

Music 324: Contemporary Composition

M-W- 11:00-11:50

2 credit hours

Fall Semester 2016

J. Brian Post Instructor

Music 102

Phone 826-5438

Office Hours: M, W, 2:00 - 3:00 pm, or by appointment

Course Materials

Cope, Techniques of the Contemporary Composer, Schirmer, 1997.
Manuscript notebook

Course Description

This class will cover many of the changes in musical composition that have occurred since the end of the Romantic Era c. 1900. Three central concepts will permeate and guide the format of the class:

1. There is no right way to compose music, no right style, only different approaches. Each individual should strive to discover his or her mode of expression.
2. There is no progress in art. While at first it may seem plausible that a Late Romantic symphony is superior to a 10th century plainchant, further consideration may prove differently. Therefore, a comparison of progress in the arts to progress in science is inappropriate.
3. Craft and consistency are fundamental to the quality of music.

Music Department Assessment Goals and Outcomes

Goal 1: Students will demonstrate the ability to hear, identify, and work conceptually with the elements of music – rhythm, melody, harmony, and structure.

Outcome 1A: Students can write harmonic progressions demonstrating correct voice-leading using standard elements of chromatic harmony including mixture, Neapolitans, Augmented Sixth chords, and enharmonic pivot chords.

Goal 2: Students will demonstrate familiarity with, and an ability to perform a wide selection of musical literature representing principal eras, genres, and cultural sources.

Outcome 2A: Students can identify and trace essential developments in Western Art Music history.

Outcome 2B: When listening to an unfamiliar musical composition, students can identify its historical era, cultural sources, genre, texture, instrumentation, and possible composer when appropriate.

Outcome 2C: Over the course of four years, music majors will perform a wide variety of music – in solos, large and small ensembles, from different eras, in different styles

Outcomes of an HSU education:

This course explicitly contributes to your acquisition of skills and knowledge relevant to these HSU Learning Outcomes:

Critical and creative thinking skills in acquiring a broad knowledge base, and applying it to complex issues

Competence in a major area of study

Graduates will be prepared to;

Succeed in their chosen careers

Take responsibility for identifying personal goals and practicing lifelong learning

Academic Dishonesty

Any student found using another person's work as though that work were his/her own, or any student who knowingly permits another student to use his/her work shall be given a grade of F for the course. Please do not let this stipulation keep you from working with another person or other people. I want to encourage you to work with others but the work you hand in must be your own.

Class Attendance

You are required to attend all classes and particularly all scheduled individual meeting times. Attendance will be counted as 10% of the final grade. Each unexcused absence will result in the subtraction of 5 points from a possible 100 points for the semester. A written doctor's excuse will be required for all excused absences. All other excuses are unacceptable. Tardy arrivals to class will be considered as absences. Tours will be excused if I know about them in advance.

Bringing Books To Class

You are responsible for bringing the text and other required materials to every class. Also, I will be supplying you with many handouts as the semester progresses, please remember that you will be responsible for bringing those to class as well.

Projected Course Schedule

Week

Topic

8/22

Chapter 1 - The Basics

Good habits for composition, ideas for preparing scores and suggestions for developing performance and publication possibilities. Also basic rudiments for orchestration will be discussed. Although these matters are often neglected in composition texts, they represent important strategies for enduring as a composer and not just dabbling in the craft.

Assignment:

- Sketch music for at least 10 minutes a day. Vary your location and tools, such as computer, manuscript paper, pencils, piano and so on. Take note of the situations that promote the most successful results.
- Read Chapters 1-4

8/29

Chapter 3 - New Roles of Melody

Creating good melodic lines is an integral part of composing, one that should not be overlooked no matter what style or process is used.

This chapter covers scales, the use of motives, basic melodic concepts, extended melodic lines and harmonic accompaniments.

Assignment:

- Sketch music for at least 10 minutes a day.

9/7

Chapter 3 - New Roles of Melody-cont. Rhythmic Note Groupings

Assignment:

- Sketch music for at least 10 minutes a day
- Refine at least 3 melodic themes for possible use in your midterm composition
- Compose at least three themes for possible use on your midterm project
- Determine and list the following items for your midterm project:

Instrumentation

Performers

Performance level of the work

Possible compositional techniques

Length; how many movements/minutes

Textures

All of the assignments listed above should be completed and brought to the first mini

9/12

Work Week/Mini Lessons

A schedule of meeting times will be posted on the classroom and Theory Lab doors. Lessons will be held in the lab or classroom depending on the student's preference. Since the lessons are only five - ten minutes long you will need to come to the lesson prepared and with your materials readily available. This means if you are composing on computer your files need to be on a memory stick or available on the Music-Server and already accessed when it is time for the lesson. Attendance to all lessons is mandatory as they are an integral part of the class. Each lesson will be worth 100 points. 60% of your grade for each lesson will be based on attendance. The other 40% will be based on preparedness for each lesson. This will be determined by how well any given assignments for the lessons are completed as well as on how much progress has been made on the final or midterm project from the previous lesson.

