Overview
Is music theory a science? Is it an art? Or is it a disciplinary hybrid, combining aspects of both? These questions are relevant to twenty-first-century research that blends music theory with cognitive psychology and neuroscience. But they were also important in the nineteenth century, when ideals of scientific objectivity and artistic subjectivity co-emerged. Indeed, this combination might be a defining feature for modern (or modernist) music theory.

In this seminar, we will explore scientific investigations of musical phenomena by Hermann von Helmholtz, Carl Stumpf, and others, while also considering critical responses to this work from theorists such as Hugo Riemann and Heinrich Schenker. Reading primary sources and recent scholarship, we will ask how the history of music theory and the history of science are intertwined and how both participate in a broader history of epistemology.

Objectives
By the end of this course, you will be familiar with diverse examples of nineteenth- and twentieth-century music theory, and you will be able to critically assess historical music theory in terms of contemporaneous intellectual contexts. Since this is a seminar-style course, though, I might say that the true objective is to develop research skills: closely reading primary sources, summarizing arguments, asking productive questions, writing abstracts and papers, engaging in scholarly debate, and so forth.

Materials
Readings will be posted on OWL or available on reserve at the library.

Throughout the term, we will read a substantial portion of two books: Helmholtz and
the Modern Listener by Benjamin Steege (Cambridge University Press, 2012) and Objectivity by Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison (Zone Books, 2007). Though they will be available on reserve, you may wish to purchase your own copies. Also, as a reference work, I highly recommend The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory, ed. Thomas Christensen (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Evaluation
This course will involve intensive reading, and I expect you to come to class prepared for in-depth discussion. You will need to read carefully and to take detailed notes. At times, students may read different secondary sources—and will, therefore, need to explain readings to their classmates. (This shows how preparation involves your obligation to other seminar participants.)

Preparation will be evaluated in two ways. First, each week you will write two to four questions that respond to the assigned reading. You will share these questions on our OWL forum, no later than noon on Tuesday before class. Second, you will periodically serve as discussion leader for a primary source reading. The discussion leader will initiate and facilitate conversation about the text and will write a brief summary (200 words, maximum) to be added to our course TimeMap. (TimeMapper [http://timemapper.okfnlabs.org] is a free, open-source tool. A link to the course TimeMap will be posted on OWL.)

You will give two twenty-minute presentations. The first will introduce a music theorist or scientist from the nineteenth or twentieth century who will not be studied by the class as a whole. (I will share a list of possible subjects in class.) For this presentation, you will prepare a handout that includes bibliographic information on relevant primary and secondary sources. You will also add an entry for this historical figure to the TimeMap. The second presentation, near the end of the term, will give a preliminary version of your final paper (see below).

You will write an original research paper (3,500–5,000 words) on a nineteenth- or twentieth-century theorist. Preliminary abstracts (250 words, maximum) will be circulated mid-way through the term, and we will discuss them in class. You will also submit—and receive feedback on—the text of your final presentation. Final papers are due by December 21, submitted via email. (Please send the paper as a MS Word document, formatted with double spacing and a serif font. Citations and bibliography
should follow the guidelines presented in *The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th ed.*

These elements will combine in your final grade as follows:

- **Preparation** 20%
- **Presentations** 30% (2 × 15%)
- **Research paper** 50%

**Statement on Health and Wellness**
As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help students achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing a graduate degree. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone in whom they feel comfortable confiding, such as a faculty supervisor, a program advisor, or the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies). Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html).

**Statement on Academic Offences**
Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic offence, as found at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf).
### Music 9563A: Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 5</td>
<td><strong>Mechanical Ears</strong>&lt;br&gt;Helmholtz, Chapters 3 and 4 from <em>On the Sensations of Tone</em>&lt;br&gt;Steege, “2. Refunctioning the Ear” from <em>Helmholtz and the Modern Listener</em>&lt;br&gt;Daston and Galison, “3. Mechanical Objectivity” from <em>Objectivity</em>&lt;br&gt;Lenoir, “Helmholtz and the Materialities of Communication” (1994)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Oct 19  

*Helmholtz’s Historicism*

Helmholtz, Chapter 13 from *On the Sensations of Tone* and “On the Relation of Natural Science to Science in General” (1862)

Steege, “4. Music Theory as Liberal Progressive History” from *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener*


Oct 26  

*Carl Stumpf*

Stumpf, Excerpts from *Tonpsychologie* (1883–1890)

Trippett, “Carl Stumpf: A Reluctant Revolutionary” (2012)

Steege, “The Modernity of Sensation” from *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener*

Nov 2  

*Hugo Riemann*

Riemann, “The Nature of Harmony” (1882)


Nov 9  

Riemann, “Ideas for a Study ‘On the Imagination of Tone’” (1914)

Rehding, “3. Riemann’s musical logic and the ‘As if’” from *Hugo Riemann and the Birth of Modern Musical Thought*

Steege, “‘Natural’ Intonation in Theory and Practice” from *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener*

Kieffer, “Riemann in France” (2016)

Nov 16  

*Heinrich Schenker*

Schenker, “The Spirit of Musical Technique” (1895)


Nov 23  Schenker, Excerpts from Harmony (1906)
Blasius, “1. The Appeal to Psychology” from Schenker’s Argument and the Claims of Music Theory (1996)
Clark, “Schenker’s Mysterious Five” (1999)

Nov 30  Ernst Kurth
Kurth, Excerpts from Musikpsychologie (1931)

Dec 7  Conclusions: Science and Music-Theoretical Modernism
Steege, “Helmholtzian Wagnerism?” and “Schoenberg’s Expressionist Empfindungswelt” from Helmholtz and the Modern Listener
Babbitt, “The Structure and Function of Musical Theory” (1965)

Dec 21  Research paper due
Selected Bibliography


———. *Science and Culture: Popular and Philosophical Essays*. Edited by David Cahan.


