

**Music 324: Contemporary Composition**

**T-R- 11:00-11:50**

**2 credit hours**

**Fall Semester 2017**

**J. Brian Post Instructor**

**Music 102**

**Phone 826-5438**

**Office Hours: TBA**

**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 10<sup>th</sup> 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**  
8/21

## **Topic**

### **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

8/28

### **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.

9/6

### **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

9/13

### **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

9/18

### **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

9/25

Mini Lessons

- 10/2**                      **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
- 10/9**                      **Work Week/Mini Lessons**  
**Assignment:**
- Read Chapter 6
- 10/16**                    **Midterm Performances**
- 10/23**                    **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.
- 10/30**                    **Work Week/Mini Lessons**
- 11/6**                      **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

11/13

**Work Week/Mini Lessons**

**Assignment:**

- Continue working on Final Project

11/20

**FALL BREAK**

11/27

**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

12/4

**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.

**12/11**      **Final exam time Tuesday Dec. 12, 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

# HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

## Final Evaluation Week Policy

1. Finals week is part of the instructional period for a course. Consequently, student achievement shall be assessed during finals week in all courses, with the following exceptions:
  - a. Courses involving laboratory or activity instruction only. They may have their final evaluations during the class designated time during the last week of class.
  - b. Courses that are non-traditionally scheduled (weekend workshops, theatre productions that last only six weeks, etc.).
2. Classes which involve both lecture/discussion and laboratory/activity methods of instruction shall use finals week for the lecture portion of the class, and if a separate final evaluation of laboratory or activity instruction (e.g. laboratory practicum) is desired, it shall be given during the last week of class and shall not substitute for the final class evaluation. Students should not be expected to complete these types of finals outside of the normally designated times for the class.
3. The designated hours allotted during the final evaluation week may be used for any number of summative or evaluative activities. They include, but are not limited to, traditional exams, presentations, portfolio sharing, performances, critiques, oral examination, or field trips. In-class final evaluation activities must occur during the final evaluation time designated for the course (not the week before).
4. The required submission date and time for take-home examinations, final papers or other out-of-class activities must fall no earlier than the designated final evaluation time slot for the course (students may voluntarily submit their work earlier).
5. The final evaluation time and location designated for a course as published in the *Registration Guide* may not be changed except in special circumstances, which must be approved in writing by the department chair and dean.
6. Students shall be informed of the nature of the final evaluation at the beginning of the semester.
7. All faculty members shall remind their students of the final evaluation schedule as published in the *Registration Guide*. Faculty must include the date and times of the final evaluation for the class in the course syllabus as specified by HSU's Syllabus Policy. Any student who finds it impossible (for serious and compelling reasons) to participate on the date, time, or place scheduled must make arrangements in advance with their instructor.

## Final Exam Schedule—Fall 2017

Evaluation Period	MON Dec 11	TUES Dec 12	WED Dec 13	THU Dec 14	FRI Dec 15
0800-0950	0800 MAF	0800 TR	0700 or 0730 MAF	0800 or 0900 TR	0800 MAF
1020-120	100 MAF	100 TR	100 MAF	100 TR	100 MAF
1240-1430	1200 MAF	1200 or 1230 TR	1100 MAF	1200 TR	
1500-1650	1500 MAF	1500 or 1600 TR	1500 MAF M	1100 TR	1100 MAF W
1700-1850	1800 M MW MAF	1800 TR	1800 W WF	1100 TR	1800 T TR
1900-2050	1900 M MW MAF	1900 T TR	1900 W WF	1900 R	1900 R

1. Day classes (starting before 1800) which either meet daily, four days a week, MWV or WF should follow the appropriate MWF schedule for the class starting time.
2. Day classes (starting before 1800) which meet on T or R only or on a TRS pattern should follow the appropriate TRS schedule for the class starting time.
3. Classes meeting one day per week, which do not show a specific meeting time on the above chart, must ascertain the availability of the classroom for their final to avoid potential conflicts.