

ANTH 5708F
Special Topics: Music and conflict

Instructor	Dr. Carolyn Ramzy
Term	Fall 2026
Course Delivery	In-Person
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Music and Conflict is a graduate seminar that explores the complex roles music plays in shaping, mediating, and intensifying contemporary social, political, and environmental conflicts in our increasingly polarized world. Drawing on interdisciplinary scholarship in governance, power, and agency, the course examines how music operates within popular media as both a tool of empowerment and a mechanism of control. Through a series of thematic and issue-based case studies, students will investigate topics such as the use of music in contexts of war and genocide, "slopaganda" (AI generated propaganda), the soundscapes of anti-oppression and anti-colonial movements, and the influence of neoliberal capitalism on how we listen, feel, and interpret global events. The seminar invites critical engagement with the question: to what extent can music transform power relations, and when does it simply reinforce and bind power to the top?

EVALUATION

Discussion Leading & Seminar Participation 30%
Weekly Reading Guides 20%
Final Paper 20%
Individual Paper Abstract 10%
Roundtable/Panel Abstract 10%
Final Presentation in a Collective Roundtable Format: 10%

TEXT

All readings will be made available on e-reserve at MacOdrum Library and are largely drawn from the fields of ethnomusicology, sound studies, anthropology, and political science, among others including:

1. Daugherty, Martin J. *Listening to War: Sound, Music, Trauma, and Survival in Wartime Iraq*. Oxford University Press, 2015.
2. Johnson, Adam. *How to Sell a Genocide: The Media's Complicity in the Destruction of Gaza*. Pluto Press, 2026.
3. Fast, Susan and Kip Pegley. 2012. *Music, Politics, and Violence*. Wesleyan University Press.
4. O'Connell, John Morgan, and Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco. 2010. *Music and Conflict*. University of Illinois Press.

