



Cross-Disciplinary Interplay
between the Humanities,
Technology and Musical Practice

**Thursday,
March 17, 2:15 - 4p.m.
in U70.**

Guest lecture (via Skype) in the
seminar series

**Topics in the Aesthetics of
Music and Sound,**

<http://soundmusicresearch.org/seminarsspring2011.html>

Soul from Plato to Motown with Joel Rudinow, author of *Soul Music: Tracking the Spiritual Roots of Pop from Plato to Motown* (2010, The University of Michigan Press)



Soul music – a style of popular music that originated in America and flourished during the middle of the 20th century – combines African American gospel music with the blues - sources that are said and sincerely believed by many to be “spiritually incompatible.” What does it mean for different styles of music – especially styles as closely and intimately related as gospel music and the blues - to be “spiritually at odds” with each other? Can music have “spiritually therapeutic” effects? Can music have “spiritually toxic” effects? Exploring this labyrinthine nest of questions takes us into:

- Some of America’s most intriguing cultural history, deconstructing the mythology of the blues as the “devil’s music”;
- One of music theory’s deepest controversies: music’s mysterious capacity to move and direct emotional energy, apparently without rational mediation;
- An effort to recover and restore a body of ancient wisdom from Pre-Socratic Greek philosophy (Pythagorean tuning theory) as applied to a crucial and central element of blues tonality (the

tritone – or “devil’s interval”), and in this connection, a re-examination of Platonic “formalism” and its limitations, and a re-appreciation of some crucial dimensions of Plato’s philosophy.

- Finally, at the heart of the labyrinth, a critical examination of clinical applications of music in medicine, which I argue are presently hampered by explanatory hypotheses too heavily invested in psychopharmacology, and would be better advanced by a shift of emphasis toward the metaphysics of energy.

Joel Rudinow teaches philosophy and popular culture at Santa Rosa Junior College in northern California, where he also moonlights as a musician. He is co-author of *Invitation to Critical Thinking* (now in its 6th edition) and *Ethics and Values in the Information Age* (both published by Wadsworth/Cengage). His philosophical essays have appeared in *Analysis*, *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, *Critical Inquiry*, *Educational Leadership*, *Ethics*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, *Philosophy and Literature*, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, and *Sophia*. His most recent book is entitled *Soul Music: Tracking the Spiritual Roots of Pop from Plato to Motown*, published by the University of Michigan Press.