MUSI 23509, SIGN 26044, TAPS 23509 / The Eurovision Song Contest
Spring Quarter 2020 – Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30–11:00 am
Instructor: Philip V. Bohlman (boh6@uchicago.edu)
Office Hours: Always available for one hour on Tuesdays and Thursday, at 3:00 pm via
electronic office hour; Individual electronic appointments also available (made by email)
Teaching Assistants: Eva Pensis (pensis@uchicago.edu)
Laura Shearing Turner (lshearing@uchicago.edu)
When you want to speak with the teaching assistants, please contact them first by email
so that you can find an appointment time that works well for both of you.

THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST
SYLLABUS

Week 1

INTRODUCTION – ON THE ROAD TO THE GRAND PRIX

April 7 – The Long History of the Grand Prix
• Hands-on acquisition of Eurovision resources

April 9 – The Eurovision Song Contest in Real Time
• Reading: Phil Bohlman Eurovision blogposts (Oxford Univ. Press) – 2012–2019

Week 2

NATIONALISM AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

April 14 – The Eurovision as Nationalist Fantasy and Political Struggle
• Reading on Eurovision themes – from Tragaki, ed., Empire of Song: Europe and
  Nation in the Eurovision Song Contest (2012) – Introduction (Fabbri)

April 16 – The Eurovision Year as Ritual and Reality
• Reading on Eurovision themes – from Tragaki, ed., Empire of Song: Europe and
  Nation in the Eurovision Song Contest (2012) – Chap. 1 (Tragaki)

Week 3

LOCAL AND REGIONAL IDENTITY – FESTIVALIZING EUROPEAN NATIONALISM

April 21 – Whose Eurovision Is This?
• Reading Assignment – Tragaki, Empire, Chap. 2, (A. F. Bohlman and
  I. Polychronakis)

April 23 – Other Eurovisions – Sanremo, Sopot, Doro, Intervision
• Reading assignment: Tragaki, Empire, Chap. 4 (Plastino)

• DIY Song Contest Design Assignment #1 – Place, Time, and Theme for the Student’s Own
  DIY Song Contest
• 300–500 words, posted as a class blog
• Due (posted) on April 21

Week 4

STARDOM – Eva Pensis

April 28 – Winners and Losers
• Reading Assignment – Tragaki, *Empire*, Chap. 3 (Kirkegaard)

**April 30** – Break-through Biographies – Is There Life after Eurovision?
• Reading Assignment – Tragaki, *Empire*, Chap. 6 (Lampropoulos)

**Week 5**

**FANDOM**

**May 5** – The Everyday Worlds of Eurovision Fans  
• Reading Assignment – Tragaki, *Empire*, Chap. 8 (Björnberg)

**May 7** – DIY (Do It Yourself) Eurovision Production  
• Reading Assignment – Tragaki, *Empire*, Chap. 5 (Strand)

• DIY Song Contest Design Assignment #2 – First sound-file compilation due – **“Run-Up Competition”**  
  • 2–3 tracks, submitted as an mp3 file for posting on May 5

**Week 6**

**THE EU, THE EBU, AND THE MAKING OR EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES** – Laura Turner

**May 12** – The Political, the Apolitical, the Media, the Immediate  
• Reading Assignment – Tragaki, *Empire*, Chap. 10 (Tragaki)

**May 14** – Imperial Eurovision – Competitors beyond Europe’s Borders  
• Reading Assignment – Tragaki, *Empire*, Chap. 7 (Solomon)

• Special student online viewing at home – “Europe Shine a Light” – EBU alternative online Eurovision Song Contest – May 16, 2:00 pm CST

**Week 7**

**THE EUROVISION SONG**

**May 19** – The Eurosong Formula  
• Reading assignment – Tragaki, *Empire*, Chap. 1 (P. V. Bohlman)

**May 21** – Breaking the Rules

• DIY Song Contest Design Assignment #3 – The Biography of a Winning Song and Its Singer  
  • 300–500 words, posted as a blog by May 19

**Week 8**

**POST-EUROVISION EUROPES – ECHOES AND ALTERNATIVES**

**May 26** – A Eurovision for Every Europe  
• Reading Assignment – Tragaki, *Empire*, Chap. 11 (Langlois)

**May 28** – The Eurovision Wannabe Phenomenon – Globalizing Talent

• DIY Song Contest Design Assignment #4 – Second sound-file compilation due – **The Sound of a Winning Song**  
  • 2 tracks submitted as an mp3 file, to be posted on May 26  
  • Each song should demonstrate some of the qualities that would make it a winner in your DIY Song Contest
Week 9

SOUNDING THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

June 2 – The Rise of the Right, Brexit, and the End of Europe as We Know It
  • Reading Assignment – Tragaki, Empire, Chap. 9 (Teixeira & Stokes)

June 4 – When Difference Makes a Difference

Week 10

• FINAL PROJECT – DIY SONG CONTEST PODCAST
  • To be developed cumulatively from the four DIY design assignments
  • Final project due on June 11

Final Projects – The DIY Song Contest

The final project for our Eurovision Song Contest course will be a podcast in which each student presents the Song Contest that she or he has been designing and developing throughout the quarter. Podcasts themselves will be variously designed, with, however, the common principle that they capture several aspects of performance. The four “DIY Song Contest Design Assignments” provide you with ways to draw together different aspects of performance, and you should treat them as if they were leading toward your final project. The two sound-file assignments (2 and 4), for example, should enable you to explore repertories that you might employ for the DIY Song Contest that you design as your final project. Assignment 1 will encourage you to think about time, space, and aesthetic/cultural backdrop. Assignment 3 requires that you think about the performers and their lives outside the contest.

