

History and Theory of Music, Ph.D.

[This program is currently not admitting students. Contact the School of the Arts for more information.](#)

The Ph.D. in History and Theory of Music is unique and combines both historical musicology and music theory and analysis to offer a Ph.D. program with a particular emphasis on music theory and analysis, critical theory, and the aesthetics and philosophy of music. The program rests on two central pillars: a sustained engagement with musical works that is underpinned by a thorough grounding in musical skills and literacy, and a strong focus on critical theory, which students learn to apply to musicological sub-disciplines such as music analysis and historical musicology.

The doctoral program in the History and Theory of Music is taught by a core faculty whose primary and secondary research interests cover a wide area: vocal music of the Italian baroque, Central European music and culture from the 19th century to the present, experimental music of the 20th century, popular music since 1950, American musical theater, especially that of Stephen Sondheim, and the intersection of theory, philosophy, and culture.

The program seeks students with a strong academic foundation, excellent writing skills, and a desire to develop a research idea into an original thesis. Applicants should possess an undergraduate degree in music or an equivalent level of training, and should demonstrate potential for creative research. Students are expected to have reading knowledge of French, German, Italian, or Spanish.

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Applicants are normally expected to have earned an undergraduate degree with a major in music (B.A. or B.Mus.) and to possess strong analytical and writing skills. Applicants whose undergraduate major was in a subject other than music but who can demonstrate a strong background in music are otherwise qualified may also be considered.

The online application and all supporting materials must be received by December 1. Supporting materials must include:

- A personal statement of the applicant's experiences, primary interests, and career goals
- Two samples of academic writing on historical and/or analytical music topics, demonstrating writing and critical thinking skills
- Results of the GRE exam, taken within the last five years
- Three letters of recommendation

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Required Courses

At least 56 units must be earned in the first two years, excluding units earned in MUSIC 399. The number of units earned thereafter will vary in accordance with the time required to pass the qualifying examination, advance to candidacy, and complete the dissertation.

During the first two years in the program, students complete the following:

A. Complete:	
MUSIC 202	Proseminar in Musicology
MUSIC 204	Proseminar in Music Theory and Analysis
B. Select six topical seminars: ¹	
MUSIC 222	Seminar in Musicology (may be repeated as topics vary) ¹
MUSIC 224	Seminar in Music Theory and Analysis (may be repeated as topics vary) ²
C. Complete the following research and writing course sequences:	
MUSIC 242A- 242B	First-Year Research and Writing Seminar I and First-Year Research and Writing Seminar II
MUSIC 243A- 243B	Second-Year Research and Writing Tutorial I and Second-Year Research and Writing Tutorial II
D. Complete a minimum of six electives, chosen with the advice and approval of the program coordinator. ³	
E. Complete:	
MUSIC 244	Readings for the Qualifying Examination (may be repeated)
MUSIC 245	Prospectus Research (may be repeated)
MUSIC 290	Dissertation Research (may be repeated)

¹ Of the six topical seminars, at least two must be MUSIC 222.

² Of the six topical seminars, at least two must be MUSIC 224.

³ Electives may include topical seminars beyond the required six.

En Route M.A.

For students who enter the program without an M.A. in an appropriate area of study, the substantial research paper written in MUSIC 243B will constitute the Master's essay. If in the judgement of the advisor and the other two readers, the essay and the student's overall academic record are determined to be satisfactory, the student will be awarded the en route M.A. and be considered to have met the standards for continued Ph.D. study.

Students who enter the program with an M.A. in an appropriate area of study are not eligible for the en route M.A. The advisor and the other two readers will determine whether the student's essay in MUSIC 243B and overall academic record have met the standards for continued Ph.D. study.

Language Requirement

Before advancing to candidacy, students must demonstrate a reading knowledge of one language other than English relevant to the student's program of study. This requirement is met by passing a translation examination administered by the Department.

Qualifying Examination

The Qualifying Examination combines written work prepared over several weeks' time and an oral examination.

Part one requires the student to write substantial essays on three topics selected from a larger set of six topics. Topics need not be limited to a single historical period and may encompass so-called art music as well as vernacular music. Successful essays are not mere recitations of fact, but rather demonstrate a student's familiarity with current concerns and methods.

Part two asks for a musical analysis of an assigned movement, work, or extended passage of a work. The student is expected to demonstrate competence in one or more appropriate analytical techniques.

Part three is an oral examination designed to test the breadth of the student's knowledge of the history of Western art music. Each student is given a list of works (or groups of works) and should prepare to discuss each with respect to matters of musical style and structure.

If the program faculty deem a student adequately prepared to take on a dissertation project, the exam is passed and the student is invited to develop a prospectus. Students must pass this exam to continue in the program. Should the program faculty identify specific and remediable deficiencies in a student's preparedness, the student will be offered a chance to retake any or all parts of the exam.

Dissertation Prospectus

After passing the Qualifying Examination, the student seeking advancement to candidacy for the Ph.D. prepares a written prospectus of the dissertation for presentation to the candidacy committee. The committee shall consist of the three members of the proposed dissertation committee (the Chair plus two other members of the senate faculty in music), plus two other members of the Academic Senate, one of whom shall be from a department other than music.

The prospectus may not be presented until all requirements other than the dissertation have been met, and it may only be presented during fall, winter, and spring quarters.

The prospectus is a written document that describes the proposed dissertation. The description must have sufficient depth for the candidacy committee to evaluate its merit as a dissertation project. The department does not require the prospectus to have any given form, length, or style, other than requiring an appended bibliography of relevant works, although the dissertation chair may impose such requirements. With the consent of the dissertation chair, the prospectus is distributed to members of the candidacy committee, and a prospectus meeting is scheduled. At this meeting, the members of the candidacy committee discuss the prospectus with the student to determine whether it is a viable dissertation project. The candidacy committee may accept the prospectus as it stands or accept it conditionally upon the satisfaction of certain specified requirements. Alternatively, the committee may reject the prospectus, and either require revisions for reconsideration at another prospectus meeting, or deem the entire project unviable.

Dissertation

The dissertation shall be an original research project of substantial length approved by the dissertation committee; it should be submitted no more than three years after admission to doctoral candidacy. The committee shall consist of the dissertation chair and two other faculty members, at least one of whom shall be a member of the faculty in the History and Theory of Music program. One member may be chosen from the faculty in music at-large or from another department. All members shall belong to the Academic Senate. During the quarters in which the dissertation is prepared, the student may enroll in MUSIC 290.

After submitting the full dissertation to the dissertation committee, the student presents a dissertation defense. This oral defense will normally not take place until at least four weeks have passed since the submission of the dissertation. The defense typically begins with a brief presentation of the project by the candidate and is followed by questions from the committee, closed deliberation by the committee, and a sharing of appropriate feedback with the candidate.

The dissertation defense can only be scheduled during the fall, winter, and spring quarters.