



# Southern Methodist University

## Meadows School of the Arts, Division of Music

### **MUTH 1129, Aural Skills I, Fall 2007**

Mondays and Wednesdays, 8:00 – 8:50 a.m., OFAC 1040

Grading Options: Letter (+/-) only; Pass/Fail is not available for this course

Instructor: Dr. Mark Feezell

Office hours: MW 9-11, TR 11-12 or by appointment

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Telephone/fax: 214-768-2531

*My sincere desire is for every one of my students to succeed – otherwise, I wouldn't be here!  
Please contact me immediately with any concerns, circumstances, or issues that may impede your success.*

#### **I. RATIONALE**

This course is designed to develop basic musicianship skills, including the ability to hear and sing music notation and to notate heard music. These skills will be developed in terms of pitch, rhythm, and harmony via sight singing and dictation. Improving these fundamental skills will increase the likelihood of student success throughout the music curriculum and in later professional life.

#### **II. COURSE AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of this course, each student should be able to:

- Define theoretical terms related to aural skills as discussed in class (solfege, etc.)
- Classify heard musical elements theoretically (e.g. major scale vs. minor, etc.)
- Modify a given element intelligently, e.g. hearing a major triad and singing a minor one
- Analyze a piece's rhythm and pitch content to convert it to notation (dictation)
- Perform a short piece at sight using solfege syllables
- Evaluate the dictations of others according to the style and terminology covered in class

These learning outcomes are based on Bloom's Taxonomy: Knowledge (define, repeat), Comprehension (classify, convert), Application (demonstrate, modify, arrange), Analysis (infer, estimate), Synthesis (create, design), Evaluation (critique, justify, discriminate). For more, see

<http://www.clt.cornell.edu/campus/teach/faculty/Materials/BloomsTaxonomy.pdf>

#### **III. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

- Beginning studies in solfeggio, melodic and harmonic dictation. Must be taken in sequence.
- A Department of Music Theory Mastery Level Exam covering fundamental skills (pitch matching, singing scales, etc.) will be required to be passed by the end of the 8th week (Oct. 12th). **Students not passing this exam by this date will be dropped from the course.**
- Corequisite: MUTH 1229. Required of all majors. **You should also be enrolled in MUTH 1229 at this time. See me if you are not.**
- This course will focus on dictation and sight-singing using diatonic melodies derived from the tonic and dominant in major and minor keys. Rhythms will utilize beat units and beat divisions in both simple and compound meters, with an introduction to triplets.

#### **IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS, EXPECTATIONS, AND POLICIES**

##### **1. Attendance and Participation Policy**

- Prompt attendance is vital. Absences and tardies will affect your grade as follows:
  - Each student will be allowed two (2) unexcused absences for this class.
  - Each unexcused absence beyond 2 will lower the participation grade by 10 points (and, hence, lower the final course grade by one point).

- Three (3) tardies count as an unexcused absence. A student is considered tardy if she or he is not present at the start of the class period. **IF TARDY, IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO CHECK THE ATTENDANCE RECORD ON THE COURSE WEBSITE AND VERIFY THAT SHE OR HE WAS NOT COUNTED ABSENT.** All such corrections must be made within two weeks (2 weeks) of the class date in question.
- Excused absences:
  - ALL excused absences require a legitimate written excuse from the appropriate authority. For example, illnesses require an excuse note from a health professional or an excuse note from the Health Center (see below). Extracurricular SMU trips require a letter from the supervising faculty or staff member. Absences for religious observance require a letter from an appropriate authority and must be submitted at the start of the semester.
  - Oversleeping, family reunion trips, auto failure, etc. will not be considered as excused absences.
  - Groveling and long explanations are unnecessary. Just turn in your written letter of excuse from the appropriate authority, if you have one; otherwise, I will record an unexcused absence and think none-the-less of you. **IF YOU DON'T ALREADY HAVE YOUR NOTE IN YOUR HAND, PLEASE DON'T ASK ME ABOUT EXCUSING YOUR ABSENCE.**
  - From Nancy Merrill, MD, Co-Medical Director: "The physicians at the Health Center do not routinely write excuses for missed classes. *Only truly disabling injuries or illnesses are considered worthy of an excuse.* Examples of disabling illnesses include hospitalization or surgery, illnesses that require admission to the Observation Room (daytime infirmary) for IV fluids, severe asthma, diabetic crisis, fever greater than 102, etc. Verification of medical illness is documented one of two ways. Either: (1) a hand written note on a health prescription form, or (2) a signed letter written on Health Center stationery. Excused medical absences shall have specific dates of time periods indicated."
  - From the Provost's office: "Verification of medical illnesses and request for an excused absence from class will be handled in one of two ways: (1) a hand-written note on a Health Center prescription form, or (2) a signed letter written on Health Center stationery. *Encounter Forms and Walk-Out Statements verify a student's visit to the Health Center, BUT DO NOT INDICATE AN EXCUSED MEDICAL ABSENCE.*"
- Make-up work:
  - It is the student's responsibility to obtain handouts, notes, and assignments for all classes missed. Consult the course website for more information. *Exchange phone numbers and emails with fellow students.*
  - Missed homework will be accepted late **only** for excused absences. Except in extreme circumstances, late homework must be turned in **within one calendar week** of the absence. Otherwise, a zero will be recorded in the gradebook.
- Absences on exam days:
  - Missing an exam is a serious issue. Exams missed due to *planned, excused* absences (including extracurricular activities and religious observance) must be made-up **before** the exam date.
  - Other *excused* absences on test days will be considered on a case by case basis. **In all cases, exams missed due to an *unexcused* absence will result in a zero (0) for that exam grade.**
  - **Regarding the final examination:** The final examination day and time are established by the university and cannot be changed. Please plan accordingly. **Make-ups will not be offered after the final exam date.** In the event of an *excused* absence with a letter from the appropriate authority, the midterm exam grade will be used for the final exam grade (i.e. 30% of the final average). **In all other cases, a zero (0) will be recorded for the final exam.**

