

CAT 124 - “Erm-BYAH!-O O O”: Singing Through Life

Instructor: Jasper Sussman

Fall 2021

course group page: <https://knit.ucsd.edu/groups/singing-through-life/>

course Google Drive: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1spv6wsRncQFgvBA1mGDnl-MWxjm7pQ3w?usp=sharing>

course website: <https://knit.ucsd.edu/singingthroughlife/>

Tuesdays, 1:30-3:20pm
CLT B108 ([map pin](#))

for Office Hours: <https://ucsd.zoom.us/my/jaspersussman>

Jasper Sussman

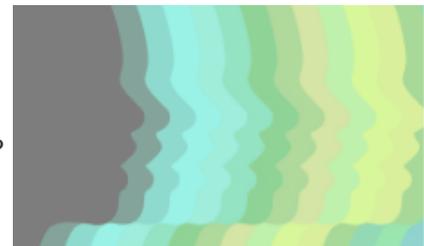
dsussman@ucsd.edu (please allow 24 hours for a response, longer on weekends)

(she/her/hers)

Office Hours: 12:30-1:30pm, CLT B108

Course Description:

Song and dance have been essential to the fabric of human societies since our very beginnings. We sing to celebrate unions, accomplishments, and times of year; mothers rock and soothe their babies to sleep, and children learn their "ABCs" to the captivating sounds of "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" and its companions across the globe. In this course, students are provided with an opportunity to consider the role that singing plays in their lives, both personally and interpersonally. How does vocal activity contribute to productive social subsistence, preservation, and change? What is the impact of singing, both in groups and individually, on aspects of health, identity formation, and one's sense of self-efficacy? By engaging in diverse vocal performance and observation practices, students will grapple with these central questions. Course activities are focused around real-world applications and reflections as opposed to purely theoretical learning modalities. Practicum elements will include singing with and for others, conducting ethnographic fieldwork (such as conducting interviews and logging experiences), and sharing personal findings with members of the greater community. No prior musical or vocal performance experience is necessary for success in this course—bring your voice, just the way it is!



Learning Objectives:

This course will guide students to:

- Recognize and identify diverse forms of musical engagement,
- Assess, for themselves, the role that singing (and the voice more broadly) plays in their lives,
 - by way of self-reflective and critical ethnographic engagement and data gathering,
 - exposure to diverse perspectives and contexts,
 - and thorough comprehension of central texts,
 - *understanding that each student will come to their own unique conclusions.*
- Consider the broader impact of music-making on human societies, and
- Create and curate multi-modal ethnographies for public audiences around their findings.

Community Partners:

Engagement with our partners at [Songs by Heart](#) and [Voices of Our City Choir](#) is a central aspect of this course. Members from both of these communities will be joining us in class to share their experiences, lead interactive vocal activities, and answer your questions. Please be prepared to welcome them, and to learn from their diverse experiences.

Additional engagement in *Songs by Heart* and *Voices of Our City Choir* programming has been scheduled into our course structure, and participation in a minimum of one event per community partner is required. (Event details forthcoming.)

Lastly, students are **encouraged** to join and participate in weekly sing-a-longs with the [Sofa Singers](#), an online global community of regular people sharing in the experience of singing twice a week. This, along with all community and course experiences, will inform your understanding of course themes and materials, and will enrich your available data for course projects.

The practicum conditions of the CAT 124 curriculum require roughly **10 hours of experiential learning per week** outside of class-time. Participation in the community activities listed here, along with the subsequent ethnographic logging of each experience (including in-class experiences and assignment related data acquisition), the evaluation of these logs, and the development of present themes into multi-modal ethnographic blog posts will fulfill this demand. *I've found it takes approximately 2-3x longer to adequately write about an experience than it takes for it to occur: plan accordingly.*

Course Requirements and Expectations:

Please Note: Success in this course will require effective time management.

It is you, the student, who are responsible for meeting course deadlines.

