



Southern Methodist University

Meadows School of the Arts, Division of Music

MUTH 4390 (002), Directed Studies in Composition, Spring 2009

Schedule TBA (30 minutes weekly for 1 credit hour, 1 hr for 2 or 3 credit hours), OFAC 2016

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

Instructor: Dr. Mark Feezell

Office hours: MW 9–12, 1–2; T 12:30–2; R 12:30–1 or by appointment

Email: mfeezell@smu.edu (email is by far the best way to reach me)

Telephone/fax: 214-768-3632 (email is by far the best way to reach me)

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 competency in the theory and practice of composition, along with associated skills such as score preparation (including computer engraving) and rehearsal technique. In pursuit of these competencies, the student will be expected to acquire a thorough understanding of compositional styles drawn from throughout music history, to study related works from the repertoire as assigned, and to thoroughly understand the genre and medium for which they are composing. Ideally, the process of growth and development in this course will stand in a larger context of growth and development spanning the student's entire life as a composer.

II. COURSE AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- Define theoretical terms related to compositional techniques and trends
- Classify elements, structures, and techniques in a given piece of music using appropriate terminology
- Modify a piece of music to improve the flow and development of musical ideas
- Analyze a piece of music globally on a level appropriate to the student's theoretical expertise
- Create a short piece or complete movement demonstrating compositional skill acquisition
- Evaluate the music of others according to the style and terminology covered in lessons

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

- Individual study with the composition faculty and regularly scheduled seminars with faculty and visiting guests.
- **Prerequisite:** Permission of instructor.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS, EXPECTATIONS, AND POLICIES

1. Attendance Policy

- Because this is a directed study course, attendance is vital.
 - The student is allowed one unexcused absence.
 - Two unexcused absences will lower the course grade by 10 points.
 - Three unexcused absences will result in immediate administrative withdrawal without appeal.
- Four tardies shall count as an unexcused absence.
- If a student arrives to a lesson without newly composed music, that lesson will count as an unexcused absence and the lesson will be cancelled. Lessons cancelled for this reason cannot be rescheduled or made-up.
- Excused absences:
 - Oversleeping, family reunion trips, vacations, etc. will not be considered as excused absences.
 - Make-up lessons will be done on a time-available basis at the discretion of the instructor.
 - Excuse procedure:
 - **OPTION ONE:** Notify the instructor of the (valid) reason for the absence via email at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled lesson time. *In this case no further documentation will be required.*
 - **OPTION TWO:** If the student fails to notify the instructor (including a valid reason for the absence) via email at least 30 minutes prior to class, written documentation from the appropriate authority will be required. For example, illnesses require an excuse note from a health professional or an excuse note from the Health Center (see below). See “SMU Course Policies” below for extracurricular activities and religious observance.
 - 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.*”

2. Course Materials

Music paper (available at course website), pencils and erasers

WWW access via lab or personal PC/Mac - courses.smu.edu

3. Assessments and Assignments

Because of the nature and goals of private composition lessons, there will be no traditional homework assignments, quizzes, or tests in this course. Instead, the assignments shall consist of the following expectations for each meeting:

- Is the student on time for the lesson?
- Has the student made substantial progress toward the project goals this week, including tangible evidence such as new score pages and/or recordings?
- Has the student examined any required readings or scores by other composers, as recommended by the instructor at the previous week's lesson?

4. Grades

The course grade will be determined at the instructor's sole professional discretion within the context of the following expectations:

- This course shall consist of a series of weekly meetings.
- The topical focus of the course will be determined at the start of the semester after an initial consultation between the instructor and the student.
- The student will create a list of goals for the semester. After approval by the instructor, these goals shall then become an integral part of the expectations for the course.
- Regardless of any other specific goals, it is expected that the student will complete at least one movement, including written score and a reading by performers, by the end of the semester.
- **Grading rubric:** Attendance will affect the course grade as outlined in the attendance policy above. The following general descriptions may help the student to understand the instructor's approach to grading. However, it is important to remember that composition is a subjective discipline and the ultimate decision regarding the course grade will be based solely on the instructor's professional judgment and will be without appeal.
 - **A / A-**
 - All stated goals (as defined by agreement between instructor and student at the start of the semester) were achieved at the highest level of excellence.
 - The student has made substantial progress in terms of technique.
 - The student has demonstrated an excitement and interest in learning more about the technique, history, and variety of available compositional approaches.
 - In addition to composition, the student has displayed evidence of a broader professional development through activities such as collaborations, entry into contests, interdisciplinary projects, portfolio development, etc.
 - **B+ / B / B-**
 - All but one or two stated goals were achieved.
 - The student has made some progress in terms of technique.
 - The student has demonstrated a modest interest in learning more about the technique, history, and variety of available compositional approaches.
 - **C+ / C / C-**
 - A few stated goals were achieved.
 - The student has made little progress in terms of technique.

- The student has demonstrated little interest in learning more about the technique, history, and variety of available compositional approaches.
- **D+ / D / D-**
 - Almost none of the stated goals were achieved.
 - The student has made little to no demonstrable progress in terms of technique.
- **F**
 - The student has shown little to no evidence of compositional activity for the semester.
 - Student attendance has been completely unprofessional.
 - The student has made no effort whatsoever to achieve the goals of the semester.
- 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

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. SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, EVENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

The course shall consist of weekly meetings working toward the stated goals of the semester.

VI. APPENDIX/OTHER

1. Course website

This course will make use of a Blackboard website. To access the website, visit 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 with any questions.

2. Other books and reserve readings

The instructor will suggest readings and auxiliary scores throughout the semester as appropriate and relevant to the course goals.

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.