Students should aim to have a two-page proposal for their thesis, outlining their research

question and methodology, along with a one-page bibliography, done by **November 1**, so that its quality can be assessed in time for the Progress Report Form. While we do not enforce a schedule for thesis completion, we strongly advise that students complete a draft of one chapter by **January 3** and an additional chapter by **February 21**, to give sufficient time for inclusion in the Progress Report Forms. The student should hand in all rough drafts to the adviser by **March 24, 2014**; the adviser should not be expected to comment on drafts handed in after that date. The deadline for the finished thesis is **April 11, 2014**, at which time the PDF of the thesis must be sent to Greg Smith, Program Manager in Music (gsmith@princeton.edu).

As with junior papers, students who will be conducting ethnographic work involving human subjects may need to have their projects reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), involving separate deadlines. Please see the separate section on the IRB under "Resources."

The Process of Writing an Independent Work Project

As should be clear from the timeline above, it is very important to pace yourself in conducting your independent work. Our experience has been that the more time a student is able to dedicate to his/her project, the more likely it is to be of higher quality. Many seniors plan their coursework throughout their career so that they need only take a light course load for their final semester, allowing them to concentrate on their theses. You should plan to do work on your thesis regularly and avoid writing it all at the last minute.

In addition, senior thesis writing is typically not so much a linear process but a reiterative one. It takes time to execute all the steps to writing a good thesis: finding a good topic, which requires review of the existing literature; formulating a research question or original angle; and writing a first draft. Once this first draft has been written, you will need to revise and rewrite your thesis. Often it is in this revising that you begin to see the implications of your insights; then you need to shape the thesis so that you present your ideas as convincingly as possible.

As noted above, students should start thinking about the final project as soon as they can. The summer before senior year is an excellent time to begin preliminary research: e.g., you can read up on subjects on which you may write, or familiarize yourself with musical genres or idioms in which you may wish to compose. It is also a good time to gain skills that you think you may need for your final project; you may find it fruitful to take a language course, a computer programming or composition course, or gain practical experience in performing new genres.

It is also important to begin writing in a timely fashion. Remember that almost no one has his/her argument fully worked out or questions answered at the beginning of the process. Do not wait to get started on writing until you know your final conclusions. It is more productive to think of your research as a gradual process in which you become more focused and specialized as you progress.

Some stages of writing a senior thesis are outlined below. Much of this description is most applicable to writing theses in musicology or music theory, although the concepts, stages, and especially timeframes can be applied to composition as well. Composition students should turn to their adviser for a more detailed breakdown for their process.

Brainstorming

Identify what it is that intrigues you most about music but which you have not yet explored to the extent that you'd like. Was there a topic in a course that you would have liked to explore further? Which genres, composers, or historical periods that interest you? You need not limit your exploration to topics covered in the curriculum; we have had excellent theses written on music in videogames, for example. Once you pick a particular field, think about the angle you would like to explore. Are you most interested in a particular analytical method or approach, or do you have a particular issue of historical, political, or social context that you'd like to investigate? What would be the primary question that you would like to answer?

Exploring the field

Once you have identified a topic, read the major primary and secondary sources on the field and listen to relevant musical examples. What have other authors already written about your topic? What questions have they not addressed? What angles or approaches have they not pursued? Which repertoires have not been analyzed? If you are working on a composition, you may find it helpful to review key works similar in style, instrumentation, or inspiration to the one in which you plan to work.

Construct a preliminary bibliography of scholarly books and articles. This step in the research process will help you to determine the feasibility of your project within the time that is available to you. While you should build your own bibliography, you should also consult your adviser who will alert you to sources you may have overlooked. Depending on the evidence available, you may revise the topic. If, for example, there are many sources available, you may want to narrow your subject to something more specific and manageable by choosing a more limited repertoire or exploring only one aspect of your original research question. Such refocusing would give you the chance to explore your area of interest more deeply. This process of finding your thesis topic is often iterative between refocusing one's interests and assimilating the research that has already been done.

You will learn how to build a bibliography in your field in the junior seminar. In addition, you will find a useful the guide to resources on the Mendel Library website (<http://libguides.princeton.edu/music>). You should familiarize yourself with the following resources:

- *Grove Music Online*, a comprehensive encyclopedia, with sections dedicated to American music, jazz, and opera, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.
- *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, an encyclopedia for the musics of the world, with sound samples.
- RILM, the music research index, <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.princeton.edu/rilm/>
- Scholarly journals on music, such as *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, *Music Theory Spectrum*, *Ethnomusicology*, *Popular Music*, *Perspectives of New Music*,

and many others. Current issues are in the periodicals reading room in the Mendel Library, and many can be read online on JSTOR or Project Muse.

