

Anthropology of Music and the World

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Allan Merriam (1964), in his significant work The Anthropology of music, emphasises on the anthropological and ethnographic study of music in order to approach it beyond its sound. Studying music as a cultural phenomenon, community building, communication, ensuring cultural continuity, symbolic representation, and the like, becomes crucial not just to appreciate a musical form, but to also understand the variegated spaces of unique music making and the people behind such complex traditions. The interdisciplinary nature of the discipline of Ethnomusicology (study of music in its cultural context) owes much to this work. Timothy Rice (2014) has discussed the importance of understanding a society through its musical cultures as studies of music have included interaction of issues such as gender; identity; challenge of modernity and popular music on the practice of traditional music; impact of migration, diaspora and globalisation on music; among other things.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes:

Therefore, this course is designed to introduce students to the area of Music anthropology or Ethnomusicology, and to the socio-cultural contexts musical cultures around the world. By the end of this course, the students would be able to appreciate the variety of non-mainstream, traditional and indigenous music forms from around the world, their history, and their evolution and sustenance through the changing times. Through relevant readings and audio-visual examples, they would be able to learn about the performance practice, the socio-cultural and environmental context, among others, of these traditions in detail. Music cannot be looked at through a single lens or through a single cultural tradition. The aim of this course is to enable students to adapt newer lens in the way we understand and listen to music within our own regional context and from around the world.

Students, at the end of semester, can expect to have an in-depth understanding what constitutes community music in different cultures around the world; the different meanings attached to music making or even to the idea of ‘music’ in varied societies; the manner in which music can lead to identity formation through diverse ways; among other things. The students will

have thorough clarity of the sociological/anthropological aspects of world music traditions and ability to analyse them through such a lens, with the ability to conduct basic secondary research through assignments.

Teaching Methodology:

To this endeavour various case studies, coupled with conceptual readings in the course. Students would be able to understand the main theoretical and ethnographic methods through which music is studied as a part of culture and society. This will be followed by the exposure to readings and listening sessions of various traditional and indigenous music traditions around the world to understand their social significance in their respective contexts. Students are also encouraged to bring in more examples in the classroom beyond the course, from their own interests and experiences, through class discussions. The course instructor will also aim to have a Guest lecture (either online or offline), providing platform to interact with specific experts from field and opportunity to ask questions. This contributes immensely to the building of knowledge in the subject matter.

Prerequisites: None

Credits: 4

Level: This course is specifically designed for undergraduate students.

Mode of Assessments:

1. Possible internal Assessment components (any two of 65 marks in total)
 - a) Research or Reflection Paper – where students would be expected to conduct their own secondary research on their chosen topic related to the course (details to be discussed later);
 - b) Movie or Documentary Review, Song Review – analysing a movie or documentary on one music tradition from around the world
 - c) Question-based Essay – students given a question on a musical tradition from or beyond the course, and would be expected to analyse it
2. Class Participation of 5 Marks – includes participation in class discussions and engagement with the course materials.

3. End Term examination: compulsory component of 30 marks in total.

Selected Essential Readings:

1. Merriam, Allan. 1964. *The Anthropology of Music*. Northwestern University Press.
2. Beck, David B. 2002. "Asia/India." In, *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's people*, edited by Jeff Tedd Titon, 293-330. Cengage Learning
3. Stobart, Henry. 2009. "World Musics". In *An Introduction to Music Studies*, edited by J.P.E Harper-Scott & Jim Samson, 97-118. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Feld, Steven. 1991. "Sound as a Symbolic System: The Kaluli Drum." *The Varieties of Sensory Experience*, edited by David Howes, 79-99. University of Toronto Press
5. Locke, David. 2002. "Africa/Ewe, Mande, Dagbamba, Shona, BaAka." In, *Worlds of Music, Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's people*, edited by Jeff Tedd Titon, 99-174. Cengage Learning
6. Tan, Shzr Ee. 2012. *Beyond 'Innocence': Amis Aboriginal Song in Taiwan as an Ecosystem*. Routledge (Introduction and Chapter 1).
7. Stobart, Henry. 1994. "Flourishing Horns and Enchanted Tubers: Music and Potatoes in Highland Bolivia." *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 3: 35-48
8. Becker, Judith. 2019. *Traditional Music in Modern Java: Gamelan in a Changing Society*. University of Hawai'i Press
9. Stokes, Martin. 2010. *The Republic of Love: Cultural Intimacy in Turkish Popular Music*. University of Chicago Press.
10. Djumaev, Alexander. 2005. "Musical Heritage and National Identity in Uzbekistan." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 16 (2): 165-184
11. McLauchlan, Richard. 2025. *The Bagpipes: A Cultural History*. C. Hurst and Co. (Publishers) Ltd.