## 2. Course Materials

Robert Ottman and Nancy Rogers, *Music for Sight Singing*, 7th edition.  
 Music paper (available at course website), pencils and erasers  
 WWW access via lab or personal PC/Mac - courses.smu.edu

## 3. Assessments and Assignments

The course is divided into five three-week units. Units 1, 2, 3 and 4 will end with a dictation exam and a sight singing exam (8 total). Unit 5 will conclude with the final dictation exam and sight singing exam. **The Department of Music Theory Fundamentals Mastery Exam will be administered on Wednesday, September 19. It must be passed by October 12th to continue in this course.**

Method of grading will be as follows:

10%	Attendance/participation (see below)
20%	Homework
30%	Dictation exams (5 total)
40%	Sight-singing exams (5 total)
100%	TOTAL

## 4. Grades

- “What did you get for number seven?” While you are welcome to provide general help to each other, **COMPARING ANSWERS IS NOT O.K.** If in the judgment of the instructor two students have collaborated on an assignment, both students will receive a zero for that assignment. **DO YOUR OWN WORK.**
- **Grading rubric for dictation assignments:** Dictation assignments are graded by taking a straight percentage of correct answers divided by total number of answers (or parts of answers). Each note or chord has two answer components: rhythm and pitch(es). For instance, a four-note chord has five answer components: 4 notes and the rhythm.
- **Grading rubric for sight singing exams:**  
Sight singing exams will occur during the instructor’s office hours. If they consist of multiple excerpts, each excerpt will be graded independently, with the grades averaged together equally to obtain the exam grade.

**A+ (98):** Rhythms and pitches are all correct. The student sings musically. The quality of the sight singing is appropriate to an on-stage performance (not in terms of vocal quality, but in terms of phrasing, breathing, tempo, dynamics, etc.). *This grade is rare.*

**A (95):** Rhythms and pitches are all correct. The performance is somewhat musical. The student may have missed a note or two, but didn’t stop.

**B (85):** Rhythms and pitches are mostly correct. The student missed three or four pitches/rhythms and/or stopped once and started over.

**C (75):** Rhythms and pitches are partially correct. The student missed five or more pitches/rhythms and/or stopped twice and started over.

**D (65):** A few pitches and rhythms are correct. The student missed eight or more pitches/rhythms and/or stopped three times.

**F (50):** Almost none of the pitches and rhythms are correct. The student missed twelve or more pitches/rhythms and stopped three times. It is obvious that little preparation has gone into the material. *This grade is unusual.*

- Grades will be posted on the course website throughout the semester. (You will only have access to your own grades.) Students are encouraged to track their progress online.
- Grading system. All averages will be rounded to the nearest point, up or down.

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
Range	92-100	90-91	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	0-59
GPA points	4.0	3.7	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.3	2.0	1.7	1.3	1.0	0.7	0.0

**5. Academic Honesty and Misconduct:** You are bound by the Honor Code and the SMU Student Code of Conduct. For complete details, see: [http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL\\_01\\_ToC.asp](http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL_01_ToC.asp)

**6. Disability Accommodations:** Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact Ms. Rebecca Marin, Coordinator, Services for Students with Disabilities (214-768-4557) to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4.)

