Beethoven: Napoleon to the Nazis, 1810-1989

Few composers can claim to have made as profound an impact on the development of Western art music than Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). A cursory glance at the literature surrounding the composer’s life and works over the last two centuries has frequently revealed a widespread cultivation of the composer as “transcendental” and the endowment of his music with “universal” meaning. It is largely for this reason that Beethoven and his music, more than any other composer, has been claimed as the representative of various social, political, cultural and intellectual systems over the past two centuries. This course examines the origins and constructions of those appropriations beginning in the composer’s own lifetime and ending at the turn of the twenty-first century. We will examine Beethoven as arch-revolutionary, conservative, fascist, socialist and liberal, to name a few, over the course of Europe’s nineteenth and twentieth centuries, keeping in mind the following questions: What is the connection between music and politics? What can discussions held in the cultural sphere tell us about larger socio-political developments? What specific function does music offer as a site of political/social/intellectual discourse? In answering these questions, we will draw on historical, philosophical, musicological and other approaches.

Grades will be determined as follows:

Exam 1-20%
Final Exam-25%
Research Paper-40%
Participation/Attendance-15%

**Required Texts:** Many of the readings will be available on e-reserve or online. There are, however, three required texts for this course:

Burnham, Scott. *Beethoven and His World*
Dennis, David. *Beethoven and German Politics: 1870-1989*
Comini, Alessandra. *The Changing Image of Beethoven*

**Week 1: Introduction and Background**

Burnham: pp. 1-50

**Week 2: Beethoven’s Vienna**
Week 3: Beethoven’s Vienna (cont’d)

Burnham: pp. 200-300

Week 4: Beethoven as Revolutionary

Solomon: Stephen Rumph, Beethoven after Napoleon: pp. 222-245

Week 5: A.B. Marx, Music and German National Identity


Applegate, Bach in Berlin: pp. 80-124

Week 6: Music and Cultural Theory

Julian Johnson, Who Needs Classical Music?: pp. 3-32

Week 7: Beethoven and Romanticism


Week 8: Beethoven and German National Identity

Dennis: 32-85
**Week 9: Beethoven as Fascist**
Dennis: pp. 142-174

**Week 10: Beethoven in Popular Culture**
Film: *Immortal Beloved*

**Week 11: Beethoven in Popular Culture II**


**Week 12: Beethoven and the Democratic Tradition**

Dennis: pp. 175-203
Film: Excerpts from *Ode to Freedom*