Work Early, and Work Often.

Major assignments (Project #1 & Project #2) are developed overtime; due to the involved nature of this course, final deadlines will be enforced and extension requests received close to deadlines will likely be denied. Plan accordingly, and give yourself time to saturate for maximal growth and enjoyment!

Assignments may only receive full credit if received by their published Due Date or by an agreed upon extended Due Date. Each day following the original Due Date, the assignment will lose 1/3 or a letter grade. No late assignments will be accepted after a week's time.

Assignments & Grading

In-Class Work / Participation	25%
Readings (with <i>students'</i> comments)	10%
Project #1 - Solo Singing and Autoethnography (w/ Video)	30%
Project #2 - Lullaby Interview + Blog OR Singing and Humanity Blog	35%

- **In-Class Work / Participation (25%)**

- For each of our 10 ten class periods, students will be awarded up to 2.5 pts (or 2.5% of their overall grade) for their in-class work and participation.
 - 2.5 pts will be awarded to students who are *fully engaged*, who *actively and fully participate in class activities and assignments*.
 - 2 pts will be awarded to students who are *mostly engaged in class*, who are *present for the entire duration of the class*, and who are *mostly active and participating in class activities and assignments*.
 - *Partially engaged students who arrive late or leave before the end of class* will receive **1.5** pts for the day.
 - Those who are *not participating*, and/or who are *not present* will receive a **0**.
- Lectures will be interactive and include hands-on learning experiences that are vital to course goals. **Please let Jasper know in advance if you will miss a class meeting.**
- This course asks students to engage in activities that are likely unfamiliar and perhaps uncomfortable (i.e. singing in front of other people, leading group singing activities, and practicing reflexive writing). That's okay! It is through *doing* that understanding and growth will occur. **Students are expected to lean into their discomfort and put consistent time and attention into coursework, even and especially when questions of significance and methodology arise.** There is no one perfect method for ethnographic engagement, it is instead an individual process of discovery. Students are expected to stretch themselves, come prepared to discuss readings and ethnographic experiences each class period, and dive into class activities with abandon.

- **Readings, with students' comments (10%)**

- Readings must be completed each Monday evening *before* the class period they are associated with to frame in-class discussions and activities.
- Links to readings are posted on our course websites, and on this syllabus in the "Weekly Schedule" section below. They are designated as either *Required* or *Suggested*, and **those that require your written engagement are marked thusly**. Directions for engagement are also included.
 - Points for readings are awarded based on your written engagement with **5** designated texts. Students will be awarded up to 2 pts (or 2% of their overall grade) for their engagement with each text.
 - Possible credit to be awarded: 2, 1.5, 1, or 0 pts.
 - 2 pts - awarded for excellent written work; complete, thoughtful, free of errors, demonstrates thorough engagement
 - 1.5 pts - awarded for adequate written work; nearly complete, underdeveloped, mostly error-free, demonstrates adequate engagement

