

Operas of Mozart (MUSI 6397), Fall 2005

Professor: Andrew Davis ([email](#))

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Home page and syllabus

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Course information:

MUSI 6397 (section 12546), Operas of Mozart | Wednesdays 10:00 a.m. –1:00 p.m. | Room: MSM 110 | course web site: <http://www.uh.edu/~adavis5/musi6397> | This is a course on the operatic music of Mozart. We will survey all 16 of the operas in some way, but the course will naturally focus in detail on the three Da Ponte operas (*Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*) and *Die Zauberflöte*. We will read and discuss recent published analytical literature on Mozart. The course is a blended theory/history seminar (and can satisfy credit for either), but will have a strong analytical bent. Periodic small assignments, a final paper on a topic of your choice, and a final exam supplement regular listening and reading assignments.

Prerequisites:

You must have completed an undergraduate music theory and history curriculum (or demonstrated equivalent competency).

Materials:

I suggest that you purchase the full orchestral scores for each of the Da Ponte operas (*Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*) and *Die Zauberflöte*. These are usually available in most bookstores of the Borders or Barnes and Noble variety, as well as from any number of online booksellers (including barnesandnoble.com and amazon.com). Purchase the Dover Publication editions—these are excellent scores and extremely inexpensive (all cost less than \$20). For other scores we need in class, I will make photocopies, but I will not make photocopies of the four scores listed here.

You will be evaluated on the following:

1. Your participation in the class discussions and the degree to which you demonstrate you have completed the required listening and reading assignments. You MUST come to class familiar with the material and ready to discuss it.
2. Small periodic assignments.
3. One final paper.
4. One final exam

Synopses assignments:

You will choose (or be assigned) an opera to explain and summarize for the class. The *New Grove Dictionary* and *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* are good places to start for these assignments.

Prepare to present to the class a summary of plot, organization, and important historical information about your opera. Include a handout that contains at least the title of the opera, the librettist's name and dates, the date of composition and/or premiere, the Köchel number, the genre, the place of premiere, and a summary of the plot. The plot summary should be in plain, understandable English! You can write in prose, or in list/outline format, or in whatever other format you deem helpful. Please do NOT simply rehash some hopelessly complex synopsis found in a CD booklet or some other publication. You may include on the handout any other information about the opera you think is interesting or important.

Bring enough copies of the handout for the entire class. You may also bring a recording and play a sample, if you wish. BUT: **Your presentation should last no more than 15 minutes.**

Final exam:

The final exam will be given on the designated final exam day for the course (Monday 12 December, 10am–1pm). The exam will include listening identification, score identification, and essay questions that ask you to synthesize topics we have discussed in class (music and text setting; music and drama; importance of specific operas, arias, and/or ensembles; approaches to analysis and interpretation; and others). Some of the essay questions will ask you to summarize or refer to reading assignments.

Final paper:

On the last day of class (Wednesday 30 November), submit a paper of about 10–12 pages in length. The paper can be either analytical or historical in nature, but it must focus in some way on a topic relevant to Mozart's operas and their music (even a primarily historical paper should include some musical analysis to support the points). Think in terms of integrating informed critical or analytical commentary on the music, supporting this with references to scores and/or musical examples in the text—as in some of the reading assignments we looked at during the semester. Beyond these guidelines, the topic is entirely up to you.

Submit a proposal to me in class in week 6 (Wednesday 28 September). Include in the proposal a summary of what you would like to write about, and cite some of the outside resources to which you will refer. After you submit the proposal, you may not change the topic without first consulting with me.

I am happy to discuss the paper project at any stage of the process; make an appointment to see me outside of class.

Grading:

Your final grade is the average of your grade in three areas: 1) the paper (35%); 2) the final exam (35%); and 3) the synopsis assignment (10%) and your class participation (20%) throughout the semester.

The final grade is assigned according to the standard scale of percentages: A: 92.5–100 | A-: 90.0–92.5 | B+: 87.5–90.0 | B: 82.5–87.5 | B-: 80.0–82.5 | C+: 77.5–80.0 | C: 72.5–77.5 | C-: 70.0–72.5 | D+ 67.5–70.0 | D: 62.5–67.5 | D-: 60.0–62.5 | F: below 60.0

Academic dishonesty:

You are expected to do your own work on all assignments and exams unless instructed differently; any work you hand in at any time should be your own. Problems with academic dishonesty will be handled according to the procedures outlined in the student handbook (see <http://www.uh.edu/dos/hdbk/acad/achonpol.html>). Please note that the mere suspicion of academic dishonesty is enough to initiate official action; please do not put yourself in the position of having to deal with this kind of situation.

Disabilities:

If you have a disability that affects your capacity to complete assignments and exams in a timely manner, please inform me at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made. You will need to document your disability with the UH Center for Students with Disabilities (see <http://www.uh.edu/csd/>). The CSD will provide me with information on your disability, and you and I will work out a mutually agreeable arrangement (based on recommendations provided by the CSD) for how to accommodate the disability.

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URL: <http://www.uh.edu/~adavis5/musi6397>
Comments to Andrew Davis ([email](#))
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