

# MUS 607: Seminar: Form in Rock Music

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PROFESSOR Drew Nobile  
dnobile@uoregon.edu  
Office: 206 Frohnmyer Music Building  
Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 10–11am and by appointment

## Course Details

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MEETINGS Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00–3:20pm  
Frohnmyer Music Building room 150  
CRN: 34457

DESCRIPTION Theories of form occupy a central position in the field of music theory. While analytical studies of popular and rock music are no longer new in the music-theoretical literature, the study of form in this repertoire is still in its infancy. This seminar will explore the professional literature on form in rock music, from basic theories on the arrangement of sections to detailed investigations of relationships between form, harmony, lyrics, and style. We will focus primarily on the “classic rock” repertoire, defined loosely as mainstream radio-length songs from the mid-60s to the late-80s, but we will occasionally look at post-1990 styles and more expansive forms, such as those found in progressive rock. Students will work toward a professional-quality final project consisting of an in-class presentation, a conference-style proposal, and a 15-to-20-page paper.

MATERIALS All required readings will be posted in electronic form on the course Canvas site ([canvas.uoregon.edu](http://canvas.uoregon.edu)). Other sources are available through the library and online databases such as JSTOR.  
It is highly recommended that you have access to a streaming-audio service such as Apple Music or Spotify.

## Required Work

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GRADING BREAKDOWN	Class preparation and participation	20%
	Online posts and discussions	30%
	Final project, including:	50% total:
	500-word abstract and bibliography	5%
	15-minute conference-style presentation	5%
	15-to-20-page publication-quality paper	35%
	SMT-style conference proposal	5%

ONLINE  
DISCUSSIONS

The class will be divided into discussion groups of three students each. Every week, the teams will engage in online discussions on the course Canvas site. First, each student will write a 500-word response to the assigned reading, which could be a critical summary, an analysis based on the reading's methodology, or any other relevant topic. These responses will be due by 5pm on Saturday. Next, students will post a paragraph-long comment on the responses by others in their discussion group no later than 5pm on Sunday. Beyond this, students are encouraged to continue the discussion online in preparation for our in-class discussion.

The online responses and comments will not be graded individually. Students will receive an A for this portion of the class if they are done in a timely fashion, at reasonable length, and with suitable seriousness.

FINAL PROJECT

The final project is in four parts:

1. Students will submit a 500-word abstract of their final paper along with a preliminary bibliography *before* writing the paper. The abstract and bibliography are due the Wednesday of week 9, but students are encouraged to submit it earlier. I will return the abstracts with feedback as quickly as possible, and no later than the day after the deadline.
2. Students will give a 15-minute conference-style presentation of their paper in extended class meetings during week 10. These presentations should be well-rehearsed (possibly read from a typescript) and must include either a detailed handout or PowerPoint slides (or both!). Feedback will be given by students in the same discussion group.
3. Finally, students will submit two polished documents by the last day of the term (6/10): a 15-to-20-page paper and an SMT-style conference proposal consisting of a 500-word abstract and up to four pages of supplementary material such as examples and bibliography. The paper should aim to be publication quality and the proposal should be ready to be submitted to SMT or a regional conference (WCCMTA, e.g.).

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## Policies

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ATTENDANCE

This is a discussion-based course, so every student is expected to attend every class session prepared with questions and/or ideas to contribute to the discussion. If you must miss a class for a legitimate reason, please email me before class.

INTEGRITY

All assignments, exams, etc., must be done entirely individually. Work submitted as your own should not be done in collaboration with any other person, nor should it use material borrowed from any other source unless the source is explicitly cited. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both.

DISABILITY If you require disability-related academic accommodations, you must first register with the Accessible Education Center ([aec.uoregon.edu](http://aec.uoregon.edu)). Once the request has been approved, schedule a meeting with the instructor to discuss the necessary course accommodations.

DISCRIMINATION Students should be aware that the School of Music and Dance discourages any sort of action that makes an individual feel uncomfortable or unwelcome. Students with concerns related to discrimination, bias, or sexual harassment are encouraged to contact one or more of the following offices to report such an incident and get help in its resolution:

The Bias Response Team, 164 Oregon Hall, (541) 346-1139

Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Office, 474 Oregon Hall, (541) 346-3123

Conflict Resolution Services, 164 Oregon Hall, (541) 346-0617

Counseling Center, 210 Health and Counseling Center, (541) 346-3227

Student Advocacy, 334 EMU, (541) 346-1141

## Course Schedule

Unit	Class session	Readings and topics (full citation info in bibliography)
Weeks 1–2: Preliminaries	M 3/28	Introduction; basic form terminology
	W 3/30	Covach, “Form in Rock Music: A Primer” Everett, <i>The Foundations of Rock</i> , pp. 141–56
	M 4/4	Moore, <i>Song Means</i> , Chapter 3
	W 4/6	Stephenson, <i>What to Listen For in Rock</i> , Chapter 6
Weeks 3–4: AABA forms	M 4/11	Covach, “Leiber and Stoller, the Coasters, and the ‘Dramatic AABA’ Form”
	W 4/13	Everett, excerpts from <i>The Beatles as Musicians</i> and <i>The Foundations of Rock</i> on <b>srdc</b>
	M 4/18	Three analyses of “Every Breath You Take”: Covach, “Form in Rock Music: A Primer,” p. 75 deClercq dissertation, pp. 85–89 and 69–70 Nobile dissertation, pp. 149–59 and 127–30
	W 4/20	Nobile, “Form and Voice Leading in Early Beatles Songs”
Weeks 5–6: Verse–chorus forms	M 4/25	Summach, “The Structure and Genesis of the Prechorus” deClercq dissertation, pp. 154–78 (on expanded <b>srdc</b> )
	W 4/27	Doll, “Expressive Modulation in Verse–Chorus Forms”
	M 5/2	Nobile, Chapters 2 and 3 from book-in-progress
	W 5/4	Nobile, “Verse–Chorus Forms as Harmonic Patterns”
Week 7: Novel forms	M 5/9	Spicer, “(Ac)cumulative Form in Pop-Rock Music” Osborn, “Terminally Climactic Forms”
	W 5/11	Neal, “Narrative Paradigms in Country Music”
Weeks 8–9: Large-scale forms and prep for final project	M 5/16	O’Donnell, “Tonal Coherence in <i>Dark Side of the Moon</i> ”
	W 5/18	Workshop on writing abstracts
	M 5/23	Progressive rock (each group presents on one article) <i>500-word abstract and bibliography for final project due 5/25 by 9am</i>
	W 5/25	Individual meetings about final project
Week 10: Presentations	M 5/30	<i>No class (Memorial Day)</i>
	W 6/1	Student presentations (2–4:20pm)
	*F 6/3	Student presentations (2–4:20pm)
<i>Final paper and conference proposal due 6/10 by 5pm</i>		