

MUS 536, Area Studies in Ethnomusicology: Music and Belief
Instructor: Margarethe Adams

In this course we will interrogate our framings and assumptions of belief and secularity, examine the sonic dimensions of worshipping and of worship spaces, and explore the multifaceted performance of belief. An introductory graduate seminar, it examines intersections of music and belief in major world religions, as well as older belief systems (animism, shamanism), and religion/philosophy complexes like Confucianism and Taoism. Topics include: Blues, gospel and forms of “sonic black womanhood” (Brooks 2011); Confucian and Taoist influence on performance of the Chinese zither (guqin); Sufi sung poetry and zikr traditions of Central Asia and the Middle East; popular music and American evangelical worship. Our study will take both anthropological and musicological approaches to these topics and students will gain an introductory look at important scholarship in social theory along the way. Requirements include weekly readings, weekly written assignments, article presentations, and a final paper. Attendance and active participation in seminar discussion are mandatory.

This counts as a history course for performers, and is primarily intended for MM or DMA students. MA or PhD students considering enrolling must confer first with Prof. Adams.

3 credits