Graham School of General Studies · The University of Chicago

**The String Quartet: A History**

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**Course Description:**   
Compact and homogenous, expressive and versatile, the string quartet is the preferred chamber music of composers from Haydn (who invented it as a genre) to the current day. Composers as diverse as Mozart and Shostakovich, Schubert and Bartók, have ennobled its repertory. Through musical analysis, listening, and lecture, this course will illuminate the unique intimacy and formidable intellectual apparatus of the quartet’s rich legacy as the greatest genre of chamber music in Western music. In a chronological survey, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, Hugo Wolf, Leoš Janácek, Bartók, and Berg’s quartets will be examined. *Musical literacy is not required.*

**Recommended Readings:**

Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet

Karl Geiringer, Haydn

Paul Griffiths, The String Quartet: A History

Joseph Kerman, The Beethoven String Quartets

Charles Rosen, The Classical Style

Eric Salzman, Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction

Halsey Stevens, Bartók

**Syllabus:**

**Weeks 1-3 · The Classical Quartet: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven**

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| Haydn  6 Quartets op. 17 (1771)  6 Quartets op. 20 (1771)  6 Quartets op. 33 (1781)  6 Quartets op. 50 (1787)  3 Quartets op. 54 (1788)  3 Quartets op. 55 (1788)  6 Quartets op. 64 (1790)  3 Quartets op. 71 (1793)  3 Quartets op. 74 (1793)  6 Quartets op. 76 (1796-7)  2 Quartets, op. 77 (1794) | Mozart  6 Quartets dedicated to Haydn, (1782-85)  K. 499 (1786)  Last 3 Quartets (1789-90) | Beethoven  6 Quartets op. 18 (1800)  3 Quartets op. 59 (1806)  Op. 74 (1809)  Op. 95 (1810)  Op. 127 (1823-4)  Op. 130 (1825-6)  Op. 131 (1826)  Op. 132 (1825)  Op. 135 (1826) |

Week 4: Early Romantics: Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann

Week 5: Later Romantics: Smetana, Brahms, Dvorák

Weeks 6-8: The Quartet in the 20th Century: Sibelius, Janácek, Ives, Bartók, Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Shostakovich