

Course title: Appreciating Indian Music (JSLH)

Instructor: Dr. Priya Kanungo

Course credits: 4

This is a short journey of discovering a long tradition that goes back almost 5000 years. What we will do in this semester is to stop at some of the major landmarks along the way, get a feel of the historical and cultural environment that the music is wrapped around. This dip in the ocean of Indian music will, hopefully, make you want to dive into it and come up asking the next informed question. In all probability, it would also make you an initiated listener.

No earlier training in music is required for those who wish to enroll for this course. The instructor will use lecture-demonstrations, videos and hand-outs as modes of learning.

Evaluations will be on the basis of a combinations of class participation, listening, quizzes and project work.

Class participation: 30%

Mid-term project (written and presentation): 30%

Final project (written and presentation): 40%

Some of the topics covered will be the following:

Introduction to music

The building blocks of music and their significance. Notes, genres, and a little bit about how Indian music began.

Bollywood music

A walk through of how it began, some major watershed moments, and the people who have kept it ticking.

The raga riddle

Get to know what a raga is, and listen to samples of Hindustani and Carnatic music; get familiar

with the meaning of important terminology like thaat, vadi-samvadi, vivaadi, pakad etc. To enable easy association, Raga Yaman will be used throughout the course as the scale for demonstration and learning.

Raga on a reel

The classical and the cinema; find out whether both genres are feeding off each other; listen to some popular tunes from Bollywood that are based on ragas.

Composition cognizance

Listen to a traditional composition; learn what alaap and taan are; figure out the different kinds of embellishments used in Indian classical music.

On the beat

Find out about the time cycles of ragas and their categorization in terms of note usage.

Keeping time

Listen to some important time cycles like Ektaal, Teentaal etc.; get a feel of the divisions in the rhythm cycles;

Even though Indian classical music follows an oral tradition, you can notate it. Learn how to read and notate this music

Signature styles

Learn about the genres in Hindustani music – dhrupad, dhamar, khayal, thumri, dadra, bhajan; Listen to recordings of some; a brief history of how they've evolved will also be thrown in; revise the composition in Raga Yaman

Important instruments

Listen to some important instruments in Indian music; identify them, and learn what their presentation patterns are.

Masters of Music

Take a look at some of the writers and thinkers that shaped Hindustani music. They also made music...

Get introduced to the life and times of some of the greatest performers of Hindustani music and their contributions; listen to their virtuosity. Their magic lives on...

Society and song

Understand the social complexities surrounding musicians. Did women musicians in India sing a different kind of song?

Reaching out: A different sound

Discover the world music flavour of India; of Indian musicians joining hands with those from other musical systems such as jazz, pop and Western classical music.

Comparison between Indian classical music and Western classical music

The new packaging

Learn about some modern trends in Indian music presentation and the role of technology. Also, take a look at how Indian music is critiqued - audience turnout, media coverage and patronage.

Protest music

The role of music in bringing to the fore repression, injustice and discrimination. We will trace it from the freedom struggle to the present. Today, there are several bands across the country that showcase different forms of social discrimination in the vernacular. We will look at some of them and see how music is an effective tool in bringing awareness and mobilizing people.

Reading list:

Hindustani music – A tradition in transition; D K Printworks P(Ltd.), 2005; Deepak Raja, Pg 25-83

Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema; Popular Prakashan, Mumbai; Editorial Board: Gulzar, Govind Nihalani and Saibal Chatterjee; Pg 197 to 208 and 271 to 300

Infrastructural Developments in Indian Cinema; Rasa – The Indian Performing Arts in the last Twenty-five years; Anamika Kala Sangam Research and Publication, Kolkata; Shampa Banerjee; Pg 289 to 296

Evolution of raga and tala in Indian music; Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1989 (reprinted 1993); M R Gautam; Pg 217-248

Time in Indian Music – Rhythm, Meter and Form in North Indian Raga Performance; Oxford University Press; Martin Clayton; Pg 10-74