Assignment:

- Read Chapter 4
- Continue work on midterm project; a piece of music to be performed in class during the week of midterms

9/19

Chapter 4 - Harmony, Counterpoint, and Hierarchy

While harmony can evolve intuitively, most composers benefit from understanding at least a few of its basic principles. Evaluating interval strengths and roots, for example can provide a useful base from which to create consistent harmonies and logical templates for harmonic progression.

Rhythm: Stretching the Beat Part One; Subdividing the quarter note into groupings of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9

Assignment:

- Compose for 10 minutes a day minimum

9/26

Mini Lessons

10/3

Chapter 5 - Interval Exploration

The exploration of intervals other than thirds for harmonic source material can provide many useful

opportunities for composers to develop skills with nontraditional vocabularies. The principles established in Chapters 3 and 4 can assist in the analysis of non-triadic sonorities.

Rhythm: Stretching the Beat Part Two; Polyrhythms

Assignment:

- Continue working on midterm project

10/10

Work Week/Mini Lessons

Assignment:

- Read Chapter 6

10/17

Midterm Performances

10/24

Chapter 6 - Serialism

Serialism is the systematic formalization of one or more musical parameters. Most serialism involves pitch, and most pitch serialism employs 12-tone techniques: the use of all twelve tones equally without preference for any particular pitch or pitches. This means no pitch is returned to until all 12 tones have been used. This type of extreme chromaticism allows for explorations into other areas such as timbre, rhythm, and motivic development.

Assignment:

- Begin working on final project. Strive to write something completely different than what you did for the midterm project.

Plan to use different instrumentation, as well as a completely different collection of harmonic, melodic and rhythmic techniques.

10/31

Work Week/Mini Lessons

11/7

Chapter 7 - Pitch-Class Sets

Many composers have employed pitch class sets as a compositional resource. A pitch class set is the group of any pitch and all of its octave transpositions, such as all Cs. Since the equal tempered scale has twelve different pitches, there are only 12 pitch classes.

Pitch-class sets are groupings of pitch classes placed in ascending order.

Rhythm: Mixed and Changing Meters

Assignment:

- Continue sketching for final project
- Compose at least three themes for possible use on your midterm project
- Determine and list the following items for your midterm project:

Instrumentation

Performers

Performance level of the work

Possible compositional techniques

Length; how many movements, minutes

Textures

11/14 **Work Week/Mini Lessons**

Assignment:

- Continue working on Final Project

11/21 **FALL BREAK**

11/28 **Chapter 7 - Pitch-Class Sets cont.**

Two Discussions of Modern Music:

John Cage Video - "I Have Nothing To Say And I'm Saying It"

Vi Hart Video - "Schoenberg Doesn't Suck: Serialism Demystified"

Assignment:

- Read Chapters 10 & 12
- Continue working on Final Project

12/5 **Work Week/Mini Lessons**

Assignment:

- **Complete Final project to hand in and have performed Wednesday, December 14, 10:20-12:10** - It will be up to the student to recruit performers for performances of their project or a computer performance of the piece will be acceptable if performers are not available to make the class time.

12/12 **Final exam time Wednesday Dec. 14, 10:20 - 12:10**

Course Evaluation

Your grade will be based on the following percentages

Biweekly lessons	30%
Written Midterm	30%
Written Final	30%
Attendance	10%

Grading Scale

93-100%	= A	Superior
90-92%	= A-	
87-89%	= B+	Excellent, above average
83-86%	= B	
80-82%	= B-	
77-79%	= C+	Average
73-76%	= C	
70-72%	= C-	
67-69%	= D+	Below average
63-66%	= D	
60-62%	= D-	
0-59%	= F	Failing

FINAL EXAM SCHEDULE — FALL 2016

Evaluation Period	MON Dec 12	TUES Dec 13	WED Dec 14	THU Dec 15	FRI Dec 16
0800-0950	0700 or 0730 MWF	0730 or 0800 TR	0900 MWF	0900 TR	0800 MWF
1020-1210	1000 MWF	1100 TR	1100 MWF	1000 TR	1200 MWF
1240-1430	1300 MWF	1200 TR	1400 MWF	1300 TR	
1500-1650	1600 MWF M	1500 TR	1700 MWF MW W	1400 TR	1500 MWF
1700-1850	1700 M	1600 TR	1800 W WF	1700 R	1700 T
1900-2050	1800 or 1900 M MW MWF	1800 T TR	1900 W WF	1900 TR	1800 R