

FYE: Philosophy and Cover Songs

UFSP 100

Fall 2026

Tu 3:00–3:55

Physics 116

Professor: P.D. Magnus

E-mail: pmagnus@albany.edu

Office: HU-218

Office phone: (518) 442-4223

Office hours: Tu 1:30–2:30, F 11:00–noon, and by appointment

The nature of music has been an issue for philosophers since ancient times, but mostly on the assumption that a musical performance was an ephemeral event, here and then gone. Now recording allows us to listen to a musical version again and again, and every recording after the first is a cover. The category of covers has only existed for about 75 years, so thinking about covers provides a clue to how music is different now than it was before. We will follow up on that clue, both to think about music and as an introduction to philosophy.

This is also a First Year Experience course, so we will also spend some time discussing how to survive and thrive at UAlbany.

- The textbook for this course is *A Philosophy of Cover Songs*, which is available both as a webpage and as a PDF.

Requirements: In addition to class participation, you will be asked to do several specific tasks.

- attend (any professor's) office hour
- DAACS (Diagnostic Assessment and Achievement of College Skills), at least the Self-Regulated Learning and Writing modules
- Munch With the Majors reflection
- Course reflection

Attendance: You should come to class! If you don't come, you can't participate.

- If you are or suspect you are contagious, *do not* come to class! Students who miss an exam with a legitimate excuse should e-mail me as soon as possible.

Electronic device policy: Students may not use smartphones or other devices during class. That said, I realize that there you have other things going on. If you have to take an important call or message during class, you should leave the room with a minimum of fuss.

Schedule

This schedule of topics is tentative. Topics will probably shift around as we go along.

Week 1 Aug 25 - introduction

Week 2 Sep 1 - scholarship and AI

Week 3 Sep 8 - understanding cover songs (chapter 1)

office hours visit and DAACS should be complete

Week 4 Sep 15 - philosophical distinctions (chapter 2)

Week 5 Sep 22 - continued

Week 6 Sep 29 - appreciating cover songs (chapter 3)

6:00–8:30 Munch with the Majors (LC Concourse)

Week 7 Oct 6 - reference and meaning (chapter 4)

Munch With the Majors reflection due

Week 8 Oct 13 - Fall Break - No Class!

Week 9 Oct 20 - continued

Week 10 Oct 27 - some puzzles (chapter 5)

Week 11 Nov 3 - music ontology (chapter 6)

Week 12 Nov 10 - continued

Week 13 Nov 17 - genre

Week 14 Nov 24 - music and emotion

Week 15 Dec 1 - conclusion

Course reflection due