**7. Religious Observance:** Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

**8. Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities:** Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

## V. PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, EVENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

### Exam schedule:

Sight singing exams (9/5, 9/26, 10/24, 11/12)

Dictation exams (9/12, 10/10, 10/31, 11/14, 11/28)

Departmental aural skills mastery exam: Wednesday, September 19

Final exam (Sight singing): **Friday, December 14, 8a-11a**

*The semester will be divided into five three-week units, as follows:*

Unit	Dates	Chap.	Sight-singing topics	Dictation topics
1	8/27 - 9/12	1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solfege warm-ups</li> <li>• Simple meter rhythmic exercises</li> <li>• Stepwise melodies in <b>major keys</b></li> <li>• Duets and structured improvisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stepwise melodies in major keys</li> <li>• Major versus minor triads</li> <li>• Rhythmic dictation in simple meters, with very limited use of beat divisions</li> <li>• Melodic and harmonic intervals: 8ve, P5, P4, M3/m3, M2/m2</li> </ul>
2	9/17 - 10/3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily stepwise melodies in <b>major keys</b> including intervals derived from the <b>tonic triad</b></li> <li>• Half notes and eighth notes as beat units</li> <li>• Duets and structured improvisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily stepwise melodies in major keys with limited arpeggiation of the tonic triad</li> <li>• Rhythmic dictation in simple meters with some division</li> <li>• Melodic and harmonic intervals: 6ths, 7ths, +4ths</li> </ul>
3	10/8 - 10/24	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily stepwise melodies in <b>major keys</b> including intervals derived from the <b>tonic triad</b></li> <li>• <b>Compound meters</b>, including the dotted half note and dotted eighth note as beat units</li> <li>• Duets and structured improvisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily stepwise melodies in major keys with arpeggiation of the tonic triad; now in compound meters</li> <li>• Rhythmic dictation in compound meters with some division</li> <li>• Two-part harmonic dictation using one note per measure in the lower part</li> </ul>
4	10/29 - 11/14	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily stepwise melodies in <b>minor keys</b> using intervals derived from the tonic triad</li> <li>• Simple and compound meters</li> <li>• Duets and structured improvisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primarily stepwise melodies in <b>minor keys</b> with limited arpeggiation of the tonic triad</li> <li>• Rhythmic dictation in simple and compound meters using divisions and some syncopation</li> <li>• Two-part harmonic dictation in <b>minor keys</b> using one note per measure in the lower part</li> </ul>
5	10/26 - 12/6	6 & 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Melodies in major and minor keys using intervals derived from the tonic and <b>dominant triads</b></li> <li>• Simple and compound meters</li> <li>• Practice in alto clef and tenor clef</li> <li>• Duets and structured improvisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Melodies using intervals from the tonic and dominant triads</li> <li>• Rhythmic dictation in simple and compound meters using divisions, some syncopation, and triplets</li> <li>• Harmonic dictation in simple meters using two notes per measure in the lower part</li> </ul>

## VI. WEEKLY NOTES AND ASSIGNMENTS

### 1. Standard Operating Procedure:

- Instructor takes roll at start of hour
- Word of the Day
- Instructor collects assigned homework (if any)
- Instructor returns corrected homework from previous class (if any) and takes questions
- Tonal indexing warm-ups
- Dictation exam (if any)
- Sight singing and/or dictation practice
- Homework/practice assignments are given for the next class

### 2. Topics by Week: See “schedule of classes” above.

### 3. How to Succeed in this Course:

- Practice the exercises until you know them well. Accuracy first, then speed.
- Ask questions as soon as you think of them, especially during class
- **Ultimately, you are responsible for your learning. Be assertive in getting the help you need and don’t give up until you understand!**

## VII. APPENDIX/OTHER

### 1. Course website

This course will make use of a Blackboard website. To access the website, visit [courses.smu.edu](http://courses.smu.edu) and login using your SMU ID and password. The ID/password should be identical to the one you use for Access.SMU. Help is available on the website, or you may contact the instructor at [mfeezell@smu.edu](mailto:mfeezell@smu.edu) with any questions. Here are some things that you will be able to do from the course website:

- View current and past homework assignments (in case you missed it in class)
- View all your grades (only your own grades)
- View the course attendance record (attendance is a matter of public record, since everyone can see who comes to class; I will not list your reasons for absence on the website)
- View class contact information
- Reprint handouts and worksheets
- Find bonus handouts and links to other useful music theory sites

### 2. Other books and reserve readings

Due to the emphasis on hands-on skills development, there are no reserve readings for this course. However, a bibliography of outstanding music theory books will be available at the course website.

### 3. Web sites

You are welcome to use the web to research terms and concepts. Anytime you use the web you must cite that usage. Direct quotes must be in quotation marks. Never use the web to find answers (not even to “check yourself”)!

*This syllabus is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and posted on the course website.*