



MUS 87 - Music Composition

Catalog Description

Transfer Status: CSU/UC

Prerequisite: MUS 80

Unit(s): 3.00

Lecture: 51.00 Contact hours/102.00 Out of class hours/153.00 Total hours/3.00 Unit(s)

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Course Description: This course is an introduction to original musical composition for solo and chamber music as well as music in multimedia. Through the analysis of applicable musical literature, this course explores instrumentation, orchestration, form and structure, timbre, pitch, rhythm, texture, interculturalism, and contemporary music notation. The course includes an introduction to music in multimedia, including music for film and video games. Students will be expected to compose original compositions, produce performances, and create a portfolio of their work.

Objectives

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

1. Compose fully-notated music for solo instruments and duets.
2. Identify the ranges, capabilities and characteristics of the standard Western instruments.
3. Discuss and analyze compositional features of relevant 20th and 21st century works.
4. Compose soundtracks and generate basic sound effects for use in film and video game projects.
5. Creatively evaluate sonic arts and its application in the 21st century.

Course Content

Topic Titles / Suggested Time Topic	
	<u>Lecture</u>
<u>Topics</u>	<u>Lec Hrs</u>
Fundamental musical elements	3.00
Time in Music: Rhythmic notation and percussion music	3.00
Composing for found objects	3.00
Form in Music: Basic forms and musical structures	3.00
Pitch Structure: Intervals, scales, modes, and chords	6.00
Music in Multimedia: Intro to DAW	3.00
Music Notation: Treble and bass clef	3.00
Introduction to Instrumentation: Standard Western instruments and orchestration.	6.00
Timbre and dynamic in music notation	3.00
Composing for solo instrument	3.00
Composing for a duet	3.00
Analyzing music of the 20th century: Modernism and Interculturalism	3.00
Music in the 21st century	3.00
Building a composer portfolio: Writing biography and program notes	3.00
Contemporary music notation	3.00
Total Hours: 51.00	

Methods of Instruction

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

Methods of Evaluation

- A. Exams/Tests
- B. Quizzes

- C. Projects
- D. Performance Examinations
- E. Short papers
- F. Essays and research papers

Examples of Assignments

Reading Assignments

1. "An Imaginary Object," is a short chapter by Nicholas Cook on the nature of music notation that considers the fundamental question: what is music? The answer may not be as simple as you think! Take notes while reading and contribute to this week's discussion page.
2. Read the book chapter by Pierre Schaeffer on musique concrete, and be prepared to discuss it in class.

Writing Assignments

1. For this listening assignment we will focus on the strategies that composers use to create and develop the pitch material for their compositions. Please listen to the following works at least once. Then choose one piece that resonates with you the most (it can be in a personal level or based on your interest in a style or technique). Listen to that piece a few times while studying the score. You may end up playing some of the phrases, motives, or harmonies on an instrument in order to find a better understanding of the pitch materials. Finally write a 500-1000 word paragraph responding to the following questions: What are the modes or scales used in this piece? How the pitch is organized in this piece? Are there any motives or phrases that is the basis of the composition and you can refer to? Or is the piece based on pure intervals derived from a scale or mode? What strategies did the composer use for developing their initial ideas? Here, please focus on the pitch material such as motives, phrases, harmonies, and modulations. The goal is to research and learn about strategies that one can use for developing the pitch material in a composition. Feel free to add any other notes. Listening List: Ben Johnston - String Quartet 4 Here you can hear how just intonation system is used in a composition. Tchaikovsky - The Seasons (April) Here you can listen for diatonic scales. Claude Debussy - La Cathédrale Engloutie Here you can hear the use of pentatonic scale and chords built on 5ths. So What - Miles Davis Here you can hear how Dorian mode is used in a jazz setting. Eight Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs - Bela Bartok Here you can hear how Gregorian modes are used in a composition. For example the melody in the first movement is mainly in c dorian while the harmonies are not. Voiles - Debussy Listen to how the composer uses whole-tone and pentatonic scales. Piano Concerto No. 2 (second movement only) - Bela Bartok Listen to how the quantal harmony is used. String Quartet No. 2 - Georg Friedrich Haas Here you can listen to how a composition can be developed from overtones.
2. Listen to the following five pieces at least once, and then choose one of them and write 1-2-paragraph responses to the following questions: 1. What did you find interesting about this piece and how do you think the composer managed to achieve it? 2. Focusing on the rhythmic components of the piece, what strategies do you think the composer has taken in order to develop his rhythmic ideas? In other words, try to analyze the rhythmic structure of the piece and explain how rhythmic ideas - that can be a short motif that you hear being repeated or a phrase, or even the overall arch of the piece, have been shaped and developed. You may end up discussing the relation between timbre of different instruments and the rhythmic components of the piece, which is perfectly fine. You can start with a brief summary of the piece and why you have chosen this specific work, then focus on the rhythmic structure of it. I have chosen videos of these performances, so you can also pay attention to how these works are performed as well. As a composer, one needs to also think about the setup, especially when writing for a percussionist you want to keep in mind how the musician can reach various instruments at the same time. On the other hand, learning how different percussion instruments are played is also a very important part of our job. 1. Edgard Varèse - Ionisation (for 13 percussionists and one pianist) 2. John Cage - Living Room Music 3. Nicholas Deyoe - Lullaby 4. Iannis Xenakis - Okho 5. Example of a Gamelan Ensemble (Indonesia)

Out-of-Class Assignments

1. Compose a piece for 4 found objects and one pitched instruments. Your piece must be between 1:20" to 2'.
2. Compose a piece for solo violin using A-B-A form and two different scales/modes. Also write a reflection on your composition process.

Recommended Materials of Instruction

Zero Cost Textbook

Gotham, M. et al. (2023). Open Music Theory. (OER). <https://viva.pressbooks.pub/openmusictheory/chapter/minor-scales/>

Minimum Qualifications

Music (Masters Required)

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