



Course Outline

2026-2027 Catalog

MUS 4 - Song Writing

Catalog Description

Transfer Status: CSU/UC

Prerequisite: MUS 3

Unit(s): 2.00

Lecture: 34.00 Contact hours/68.00 Out of class hours/102.00 Total hours/2.00 Unit(s)

Total: 34.00 Contact hours/68.00 Out of class hours/102.00 Total hours/2.00 Unit(s)

Course Description: This course is designed to teach students the basics of song writing with emphasis on the four primary elements required to write a good song: lyric development, chord progressions, melodic development, and song forms. Focus will be on creative songwriting by individuals and in teams, reflecting the trends in the modern music industry.

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Create original songs with lyrics, melody, and chord progressions that demonstrate competence of song structure and a variety of lyrical techniques.
2. Analyze the manner in which rhythm, melody, harmony, and lyrics work together to create memorable songs.
3. Collaborate with other songwriters, producers, and arrangers to create song compositions, arrangements, and demo recordings.
4. Articulate the variety of musical and lyrical approaches and thematic material that the great songwriters have utilized in their songs.

Course Content

Topic Titles / Suggested Time Topic	
	<u>Lecture</u>
<u>Topics</u>	<u>Lec Hrs</u>
Introduction, Terms and Song Writer Fundamentals	2.00
How Songwriters Write; How to Find Inspiration for both Melody and Lyrics	2.00
Song Form and Structure	6.00
Melody and Melodic Development	6.00
Harmony, Groove and Chord Progression	6.00
Lyric Writing and the Importance of Lyrics	6.00
The Craft of Editing and Rewriting a Song; Objective Evaluation of Song Writing	4.00
The Business of Song Writing	2.00
Total Hours: 34.00	

Methods of Instruction

- A. Class Activities
- B. Collaborative Group Work
- C. Demonstrations
- D. Homework: Students are required to complete two hours of outside-of-class homework for each hour of lecture
- E. Lecture
- F. Multimedia Presentations

Methods of Evaluation

- A. Exams/Tests
- B. Quizzes
- C. Projects
- D. Performance Examinations
- E. Class performance of original songs with group critique.

Examples of Assignments

Reading Assignments

1. Find two popular songs that use the song forms we have studied in class this week. Then bring your examples to class for discussion.
2. Find a folk song that you feel has a nice melody. Prepare a short presentation that discusses why you think this melody is a good melody. Additionally, discuss how the tools of melodic construction are used to create this melody.

Writing Assignments

1. Choose a song of your choice and analyze the lyrics. Write a short paper (500 + words) discussing why you feel your song has well crated lyrics. Use terminology from this course to support your position.
2. Write a short love story with good details (500 + words). Then, turn your story into a verse-chorus song form to be presented to the class.

Out-of-Class Assignments

1. At home, write a melody and chords for your previous verse-chorus song. Then bring it to class to be performed in front of the class.
2. At home, do some research to find a popular song written in a 3/4 or 6/8 time signature. How does the meter affect the overall affect of the song? How does the meter align with the lyrics and their effectiveness? Share your findings with the class.

Recommended Materials of Instruction

Stople, A. and Stople, J. (2015). Beginning Songwriting. *Berklee Press, Dwn edition*. 978-0876391631.

Minimum Qualifications

Commercial Music

Music (Masters Required)

Created/Revised by: Heimlich, Ryan

Date: 05/20/2024