- 1 pt - awarded for inadequate written work; incomplete, inadequate development, noticeable errors, and fails to demonstrate engagement
- **Project #1 - Solo Singing and Autoethnography (w/ Video) (30%)**
 - Throughout the course, students will be guided to explore their voices and selves through mastering a song of their choosing. The experiences involved, documented in a field journal, will culminate in a reflexive piece of writing to be published as a blog post on our [course website](#), alongside a video produced by each student of their performance of their song. *This project centers each individuals' personal journey- it does not aim to reward "skillful" performances over "unskilled" performances, as such conceptions are rigid and unhelpful to us in this course. That said, this project **does** require students to embrace vulnerability and share their voices.*
 - Songs are to be no more than 3 minutes in length (*it is acceptable to learn a segment of a larger work*), and performance videos must demonstrate thought behind their presentation elements (i.e. lighting, sound, location, performance persona). Accompanying blog posts are to be between 750 - 1,500 words.
 - **This assignment is scaffolded, with three major components:**
 - **From the start of the term**, students will maintain a **Project #1 Doc /Solo Singing Field Notes/ (7.5%)**, hosted on our course's shared Google Drive folder, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1spv6wsRncQFgvBA1mGDnl-MWxjm7pQ3w?usp=sharing>. The upkeep of this document includes the development of autoethnographic writing around the significance of singing specific songs, and the evaluation of the learning, sharing, and video-creation experience of solo singing. There will be a graded Project #1 Doc checkpoint on **Monday, October 25 at 11:59pm** with the possibility of a markup if development takes place before the final Project #1 deadline.
 - Project #1 Docs will be awarded 7.5, 6, 5, or 0 pts.
 - 7.5 - Complete, thoughtful and developed work, updated consistently
 - 6 - Complete, thoughtful but underdeveloped ideas (*could have more*)
 - 5 - Incomplete, some thought, underdeveloped
 - **First drafts (7.5%)** of the blog post and accompanying video are due on **Monday, November 1 by 11:59pm**. Students will receive feedback within two week's time.
 - Drafts will be awarded full points upon submission. Detailed feedback will be provided only on developed, thoughtfully constructed drafts.
 - **Final drafts (15%)** are due on **Monday, November 29 by 11:59pm**.
 - Final drafts will be awarded a letter grade. For [assignment rubric](#) and full details (i.e. how-to resources on performance video creation, music learning, and assignment submission), see our Canvas course site.

- **Project #2 - Singing and Humanity Blog OR Lullaby Interview + Blog (35%)**

For the second major project of the course, students choose of the two following options:

(OPTION 1) **Singing and Humanity Blog**

- For this project, students will produce a self-reflective ethnographic essay in the form of a 750-1,500 word blog post, to be published publicly to our KNIT course website. The content and theme of the blog, though personal to each student, is to be about the role of the voice in human life; students will determine a concise thesis from this general subject. Blog content will draw upon course readings, engagement with course community partners, in-class activities, and students' reflexive writing on such subjects.
- **This assignment is scaffolded with four major components.** A living document holding students' observations, an assignment proposal, a first draft, and the completed blog post are the primary components of this assignment.
 - **From Week 1 onwards**, students will maintain a **Project #2 Doc /Community Field Notes (7.5%)**, hosted on our shared Google Drive course folder. Topics to be discussed are in-class conversations with community partners, musical interactions with community partners (in *their* domains, as possible), in-class student and public activities, course materials, related life experiences, and beyond [*everything is potential data*]. There is a Doc Checkpoint on **Monday, November 8 at 11:59pm**, and students should be prepared to share their writing without notice in lecture throughout the term.
 - Project #2 Docs will be awarded 7.5, 6, 5, or 0 pts.
 - 7.5 - Complete, thoughtful, developed work, updated consistently
 - 6 - Complete, thoughtful, underdeveloped ideas (*could have more*)
 - 5 - Incomplete, some thought, underdeveloped
 - The **Assignment Proposal (5%)** for Project #2 is due on **Monday, October 25 by 11:59pm**. It is to be approximately 250 words, and should concisely summarize the intended content of the blog. Students should take care to articulate a primary focus or theme for their post, draft out a thesis (it can be observational in nature, or inquisitive), and list the representative experiences they plan to expand upon in their final writing. Instructor feedback will be provided within two week's time.
 - Assignment Proposals will be awarded 5, 4, 3, or 0 pts.
 - 5 - meets length and content requirements, written with thought and effectiveness, proof-read for errors
 - 4 - under length requirements though has required contents, underdeveloped and lacking refinement, noticeable errors
 - 3 - missing components, little to no effort to edit and develop ideas
 - **First Drafts (7.5%)** of the blog post are due on **Monday, November 15 by 11:59pm**. Students will receive Peer Reviewed feedback in class.
 - Drafts will be awarded full points for submission. Opportunities for instructor feedback will be provided in class on Tuesday, November 23.

