MUSIC: MUSIC STUDIES, PHD

The graduate program in Music Studies at the University of Pennsylvania serves students who intend to conduct cutting-edge research, produce high-quality scholarship, and develop teaching and professional skills in order to pursue academic positions in music studies; it also serves those who want to consider career opportunities beyond academia in both music and non-music domains. Faculty apply methodological tools from ethnomusicology, sound studies, musicology, and music theory to a wide range of research projects. The goal of the graduate program is not to entrench these disciplinary distinctions, but rather to seek out productive and innovative means of placing them in dialogue with each other. This orientation toward holding all of the sub-disciplines in view is reflected in the graduate curriculum as well as in the multiple colloquium series that animate departmental life. The program is designed with flexibility in mind—designed specifically to offer students the freedom to craft a path of study that best addresses the research needs and methodological concerns of their particular dissertation projects. It combines the wide range of courses offered by the world-class faculty in the music department with the possibility of enrolling in seminars in other Penn departments and taking classes at consortium schools such as Princeton, Yale, and Columbia. Our colloquium series provides another means of engaging in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary conversations. In addition, workshops, public performances, and working papers presented by graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and faculty offer a wide range of perspectives on musical practice and scholarship, focusing variously on public lives in music, current research, craft and compositional issues. The faculty is particularly interested in teaching and research in the following areas: Archives, Textualities, and Materialities; Audio Politics and Sound Studies; Conflict, Healing, and Displacement; Gender, Sexuality, and the Body; Global Medieval/Renaissance; the Global South; History, Memory, and Intangible Heritage; Life Forms and Forms of Life; Opera and Performance Studies; Race, Ethnicity, and Empire; and Religion, Ritual, and Secularism. The Department of Music at the University of Pennsylvania also offers a Ph.D. program in composition.

For more information: https://music.sas.upenn.edu/

View the University’s Academic Rules for PhD Programs (http://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/academic-rules-phd/).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MUSC 6300</td>
<td>Historical and Historiographic Approaches</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSC 6200</td>
<td>Creative and Compositional Approaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSC 6700</td>
<td>Analytical and Theoretical Approaches</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>MUSC 6500</td>
<td>Ethnographic and Anthropological Approaches</td>
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</table>

Exams

Practicum Exam
During the first semester of study, each student will work collaboratively with two faculty (these faculty members will be identified by the Director of Graduate Studies according to student research interests) to determine their areas of strength and opportunities for growth in repertorial knowledge. During the first meeting, each student should offer a self-assessment which will guide faculty toward a better sense of their listening habits and sound worlds. In subsequent meetings, students and faculty will explore a variety of possible areas/topics/repertories for listening and music study. During the second semester of study, the faculty and student will settle on 5 areas to be examined at the end of the first summer. These areas will be selected as follows: Faculty will select 2-3 areas; faculty and student will agree on a further 1-2 areas; the student will propose the final area. The structure of the exam should be settled and communicated to the Director of Graduate Studies during the Annual Review meeting (see below).

The exam will consist of two questions per area and students will answer 6 (one question from each area must be answered). Questions may take the form of scores, recordings, videos, and/or other objects. Answers should interact with and work toward an identification of the score, recording, or video in question. Emphasis in evaluation will be placed more on the quality of the interaction and less on exact identification. Students will sit for the exam in the week before classes resume (late August) and students will be allotted 4 hours to select and prepare their answers.

Practicum exams will be evaluated based on the following structure:

Pass: A Pass on all portions of the examination is required for admission to the Ph.D. program.

Partial Pass: The student must take some portion of the examination again (normally at least four months later) before the question of admission to the doctoral program is decided. Failure to achieve a Pass during the second sitting may result in an offer of a terminal master’s degree (see Annual Review).