The Eurovision Song Contest provides you with a model for developing your DIY Song Contest. There will be some students who design a song contest that has many of the same attributes as the Eurovision, say, a Chicagovision or Asiavision Song Contest. Other students may take the alternative song contests that we explore in the course as their point of departure, say, Arab Idol or Bollywoodvision. You may draw from the repertories that are dear to your heart, or in which you have performed for many years. Finally, should your imagination run toward internet or fantasy contests, those too would be acceptable; you should feel free to invent a tradition with your song contest. Again, we urge you to think of the four design assignments as opportunities to experiment and improvise with the concept and elements in the final podcast.

Some of you will have experience with podcasts, while others will not. Early in the course, we should explore together some of the ways in which making a podcast can be relatively straightforward, creative, and fun. Laura Turner, in particular, has helped students before with their podcasts. Canvas has quite good tools to help you as you begin to assemble materials. Your final podcast can be as long and complicated as you wish. We recommend, nonetheless, that you think about five to eight minutes.
Class Materials

Our class materials will primarily come from three sources. Each regular class period will begin with presentation of material that introduces the themes of the day. The exact nature of the introductory material will vary from class to class, though it will be designed so that it can be circulated to the students, usually the night before, so that they can look at it before class. The introductory material may take the form of a text or some lists of audio-visual recordings to which you listen prior to class. We also conceive of the introductory material as having a long-term durability, in other words, allowing students to look it over in the course of the quarter, or review it should someone fall victim to a weak internet connection. Please make a special folder in which you keep the introductory materials.

The second source of materials will be readings that students prepare in advance of our class meetings. Most readings will be chapters in the book, *Empire of Song: Europe and Nation in the Eurovision Song Contest* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2013), which was edited by the ethnomusicologist and Eurovision scholar, Dafni Tragaki, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Thessaloniki in Greece. You will have electronic access to the entire book in two ways: 1) there is an e-book copy in the Regenstein Library; 2) there is also an e-book copy that is accessible through the Canvas site for the course. You will note that the chapters from *Empire of Song* are connected thematically rather than chronologically to the different weeks and class subjects. Many of you, however, may decide to read the entire book earlier in the quarter, and we encourage you to acquaint yourself with the Eurovision Song Contest in this way, through arguably the best single scholarly book on the Eurovision.

We also ask students to respond to each reading with some comments that will be posted on the Canvas site. Your postings will provide points of inclusion for each of you in the break-out discussion sections that occupy us during the second half of class. Your postings do not have to be extensive (and they should not be), but they should engage with some important point in the reading.

You will have access to the sound and video materials that we use for the course primarily by using the internet. We have the great fortune that it is now possible to retrieve virtually every entry in the Eurovision during its sixty-five-year history by searching for the link easily in YouTube. The simplest link will be something like: nation – Eurovision – year (for example: france eurovision 2020 or armenia eurovision 2015). In most cases, you will discover links to multiple versions, ranging from the “official” version at the contest itself to the video that circulated before the competition to national run-up versions to covers by fans. Eurovision TV also provides an abundance of sound and video material for you to study and compare. Though Eurovision 2020 Rotterdam has been canceled, the songs that would have competed are accessible through YouTube.

Because the Eurovision Song Contest is a national and global media event, there are many other media that disseminate songs, biographies, histories, and debates over the years. There are CD and DVD compilations from every year since the 1990s. Such sources chart the “Empire of Song,” and you should explore them, especially as you think about ways to create your own DIY Song Contest.

Finally, you will soon realize that the literature and scholarship on the Eurovision Song Contest is vast and rich. The bibliography, discography, and filmography section that you find below stretches to seven pages, and more resources become available all the time. Please do spend time looking through these sources, discovering traditional and new websites, and exploring the world of
knowledge and serious pleasure that has grown up around the Eurovision. You will find that the resources will be helpful as you design your own DIY Song Contest, not least because the Eurovision Song Contest itself provides a lens into the ways in which modern song contests worldwide have come into being.

Organization of Individual Classes

We shall divide each class period (9:30–11:00 am CST, Tuesdays and Thursdays) into two larger parts. We devote the half-hour of Part 1 to presentation of the introductory materials for individual classes (see above). By “presentation” we mean a mixture of addressing key points and central issues for the class or week. Quite often, we shall illustrate such points and issues with a recorded example. Whereas we encourage feedback in the first half-hour, you should think of feedback as part of the break-out discussions in the second part of class.