- **Final Drafts (15%)** are due on **Monday, December 6 by 11:59pm**.
 - Final drafts will be awarded a letter grade. For [assignment rubric](#) and full details, see our Canvas course site.

(OPTION 2) **Lullaby Interview + Blog**

- For this project, students will prepare and conduct an ethnographic interview and produce an accompanying blog post for publication via our [course website](#). The interview will center around the subject of “lullabies,” and provides students with the opportunity to evaluate how this intimate human activity reveals both our cultural differences, on the one hand, and species-wide similarities, on the other. As the subjects interviewed will ideally be the students’ own family members, it also presents a unique opportunity for students to acknowledge the role that singing has played in their own lives since infancy.
 - Interview recordings are to be approximately 35 minutes in length. Accompanying blog reports are to be between 750-1,500 words.
- **This assignment is scaffolded, with four major components:**
 - From the start of the term, students will maintain a **Project #2 [Community Field Notes] Doc (7.5%)**, hosted on our shared Google Drive course folder. The upkeep of this document includes the development of interview questions, field notes, and the ethnographic evaluation of the interview and blog-creation experience. Observations from course activities involving community partners, and/or related life experiences may also be logged here. There is a Doc Checkpoint on **Monday, November 8 at 11:59pm, and students should be prepared to share their writing without notice in lecture throughout the term.**
 - Project #2 Docs will be awarded 7.5, 6, 5, or 0 pts.
 - 7.5 - Complete, thoughtful, developed work, updated consistently
 - 6 - Complete, thoughtful, underdeveloped ideas (*could have more*)
 - 5 - Incomplete, some thought, underdeveloped
 - The **Assignment Proposal (5%)** for Project #2 is due on **Monday, October 25 by 11:59pm**. It is to be approximately 250 words, and should detail your plans (the who, when and how) for your interview, and a concise and articulate description of your research goals for the project. What do you hope to understand more fully, and why is this a worthwhile undertaking? Please also provide your intended interview questions along with your proposal.
 - Assignment Proposals will be awarded 5, 4, 3, or 0 pts.
 - 5 - meets length and content requirements, written with thought and effectiveness, proof-read for errors
 - 4 - under length requirements though has required contents, underdeveloped and lacking refinement, noticeable errors
 - 3 - missing components, little to no effort to edit and develop ideas

- **First drafts (7.5%)** of the interview and blog post are due on **Monday, November 15 by 11:59pm**. Students will receive Peer Reviewed feedback in class.
 - Drafts will be awarded full points for submission. Opportunities for instructor feedback will be provided in class on Tuesday, November 23.
- **Monday, December 6 by 11:59pm**. Students will receive Peer Reviewed feedback in class.
 - Drafts will be awarded full points for submission. Opportunities for instructor feedback will be provided in class on Tuesday, November 23.
- **Final drafts (15%)** are due on **Monday, December 6 by 11:59pm**.
 - Final drafts will be awarded a letter grade. For [assignment rubric](#) and full details, see our Canvas course site.

Accessing KNIT:

1. Log into KNIT using your Active Directory credentials at <https://knit.ucsd.edu/>. Please note that your login name is not your entire UCSD email address, but only the first part: “**YourLogin@ucsd.edu**.”
2. Navigate to our group page, <https://knit.ucsd.edu/groups/singing-through-life/>.
3. Click the button “request to join”. When I approve your request, you will have access to post to the KNIT group or site. Please note that sites have a different URL than groups: “<https://knit.ucsd.edu/singingthroughlife/>.”

Important Policies:

- It is the responsibility of all students to familiarize themselves with [UCSD’s academic integrity policy](#). Violations of academic integrity in this course will not be tolerated and can result in an automatic F as well as university sanctions.
- Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), which is located in University Center 202.
- Students are expected to adhere to the [UCSD Principles of Community](#), especially during lecture and when writing public blog posts.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Please Note: This syllabus is a living document, and will continue to evolve throughout the quarter. I reserve the right to alter this schedule as the course progresses and in response to class dialogues.