- Handbooks on certain fields, such as the Oxford Handbook series (e.g., *The Oxford Handbook of Computer Music*), Cambridge Companion series (e.g., *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*), or Cambridge Histories series (e.g., *Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*)
- Bibliographies and discographies on specialized topics, available in the reference section of the Mendel Library.
- Naxos, an online music library of primarily Western classical music but also jazz, popular music, and world music,
<http://princeton.naxosmusiclibrary.com.ezproxy.princeton.edu/>
- Smithsonian Global Sound, produced in cooperation with Smithsonian Folkways, a vast resource of many musical genres from all over the world.
<http://glmu.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.princeton.edu/>

Establishing a plan

Working through the bibliography you have assembled, you will gain a greater level of mastery over the material. You will then be able to hone in on the specific question your project sets out to answer, and think of the ways to divide the topic into chapters. First, try formulating your thesis topic into a question about the material. As a hypothetical example, let's say you are interested in Mongolian hip-hop. You might ask, "How does Mongolian hip-hop express Mongolian identity today?" or "How does Mongolian hip-hop respond to current political and social conditions?" You should not expect to know the answers to these questions, but thinking about how to answer them will help you to break down your project into smaller sections, which will help you to begin writing. For example, you may discover Mongolian rappers who represent specific social classes or philosophical positions and write a chapter on each of them. Alternatively, you may find that rappers use a variety of aesthetic styles (e.g., incorporation of traditional Mongolian throat singing or poetic forms, adoption of a certain dance genre) and devote chapters to each style. As you conduct your research, you may find that what you had planned as a single chapter is worthy of the entire project.

Such developments are natural, and you should not feel reluctant about changing course, provided that your project remains in a workable size.

By November 1, you should have done sufficient research to write a brief proposal of two pages, outlining your research question and methodology, along with a one-page bibliography. This proposal will provide you and your adviser with a roadmap for your thesis as originally conceived. It should ideally consist of an introductory paragraph stating the overall question, stating why it is interesting; a brief review of existing literature; and paragraphs describing every chapter, explaining how each contributes to answering the overall research question and the methodology it would involve. Proposals for compositions should give an overview of your creative aims, what the components of the final work will be, and how a performance would be staged.

Drafting chapters

In beginning to write your individual chapters, you may find it most helpful to think of each chapter as an independent term paper. Chapters can be of any length, but they often work best as a long paper of twenty or so pages. Each chapter should have its own thesis and argument, so that any person reading just that chapter would understand the points you are making. A thesis chapter differs from a term paper in that the chapter is part of a larger analysis; the process of writing a chapter helps you to formulate your thoughts about the subject, so that your goals for the completed work may change as you write. As with any writing assignment, you may find it helpful to start by composing an outline or posing a set of central questions addressed in the chapter. For an analytical chapter, one way to proceed would be to formulate the central questions, and then find examples or conduct specific analyses that address these questions. At this initial stage of writing, you may find it more helpful to aim to explain rather than structure a specific argument; you may instead address this issue in the rewriting and revision phase and as you shape your conclusion.

The chapter you write first does not need to be the first chapter of the thesis, and it usually should not be the introduction. Often, beginning with the chapter where you have the most data or in which you have most interest works best: doing what comes most easily first would allow you to gain momentum in your writing.

You should set and maintain a firm schedule, leaving ample time for revision; do not count on drafting the entire thesis over winter and spring break. In order to allow your adviser to comment on your completed draft, you should aim to have a complete draft of the thesis by spring break.

Revising and rewriting

While you are free to send your adviser drafts of parts of a chapter, s/he will be best able to offer you suggestions once you have handed him/her a completed draft of a chapter. He/she can then see how your arguments are developing and advise you on revisions. In revising your chapters, you should think back to the question you posed in the chapter. How are you answering it? Have you supplied the musical examples or documentary evidence necessary to address your questions? In drafting the chapter, you may have concentrated on presenting the evidence; in the revision phase, you should think about reshaping the presentation of arguments, as well as the larger framework and meaning of your research. You should check to see if you have been consistent in your application of analytical methodology. As you complete drafts of further chapters, you may find it necessary to revise the conclusions you drew in earlier chapters.

Wrapping it all up

Once you have revised each chapter, you can reconsider your project in its entirety. What is the question you have really posed? How does your answer or methodology relate to the approaches of others? How do you structure your arguments? These are some of the questions you would answer in the introduction to the thesis. After you have written the introduction, reread each chapter. Are its contributions to the overall argument clear? Revise the introductions and conclusions of each chapter as necessary. Write a conclusion, which may offer a summary of your primary findings and your methodology. You should also include your thinking of the relevance of your study for the field at large and suggest areas for further investigation.

Resources

Your adviser

As noted above, you are allowed to choose your adviser. If you cannot confirm one by the third week of fall term, the Departmental Representative will assign one to you, upon your request. You should discuss your interests for your final project with the Departmental Representative during your junior year and onwards, so that s/he can help you identify an appropriate adviser. It is to your advantage to have found a potential adviser in the spring term of your junior year, so that s/he can advise you about preliminary research you could do in the summer and help you secure funding for this research. Both the Departmental Representative and your adviser can advise you on selecting courses to complement your independent work, optimize your time management, and allow you to pursue performance and other interests. Nonetheless, it is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with requirements and articulate your goals. In addition, while your adviser may help you to brainstorm on the directions your thesis may take, it is your responsibility to find a thesis topic and define its chapters.

You should work closely with your thesis adviser over your senior year. You will work best with your adviser if you agree to a schedule early in the fall semester. You should agree on the timing of the writing of the proposal or outline of the project, and for writing the thesis and its chapters. This schedule is likely to change as your project develops, but these changes should be the result of ongoing conversations between you and your adviser, with adjustments made depending on your progress and the direction of your research and writing. While there is no single template for how often you should meet with your adviser, you should be in regular contact (say, once every two weeks) and you should keep scheduled appointments. It is your responsibility to stay in communication with your adviser.

You should allow your adviser about two weeks to return comments on your drafts. You should not expect your adviser to comment on drafts you send too close to the submission deadline; in other words, to give both your adviser time to comment on your

draft and you to incorporate his/her comments, you should submit your last draft well in advance of **March 24, 2014**.

Your adviser's comments on drafts are meant to guide you in maximizing your potential and the potential of the project; they depend on the quality of the work being submitted in draft. These comments exist independent of the final grade. Keep in mind that this interim feedback is *not* a checklist of problems to be fixed in exchange for a grade. The grade for the finished project is based not on whether you have satisfied queries, but on the overall quality of the final product submitted.

For theses with a performance component, one of the performance faculty (defined as the conductors of the Princeton University Orchestra, Princeton Glee Club, and the Princeton Jazz Ensemble) will act as adviser on this performance component (in conjunction with your thesis adviser on the written work). We do not expect the accompanying performance to follow the exact timetable of the written thesis because of the external factors that govern performance scheduling; nonetheless, we do require that both the performance and the text meet the department deadline. While the nature of the project will partly determine the advising process, we expect you to meet regularly for coaching and consultation with your performance adviser, just as you would with your academic adviser. It is your responsibility to articulate to your performance adviser how performance decisions relate to the analysis or exploration of the music being made in the text of the thesis. There should be a close connection between the written thesis and the performance project; the two sides of the thesis should inform each other.

Your adviser will be able to give you the most help if you involve him/her in the research and drafting process. For basic assistance with research and writing, you should first turn to the range of resources available at Princeton, namely specialist librarians and the Writing Center, discussed below. You should not expect your adviser to provide remedial training in these skills, although s/he can help direct you to the resources on campus.

The more you use these resources, the more your adviser will be able to help you with higher-level, specialized aspects of your thesis: work with source materials, musical analyses, bibliography, performance considerations, structure, argument, etc. It is your responsibility to submit high-quality drafts that you have discussed with writing tutors as

needed and carefully proofread. The better quality your drafts, the better the feedback you will receive from your adviser, and the better your final thesis will ultimately be.

Mendel Library and the Music Librarian

You will receive training in how to use the Mendel Library and other campus and online resources in the junior seminar. In addition, Darwin Scott, the Music Librarian, is available to help you. He also maintains a guide to resources in music research, including bibliographies, encyclopedias, and sound recordings, here:

<http://libguides.princeton.edu/music>

It is highly recommended that you meet with Dr. Scott at the beginning of your research process, so that he can direct you to the primary sources in your field. His contact details are:

Darwin Scott

Mendel Library, first floor

dfscott@princeton.edu

(609) 258-4251

In addition, students writing about musics of the world, music and society, music in history, and other interdisciplinary topics are advised to familiarize themselves with the specialist collections and libraries pertaining to their interests. For example, Princeton has libraries dedicated to East Asian Studies and Art. Furthermore, the university libraries employ specialist librarians in a host of subjects, including African Studies, Slavic Studies, Film Studies, Gender Studies, or Sociology. A full list of specialist librarians can be found on the library website at <http://library.princeton.edu/help/sub.php>. Research guides on a number of topics can be found on the library website at <http://libguides.princeton.edu/>.

The Writing Center

Another resource on campus is the Writing Center (<http://www.princeton.edu/writing/appt>), located in Whitman College. The Writing Center offers free one-on-one conferences with fellows who are experienced writers

trained to consult on assignments in any discipline. When you are working on your JP or thesis, you can schedule 80-minute conferences with a graduate student fellow from Music or a related department. The Writing Center also holds 50-minute regular conferences seven days a week, and drop-in hours Sunday through Thursday evenings. Do plan your appointments in advance.

The Writing Center also runs boot camps for senior theses as well as junior papers. These boot camps are aimed at helping writers gain momentum on an extended writing project. They provide a dedicated space and structured time for writing, discourage distractions such as surfing the internet, and offer caffeine and camaraderie. Participants can get immediate feedback on what they have written. More information can be found on the Writing Center website at <http://www.princeton.edu/writing/university/bootcamps/>

The Senior Thesis Writing Group

The Department organizes a writing workshop for seniors each year, led by an advanced graduate student. The workshop begins early in the fall semester and meets regularly in the spring semester until mid-April. You should make attending the workshop a priority. Writing a thesis on your own can sometimes feel intimidating or lonely. By participating in a group that meets regularly, where you can get feedback from your peers on chapters, share experiences and advice, encourage each other along, and socialize, you will find the thesis-writing process more enjoyable and productive.

Research Support

The university and the department make several funds available for the potential financing of independent research. The Department of Music has a small fund to offer support to students traveling independently to conduct research on their theses, take a specialized music course abroad during the summer, purchase equipment or materials not already available at Princeton, hire performers for a performance of the senior theses, or travel to conferences or meetings directly related to the senior thesis. Students are expected to apply simultaneously for funds through the Office of the Dean of the College (ODC). The application is online at <https://odocapps.princeton.edu/strf/>; you can find a

sample form at http://www.princeton.edu/studentfunding/docs/SAFE-__Sample-Project-Senior-Thesis-Research.PDF. The deadline for applications is **around March 24, 2014** (check the ODC website for exact dates).

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Federal regulations require a review of any research done involving risk to human subjects. If your work involves any contact with living people—interviewing them for information, conducting surveys, etc.—you must submit a form for review by the Princeton IRB. Proposals and amendments involving minimal risk to human subjects are reviewed through an expedited process, which is conducted on a rolling basis. If your project proposal requires a full review, you must submit the forms, signed and commented upon by your adviser, to the IRB in time for review at their monthly meetings. Please note that you cannot conduct any work on your project with human subjects until the IRB has sent its approval. Please review the guidelines, calendar of meetings, and forms on the IRB website at <http://www.princeton.edu/ria/human-research-protection/committee-information/>.

Grading principles

Musicological theses

Criteria for evaluation

As independent projects in music vary greatly in type and orientation, each project will be judged according to its own criteria. Nonetheless, good projects tend to possess the following qualities:

- 1) *Originality and imagination.* What is new about the way you see a particular field or problem? It is fine if elements of your argument have been remarked upon before; the key point is that you recognize and make clear what is unique about your approach.
- 2) *Clarity and logic.* Are your arguments laid out in a clear way? How easy are they to understand to an intelligent reader who is unfamiliar with your subject? In many cases, you will not have all the material you would like to have to answer your questions, but does your thesis make best use of the materials at hand? If your thesis is on musical analysis, you should aim to present an overall argument rather than a blow-by-blow analysis of a piece.
- 3) *Depth and breadth of knowledge on the topic.* While we do not expect you to know everything about the field, your thesis will be much more convincing if you show that you have digested and incorporated relevant materials, such as secondary literature or works of similar provenance, into your thesis. Being in conversation with material that contradicts or supports your argument will make your project more original, complex, and successful.
- 4) *Critical readings or analyses of music.* In writing about the historical or social context of music, you should not neglect consideration of the music itself.
- 5) For theses with a performance component: *Advanced technical proficiency* must be demonstrated, but that is only the starting point. We expect performance-related projects to demonstrate a *thorough knowledge of performance style* and,

where appropriate, *musical originality* connected with the explorations made in the written work.

