Overview: We often hear that time is an inextricable element of music, that music cannot exist outside of time. But, to paraphrase a famous statement by St. Augustine, although we may think we know what time is, our conception breaks down once we have to put it in words. In this seminar we will investigate musical time from a fresh perspective, looking at how it is organized in different cultures, at recent research in cognition and perception, and at some influential thinkers of the 20th century. The goal is to open the topic up to current interests, and to investigate its significance using contemporary methods. We will place our discussion in historical context, but the main focus will be on more recent approaches. Our readings will not be limited to music, but will cover a broad spectrum of issues.

We will begin by looking at the cultural and political contingency of time in general, in order to get a sense of what it is that we're even talking about. We will then delve into more music-specific concerns, namely small-scale organization (meter and rhythm) and large-scale structure (form) in Western classical music, before broadening our perspective to non-Western cultures. Following that, we will examine the interplay of music and time in human movement, as well as some of the recent empirical work in perception and cognition of time. We will close the seminar by returning to a wider angle, and consider some philosophical approaches to time and their application to music.

Requirements: The goal of the seminar is to provide you with a wide overview of the issues involved in talking about musical time, in order to allow you to apply specific concepts to your own work. To that end, the seminar will end with a mini conference, in which everyone will have the opportunity to share their research with their peers. In addition, a full length research paper, based on your conference presentation, will constitute the final project.