The second part of class will last about one hour, and it will consist of discussion in the break-out groups. We shall set up the break-out groups during the first day of class. The participants in each of the three break-out groups will remain the same throughout the quarter. This smaller format of ca. eight or nine students affords you the opportunity to share ideas and discuss problems among yourselves much more effectively. The three instructors will move among the different break-out groups in the course of the quarter. You’ll get the best of each of us!

Schematically, each class period will look something like the following:

Part 1 – 9:30–10:00 am CST – Presentation of introductory materials
Part 2 – 10:00–11:00 am CST – Break-out discussion groups (3)
   NB: There will be built-in transitions for Part 2
   1) 10:00 am – ca. ten minutes to gather in the break-out groups
   2) 10:50 am – ca. ten minutes to make a transition back to the entire class

Office Hours and Individual Contact with Instructors

Office hours pose special problems during this quarter of remote instruction. Both students and instructors will be occupied at many other times during each day, making availability more complicated. To respond to those problems we offer several options for individual contact with the instructors:

1) Phil Bohlman will be available electronically (Zoom, Skype, or whatever works for you) for one hour at 3:00 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
2) Phil Bohlman can be contacted at other times, initiated in advance by email (see above)
3) Eva Pensis and Laura Turner are also available for appointments, but using prior email contact only.

Problem Shooting in Advance

Some of the realities of remote instruction are easier to manage than others. Here are just a few of the realities that require special vigilance.

1) Some students may live in time zones that do not allow them the same ease of morning classes in Chicago’s time zone.
2) Students have access to different types of technology, some of it more challenged by remote learning than others.
3) There are times when a student might lose contact during class time.

We hope to respond to such problems both generally and specifically. The introductory material for Part 1, the readings, and the links to sound and visual materials will mean that students can review much of the content of a class session outside of class. More specifically, students who have found some problems insurmountable should be in touch with the instructors so that we can seek solutions. Please know that we do not want to leave you behind.

Statement on Disabilities

It is the responsibility of students with disabilities and/or personal circumstances that may negatively affect their academic performance to inform the instructors and provide the required documentation from Student Disability Services as early in the term as possible, preferably before the end of week two. Without timely prior notification, it may be difficult or impossible to adjust the due dates of assignments or other projects to make other accommodations. For further information on University policies regarding disabilities, contact the office of the Dean of Students or consult the Disabilities Services web page: http://disabilities.uchicago.edu/.
THE EUROVISION SONG CONTEST
Bibliography, Discography, Filmography


Eurovision Song Contest – SYLLABUS


Bohlman, Philip V. – Blogposts, Oxford University Press.

2012 – Europe in Spite of Itself
http://blog.oup.com/2012/06/europe-in-spite-of-itself/

2013 – Europa borealis: Reflections on the 2013 Eurovision Song Contest Malmö (with Dafni Tragaki)
http://blog.oup.com/2013/05/europa-borealis/

2014 – “There Is Hope for Europe” – The ESC 2014 and the Return to Europe
http://blog.oup.com/2014/05/eurovision-hope-for-europe/

2015 – Tales of two Europes: Sameness and Difference at the Eurovision Song Contest

2016 – “We Could Build a Future Where People Are Free”: Reflections on the Eurovision Song Contest
https://blog.oup.com/2016/05/eurovision-2016-reflections/

2017 – “I Beg You To Return, To Want Me Again”: The Apolitical Politics of the Eurovision Song Contest 2017 (NB: never posted)

2018 – The Ascent of Music and the 63rd Eurovision Song Contest

2019 – “How the Eurovision Song Contest Has Been Depoliticized”
https://blog.oup.com/2019/08/how-the-eurovision-song-contest-has-been-depoliticized/


WEB BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Semi)Official Information Hubs
1. Official Eurovision Site: http://www.eurovision.tv/
2. Independent ESC news reporting: http://esctoday.com/ (e.g., www.esctime.com; www.eurovision-09.com; www.oikotimes.com)
3. BBC official site: http://www.bbc.co.uk/eurovision/
4. Wikipedia is pretty good for up-to-date news

Historical Information
2. mp3 archive: http://www.eurovisionsongs.net/index.htm

Eurovision-esque Contests
2. Eurovision Dance Contest: http://www.eurovisiondance.tv/
4. Sanremo: www.sanremo.rai.it
5. Sopot Festival: http://sopotfestival.onet.pl/
6. And the myriad idols: http://www.realityblurred.com/realitytv/archives/international_idols/

Blogs
1. http://eurovisionexpress.blogspot.com/
8. Philip V. Bohlman, see above.
Etc. forever to infinity.

Ephemera
1. The musical: www.eurobeatthemusical.com
2. The campaign for Scotland: http://www.scotlandineurovision.eu/
3. Another kind of cover: http://www.eurovisioncovers.co.uk/
4. Father Ted’s spoof: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzYzVMcgWhg