



Erica Cao

Lecturer, Music

Bio

BIO

Erica Cao received her PhD from the University of Cambridge Centre for Music and Science and is a resident psychiatrist at San Mateo County. She seeks to understand and address social determinants of behavioral health through development and characterization of arts-based strategies through qualitative, mixed-methods, and community-engaged approaches. As part of this work, she examines the impacts of a collaborative songwriting model she developed, Music Corps, on, for example, interpersonal measures of empathy, social connectedness, and community engagement across social service and clinical settings. Trained in psychology and ethnomusicology, she has conducted fieldwork and organized songwriting workshops with social service organizations in NYC. She continues this work in community mental health settings and with San Mateo County. She co-founded Humans in Harmony, a 501(c)(3) arts nonprofit which organizes collaborative arts projects with community members. Her interests are in community-engaged research, health services implementation, and health equity.

Education

MD, Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons

PhD, Music, Centre for Music and Science, University of Cambridge

BA, Psychology; Certificate Program, Musical Performance, Princeton University

Publications

Cao, E. L., Blinderman, C. D., & Cross, I. (2021). Reconsidering empathy: An interpersonal approach and participatory arts in the medical humanities. *Journal of Medical Humanities*, 42, 627–640.

Cao, E. L., & Gowda, D. (2018). Collaborative songwriting for health sciences interprofessional service learning. *Medical Education*, 52(5), 550.

Cao, E. L., Lotstein, M., & Johnson-Laird, P. N. (2014). Similarity and families of musical rhythms. *Music Perception*, 31(5), 444–469.

Courses taught:

Music in Psychic and Social Life (MUSIC 110, ANTHRO 112, TAPS 110), Winter 2025, Spring 2026

CV: <https://tr.ee/XawH03MPUg>