“The composer of galant music, rather than being a struggling artist alone against the world, was more like a prosperous civil servant. … [He] lived the life of a musical craftsman, of an artisan who produced a large quantity of music for immediate consumption”.

Robert Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style*

“Which is to say that Mozart’s music often seems effortless, an aesthetic judgment often ratified by what we know of the circumstances of its composition. Human strain, or even overt human manipulation, the tooling of a product, would seem to have left little mark here. The music somehow seems pre-made.”

Scott Burnham, *Mozart’s Grace*

How does one reckon with craftsmanship and technique in music? A new set of critical tools, developed by authors such as Robert Gjerdingen, Giorgio Sanguinetti, and Lawrence Dreyfus, has been shaping the recent study of eighteenth-century music, placing the role of musical craft front and center. The reactivation of pedagogical methods such as partimento practice, the rise of schema theory, with its related emphasis on the effective manipulation of conventional formulas, and the encouragement to approach Bach’s music via specifiable, quasi-grammatical operations: all these have galvanized the field, opening unfamiliar repertories and reenergizing old ones. At the same time, this new orientation has had the effect of a certain demystification and democratization, bringing the music of the “great” composers down from ineffable realms and repopulating the eighteenth-century’s musical landscape with innumerable flesh-and-blood practitioners.

The central issue of the class, then, is a simple one: what happens to our analytical and theoretical sensibilities when musical craft is foregrounded? To focus on craft is in part to focus on skill and technique, of course, the skein of constraints, imagination and solutions, but also on pedagogy, routine, and habit. It emphasizes doing and making, and fosters an appreciation of elements that are concrete and specifiable, local and conventional, available for manipulation and working. How far can these concepts take us? Are they ever fully explanatory? Where and when do we wish for them to meld with things that are more elusive? What is the role of artistry, beauty, impenetrability, mystery, and wonder (the sort of “knowing enchantment” that Scott Burnham has encouraged)? And, more practically, are there ways to incorporate such aesthetic sensibilities into robust methodological positions?

Working across the whole of the long eighteenth century (from Bach to Beethoven—or Scarlatti to Rossini, if you prefer), the course will offer a thorough grounding in these vital theoretical approaches, whose waves are being felt in the discipline far beyond the originary eighteenth-century repertoire. At the same time, however, the course offers an invitation to reflect on the craft of music theory itself, the industry of the discipline, so to speak, and the mechanisms that support it.