

MUS 507: Studies in Music History – Histories of Music Theory
Instructor: August Sheehy | Tuesday, 9:30am – 12:20pm

The concepts we use to understand Western music are historical. Staff notation was developed in eleventh century Europe. Time signatures evolved into their present form in the seventeenth century. Roman numeral harmonic analysis was invented in the late eighteenth century. Such ideas are not neutral or inert; they are contingent technologies used to understand past practices and to build new futures in which they too will be superseded.

At the same time, our approaches to the past are always evolving. In this course, we will examine recent approaches to music theory's histories. Though our focus will be on European music theories and their intellectual descendants, we will also broaden our theoretical perspectives to include some non-Western musical thought, the better to understand the circumstances and historical trajectories that make us the musicians we are.

This course is primarily intended for MM and DMA students, for whom it fulfills the Elective Group 1 requirement. Students in the MA in Composition track must take either MUS 503 or MUS 507 in the first year.

3 credits