

MUS 536, Area Studies in Ethnomusicology: Protest Music: A Historical, Global, and Theoretical Introduction

Instructor: Benjamin Tausig | Monday, 10am – 12:50pm

Music has long been linked to expressions of political and social dissent, from the ancient world to the folk revival, from the streets of Ferguson, Missouri to Hong Kong. Music offers a distinct affective power to those who hear or play it, especially when they do so together. Why is music so vital to dissent? What does it do for dissidents, and why?

This course considers case studies of music and dissent from around the world, both historical and contemporary. We will read from areas like sociology and affect theory, which grapple with music's role in political contexts, in an attempt to develop a theoretical language for understanding protest music as a general phenomenon. We will also look at many specific case studies, as well as many specific pieces, analyzing them as both formal texts and as political totems. We will work through some challenging questions, including the unavoidable fact that music has power for political movements of all kinds, including those we might despise.

Coursework includes weekly readings and Brightspace postings; one in-class presentation; an analysis of a piece, performance, or recording of your choosing, and a final paper (with in-class presentation).

This course is suitable for all students. It fulfills the Elective Group 1 requirement for DMA students. For students in the MA/PhD track in Critical Music Studies, it satisfies the Elective Group 1 requirement.

3 credits