Grading Scale

Based on these criteria, grades will be awarded using the following guidelines:

A: Exceptional work, advancing an argument that is original, beyond interpretations already published or available to the student; clear, persuasive, and well-organized; demonstrative of a broad, critical knowledge of the material; and sensitive to music. The instructor ought to have learned something from the paper.

A-: The thesis excels in three of the four criteria required for an A (originality, persuasiveness, range of knowledge, sensitivity to music).

B+: The thesis is of a B-level but contains some observations of A quality or shows an exceptional command of the material.

B: The thesis has fully satisfied the expectations of the readers. It has a clear argument and shows a good knowledge of the material. It does not show the command in the organization and clarity of writing, formulation of argument, quality of research, or sensitivity to music as an A-level thesis. Many such theses contain insights and independent thought, but the arguments are not presented as clearly as an A-level thesis.

B-: The thesis falls just short of the level of a B, e.g., in the depth of knowledge demonstrated. The thesis may also lack a clear argument, be padded with irrelevancies, or otherwise fail to defend an independent argument.

C+: The thesis is of C quality, but has some original insights or evidence of depth of knowledge.

C: The thesis shows an acceptable level of knowledge of the material. However, the thesis does not achieve the standard of a B. Problems may include a lack of originality (e.g., the thesis offers little beyond a summary of ideas or information already covered in coursework or relevant readings), frequent factual errors, unclear writing, poor organization, or inadequate research.

C-: The thesis falls below the C level. It may show significant gaps in relevant knowledge.

D: The thesis does not display adequate command of the material. There are serious deficiencies or flaws in the argument or understanding of the subject. However, it demonstrates the student's effort to fulfill the goals of the thesis.

F: The thesis demonstrates no competence in the subject matter. The opinion of the grader is that the student made little to no reasonable attempt to meet the goals of the assignment.

Compositions

The musical text is the primary focus for evaluating independent work in composition. Depending on the nature of the project, supplementary prose may be requested and evaluated in some cases; in most cases, however, no such supporting prose is expected or required. Examples of cases where supporting prose was appropriate include the following:

1) A composer of jazz and improvisation created an experimental digital trombone and performed with it in a number of improvisational contexts. This instrument was a tool for composition rather than a composition *per se*, and the musical text itself did not represent the scope of the project itself nor the details involved in its execution. Hence, a supplementary text was required.

2) A composer created both the libretto and the music for a theatrical work. By discussing the creative process, the student was able to highlight the unique aspects of the endeavor.

Criteria for evaluation

1. *Command of the medium*: Does the composer demonstrate a technical command of the medium— instrumental, vocal, electronic, theatrical?
2. *Command of the music*: Does the composer demonstrate a technical command of musical materials and musical development?
3. *Originality and inventiveness*: Has the composer invented something—sounds, gestures, textures, affects, narratives, etc.—that reflects his/her unique place in the musical universe rather than merely replicating existing models?
4. *Process, growth, and self-evaluation*: Does the composer demonstrate a commitment to the *process* of composing—e.g., expanding one’s gamut of influences, imagining and implementing alternative solutions? A composer should aspire to continual growth throughout his/her career. Since each composition emerges from and reflects this process of growth, it is important to evaluate the student's *talent for self-evaluation*.

For example, a student composed a trial work that was a solid thesis in both scope and quality. The student then composed an entirely new work for the final project that did not manifest significant further growth as a composer. This piece on its own may not be as impressive an accomplishment as a student who composed only one work but showed self-critical, impassioned commitment to the process of growth, which we consider to be a strong indicator of his/her overall quality as a composer. Put another way, a trial work that is not submitted is often factored into the grading of the submitted final project.

Grading Scale

The following guidelines outline how these criteria factor into assigning a final letter grade. +/- are regarded as gradations on these general marks:

A: The composer excels in all four criteria, demonstrating superb accomplishment and potential as a composer.

B: The composer excels in a number of the criteria, demonstrating a high level of accomplishment in some, but not all, of the categories, while demonstrating reasonable accomplishment in all.