Comprehensive Review
During the third year of study, students will complete three comprehensive essays and prepare a dissertation proposal (see below for descriptions). These comprehensive essays and the dissertation proposal (both approved by the dissertation committee) must be submitted for review to the graduate group faculty no later than two weeks prior to the Comprehensive Review. In April of that year (dates set by the faculty exam committee at the beginning of the Spring Semester), each student will sit for their Comprehensive Review. The faculty exam committee, along with the student’s principal advisor will be in attendance. Topics of discussion will include the comprehensive essays, the intellectual terrain that they trace, the quality of the work, and the opportunities it suggests for ongoing research. The dissertation proposal will also be discussed, both in terms of content and also with a view toward the research phase of the project.
Comprehensive Essays
The comprehensive essays will consist of three essays of no more than 3,000 words each. Each student will select topics for these essays in consultation with their advisor, the Exam Committee, and the Director of Graduate Studies. The essays will take the form of literature reviews, tracing the history and current state of research in fields related to but not directly overlapping with the dissertation project. While each student will constitute these essays in different ways, students will often include at least one essay on a theoretical topic and another on a more regional or temporal topic. The comprehensive essays must be submitted for review to the graduate group faculty no later than two weeks prior to the student’s comprehensive review.

Dissertation Proposal
The dissertation proposal is an essay of approximately 15-20 pages plus bibliography outlining the dissertation project, illustrating the disciplinary and theoretical stakes of the work, indicating the interventions that this project will make within music studies and related disciplines, and laying out the arc of the research and writing plan for the project. The proposal is prepared under the supervision of a dissertation advisor and at least two additional faculty (the dissertation committee). The dissertation committee must be chaired by a member of the graduate group in music and an additional member of the committee must be drawn from within the department. The third member of the committee may be selected from within the department, from other departments at Penn, or from an outside institution. Some students choose a committee of four. Students will find additional support for their work on the dissertation proposal in the Dissertation Proposal/Grant Writing Workshop. A final draft of the dissertation proposal, approved by the dissertation committee, must be submitted for review to the graduate group faculty no later than two weeks prior to the student’s comprehensive review.

Dissertation
Each student is responsible for making certain that the dissertation conforms to all requirements and specifications of the Provost’s office, details of which should be requested at an early date. Early in the semester in which students expect to complete the dissertation, they should carefully review the Graduation Calendar (https://provost.upenn.edu/graduate-degree-calendar/). It is each student’s responsibility to see that all the deadlines listed therein are met. The Department of Music requires that a bibliography be provided in all dissertations. A final draft of the dissertation should be circulated to the entire dissertation committee at least one month prior to the submission deadline so that any changes suggested by the committee can be incorporated into the final version.

Approved dissertations must be submitted online; see the Graduate Degrees website (https://provost.upenn.edu/graduate-degrees/) for more details. Additional details can be found in the Handbook for Graduate Students in Music (https://music.sas.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/2022-23%20Graduate%20Handbook%20Music%204.11.pdf).

Public Dissertation Defense
In consultation with the dissertation committee, and with reference to the yearly deadlines for dissertation submission, students will schedule a dissertation defense. This public event constitutes the final examination for the Ph.D. degree. A final draft of the PhD dissertation must be submitted for review to the graduate group faculty no later than two weeks prior to the student’s dissertation defense. Please see the Graduation Calendar (https://provost.upenn.edu/graduate-degree-calendar/) for deadlines.

Language Requirement
Reading knowledge of two languages is required for students in music studies. Reading knowledge of one language is required for students in composition. Students will select their language exams in consultation with the graduate chair and faculty, with the understanding that their selections should relate clearly to the their projected plan of study and proposed dissertation topic. Students for whom English is not their native language may choose their native language as one of their two language exams if they plan to conduct significant research/fieldwork in that language or in cases where a major corpus of literature pertinent to the student’s field of research exists in that language.

Language Examinations
Language examinations are given twice each year: at the beginning of the fall term and at the beginning of the spring term. Students must take an examination at each of these times until their language requirements have been met. Each language examination consists of a passage of approximately 500 words selected from a representative work of musical scholarship. The student is given two hours to write an English translation. Use of a dictionary is permitted.

Reading courses in French, Italian, and German are administered by the Graduate Division during the summer (May through June), and are available to Ph.D. students at no cost. Students may register for undergraduate language courses as a fourth course as ‘auditors.’ Graduate credit will not be granted for such undergraduate language courses.

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The degree and major requirements displayed are intended as a guide for students entering in the Fall of 2023 and later. Students should consult with their academic program regarding final certifications and requirements for graduation.