All homework is due at the start of the class period following its inclusion, except when otherwise specified.

All readings and associated comments are due by the Monday preceding the course-date listed.

WEEKS 1-2: *Ethnomusicology and the Voice; Course Foundations*

Objectives:

Understand course expectations;

Develop skills in and awareness of singing and ethnographic data collection practices;

Recognize ethnomusicological stance on ubiquitous nature of music-making in human life

Tuesday, September 28—*To be human is to be musical; life is data*

- **Read:**
 - **Required**
 - **(w/ Written Engagement)** - [Christopher Small - “Prelude,” *Musicking*, 1-18.](#)
 - [Timothy Rice - “Chapter 1: Defining Ethnomusicology,” *Ethnomusicology, a Very Short Introduction*, 1-10.](#)
 - **Suggested**
 - [Samuel A. Mehr, et. al. - “Form and Function in Human Song,” *Current Biology* 28, 356-368.](#) **TO SKIM.** *pertains to in-class activity*
 - [Gary Tomlinson - “Some First Principles,” *A Million Years of Music: The Emergence of Human Modernity*,” 23-26 \[READ\], 27-50 \[SKIM\].](#)
- **In Class (and beyond):** Create and begin populating [Project Docs](#). Full details and related activities to be discussed in class. **[Move today’s journals to Project Docs by next class.]**
- **Homework:**
 - Review/become familiar with course projects and expectations.
 - **Come prepared for the next class with a song** you know well, that feels comfortable in your voice, and **that you’d like to explore as a solo singer** (think karaoke). The song (or song excerpt) should be no longer than 3 minutes.

Tuesday, October 5—*Exploring Song, Exploring Self*

- **Read:**
 - **Required**
 - [Lisa Sokolov - \[excerpts\] *Embodied VoiceWork: Beyond Singing*, 3-6, 26, 28, 30-31, 46-50, 152-161.](#) *[When you come to the “PLAY” sections on p. 28, 49-50, give them a go! Then document the experience in your Project #1 Doc. SKIM pp. 152-161.]*
 - **(w/ Written Engagement)** - [Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and Carolyn Ellis - “Introduction,” *Making Autoethnography Sing / Making Music Personal*, 1-20.](#)

- [Markku Kaikkonen - “Music for All: Everyone has the Potential to Learn Music.” *Exceptional music pedagogy for children with exceptionalities: international perspectives*, 10-11.](#)
- **In Class:** Vocal explorations and autoethnographic activities around student’s chosen songs.
- **Homework:** **Take time generating field notes (Project #1 & #2 Docs), and practice your song.**

WEEKS 3-4: *Music, Memory, and Connection*

Objectives:

Discover the various layers of meaning in vocal activity;

Deepen understanding of reflexive field note-taking;

Experience and reflect upon the act of singing solo for a public audience, and how this act compares to other singing contexts

Tuesday, October 12—*The power of singing, personally and interpersonally*

COMMUNITY PARTNER VISITS:

- (1) **Katie Hickey** (and friends?) from [Songs by Heart](#) &
- (2) **Steph Johnson** and friends from [Voices of Our City Choir](#).

- **Read/Listen**
 - **Required**
 - (w/ **Written Engagement**) - [Amanda Weidman - “voice,” *Keywords in Sound*, 232-245.](#)
 - (w/ **Written Engagement**) - [Michelle Kisliuk - “\(Un\)doing Fieldwork: Sharing Songs, Sharing Lives,” *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, 183-205.](#)
 - Madeleine Fernando, “Nonprofit seeks to improve quality of life through music for people with dementia,” *The Daily Northwestern*: <https://dailynorthwestern.com/2017/10/25/ae/nonprofit-seeks-improve-quality-life-music-people-dementia/>.
 - **Suggested**
 - [Graham Welch and Adam Ockelford - “The importance of music in supporting the development of children with learning disabilities,” *IJBPE*, vol 2, issue 3, 21-23.](#)
- **In Class:** Engage with Community Partners, practicing both *participating* and *taking field notes*.
- **Homework:** Practice your song for next week’s masterclass! And, as always, generate content for your Project Docs.