C: The composer demonstrates acceptable accomplishment in most of the categories, but is lacking in others (e.g., showing inadequate command of instrumental resources, lack of self-critical evaluation, or lack of invention)

D: The composer shows significant weakness in some or all of the categories, while still completing the aims of the independent work.

F: The composer has failed to demonstrate accomplishment in most or all of the categories. In the opinion of the grader, the student has made little to no reasonable attempt to meet the goals of the assignment.

The grading process

The Departmental Representative or the instructor of the junior seminar grades the junior independent work in the Fall Term; the student's adviser grades the junior paper or composition in the Spring Term. The senior thesis is graded by the adviser and a second reader, who is assigned by the Departmental Representative. The final thesis grade is the letter equivalent of the numerical average of the two readers' grades.

For a thesis with a performance component, the performance adviser and the academic readers of the written thesis will consult with each other to decide on a weighting of the two parts of the thesis. The final thesis grade is the letter equivalent of the weighted average of the grades for the two components, where the grade for the written thesis is the numerical average of the academic readers' grades.

The readers at this final stage will provide comments in a brief report, offering feedback about the central claims of the paper and indicating areas of promise, as well as

those for improvement. As previously stated, more in-depth feedback is given during the drafting stage, with an aim to improving the final product. It is this final product that is the sole determinant of the grade.

Appendix: Forms for Independent Work



DECLARATION OF PROJECT AND ADVISER
SENIOR INDEPENDENT WORK

Name: _____

Email: _____

Residential College: _____

Project Title: _____

Project Abstract (200 words):

I hereby agree to supervise _____ on the above-named project.
(Student's name)

(Print Advisor's Name)

(Date)

(Signature of Advisor)



PROGRESS REPORT
SENIOR INDEPENDENT WORK

Name: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____

Project Title: _____

Students: *Describe your progress to date on your independent project.*

(Print Student's Name)

(Student's Signature)

Faculty adviser: *What is your assessment of the student's progress to date?*

Does the student need to meet with you more often? _____ *Yes* _____ *No*

Additional comments (optional):

(Print Name of Advisor)

(Date)

(Signature of Advisor)



SENIOR THESIS ASSESSMENT FORM

Student: _____

Thesis title: _____

Reader: _____

Grade: _____

I. Please rate the thesis on a scale of A (superior) to F (unacceptable) on the following criteria, as appropriate:

- A. Construction and strength of argument or premise**
- B. Thoroughness of background research; knowledge of subject matter**
- C. Originality, creativity, imaginativeness, inventiveness of thesis**
- D. Musicality**
- E. Technical command the medium or media**
- F. Technical command of musical materials and development**
- G. Process, growth and self-evaluation**

Comments:

II. Please provide feedback on 1) the central claims of the thesis or concept of the composition, 2) its particular strengths, 3) areas for improvement, and any other aspect of the thesis/composition on which you would like to comment.

(Signature of Reader)

(Date)



DECLARATION OF PROJECT AND ADVISER
JUNIOR INDEPENDENT WORK

Name: _____

Email: _____

Residential College: _____

Project Title: _____

Project Abstract (200 words):

I hereby agree to supervise _____ on the above-named project.
(Student's name)

(Print Advisor's Name)

(Date)

(Signature of Advisor)



PROGRESS REPORT
JUNIOR INDEPENDENT WORK

Name: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____

Project Title: _____

Students: *Describe your progress to date on your independent project.*

(Print Student's Name)

(Student's Signature)

Faculty adviser: *What is your assessment of the student's progress to date?*

Does the student need to meet with you more often? _____ *Yes* _____ *No*

Additional comments (optional):

(Print Name of Advisor)

(Date)

(Signature of Advisor)



JUNIOR INDEPENDENT WORK ASSESSMENT FORM

Student: _____

Thesis title: _____

Reader: _____

Grade: _____

I. Please rate the thesis on a scale of A (superior) to F (unacceptable) on the following criteria, as appropriate:

- A. Construction and strength of argument or premise**
- B. Thoroughness of background research; knowledge of subject matter**
- C. Originality, creativity, imaginativeness, inventiveness of project**
- D. Musicality**
- E. Technical command the medium or media**
- F. Technical command of musical materials and development**
- G. Process, growth and self-evaluation**

Comments:



**PRINCETON
UNIVERSITY**

II. Please provide feedback on 1) the central claims of the essay or concept of the composition, 2) its particular strengths, 3) areas for improvement, and any other aspect of the essay/composition on which you would like to comment.

(Signature of Reader)

(Date)