****Thursday, October 14**—*Songs by Heart Session: 11-11:45am (attendance expected) | see Canvas for Zoom Location*

Tuesday, October 19—*How do we learn music?*

- **Read/Watch:**
 - **Required**
 - (w/ **Written Engagement**) - [FILM] [Mister Rogers: It’s You I Like - A Retrospective of Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood. PBS.](#) (see Canvas for engagement details)

- **In Class:** Students will sing for one another in a masterclass format. We will also discuss the nature of ethnography further, digging into the details of Project #2.
- **Homework:**
 - **Due Monday, October 25 by 11:59pm - Project #1 Doc AND Project #2 Proposal.**
 - Please submit 1-2 excerpts from your Project #1 Doc that you'd like feedback on. *Details on Canvas under Project #1 Doc Assignment.*

WEEKS 5-6: Participant Observation, and Navigating Shifting Roles

Objectives:

Practice observational engagement (a.k.a. participant observation) while singing in, with, and for communities;
Critically assess and articulate the potential significance of observed occurrences;
Practice translating data into ethnography

Monday, October 25—*Voices of Our City Choir Rehearsal*

Tuesday, October 26—*Turning Observations into Critical Narratives*

- **Read:**
 - **Suggested**
 - [Elena Passarello - "The Wilhelm Scream," *Let Me Clear My Throat, Essays*, 11-24.](#)
- **In Class:** Continuation of last week's masterclass, and class discussion of student field notes/ethnographies-in-progress.
- **Homework:**
 - **Due Monday, November 1 by 11:59pm - Project #1 First Draft.**

Monday, November 1—*Voices of Our City Choir Rehearsal*

Tuesday, November 2—*Teaching, Sharing, Singing!*

- **In Class:** Feedback, workshopping/critiquing projects in progress, vocal activities.
- **Homework:**
 - **Due Monday, November 8 by 11:59pm - Project #2 Doc.** *Submit to Canvas.*

WEEKS 7-8: Refining Understanding Through Writing

Objectives:

Assess and refine thinking around and articulation of field observations;
Develop ethnographic materials for a public audience

Tuesday, November 9—*Vocal & Verbal Refinement*

- **In Class:** TBD.

- **Homework:**
 - **Due Tuesday, November 15 by 11:59am - Project #2 First Draft.** *Submit to Canvas.*

Tuesday, November 16—*Peer Review*

- **In Class:** Peer Reviews of Project #2 Draft materials. The second half of class is dedicated to one-on-one sessions with Jasper and collective work-time on projects.
- **Homework:** Work on Project #1 revisions, and continuing to explore your voice!

WEEK 9-10: Past, Present, Future - Our Vocal Lives

Objectives:

Effectively host a music-centered public event;

Reflect on newly acquired understandings of singing and human life;

Imagine future possibilities to enable continued related work

Tuesday, November 23—*In-Class Work Time*

- **In Class:** In-class work time on Projects #1 and #2; optional individual meetings with Jasper.
- **Homework:**
 - **Due Monday, November 29 - Project #1 Final Draft.**
 - *Submit to Canvas **and publish to course website.***

Thursday, July 29—*Final Reflections*

- **In Class:** Student performances and full-group sing-a-longs (full details TBD). **Invite your friends and family!** Followed by a time to debrief, share final reflections and ideas, and submit CAPE Evaluations.
- **Homework:**
 - **Due Monday, December 6 - Project #2 Final Draft.**
 - *Submit to Canvas **and publish to course website.***

All work must be submitted by 11:59pm Wednesday, December 8 to receive a grade.