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MUS 303.01: Choral Conducting

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Course Description:
Music 303 is an introduction to the art of choral conducting. Because it is offered in the fall semester it serves, for most students, as their first conducting course. The course, therefore, stresses the development of fundamental skills that will serve a variety of ensembles:
- The physical (gestural) skills of conducting
- The mental processes of preparing a score (analysis, internalization, score marking)

Music 303 is what many universities call a capstone course, i.e., a course which uses the summation of knowledge and skills acquired in the student’s previous course work. A solid foundation in music theory, aural perception, music literature, and basic piano will lead to strong conducting and leadership skills. Because this is an upper division course it is understood that each student in the class has passed Music Theory 1-4, Aural Perception 1-4, Piano in Class 1 & 2, Intermediate Piano in Class (for BME and BM students), and Introduction to Music Literature. Students must also have passed all sections of their piano proficiency and their Upper Division Recital Performance. Any undergraduate music major who has not passed all of these must petition the Faculty Executive Committee to take this course. Music minors and non-majors will be permitted to take this course at the instructor’s discretion.

Activities:
This class will work together on conducting exercises using simple rhythmic pulses, unison folk songs, recorded examples of choral music, and standard choral scores in live rehearsal situations. The class will serve as its own lab ensemble. Assigned activities outside of class will involve observations of other conductors, watching video-tape guides and other materials on reserve in Mansfield Library, and other activities.

Materials:
There is no textbook for this course. Students will work, instead, from a packet of music including folk songs, part songs and choral standards. You must bring your packet to every class. Throughout the semester, handouts, exercises, and other materials will be provided. Each student will need to keep these materials organized in a three-ring binder notebook. It is advised that you keep your class notes in this binder as well. Each student will also be given a CD of recorded examples to use for practice.

Practice and study outside of class:
Treat this class as you would lessons in voice or an instrument. Schedule daily practice sessions of your developing conducting skills using materials from class. Make focused observations of different conductors (both their conducting and rehearsal techniques) and take notes. Practice conducting music from your various choral and instrumental ensembles.

Grading:
Students will be evaluated in the following areas:
Conducting skills – 70 % of final grade
  clarity of:
    beat, cues, entrances and releases, eye-contact, tempo, dynamics, phrasing and
    expression, overall communication.

Score Study – 15 % of final grade
  research, analysis, preparation.

Homework assignments – 15% of final grade
  observations, other assignments.

Attendance
  Excellent attendance is required. One can not acquire classroom information and experience
  if you are not here. I will assess an attendance policy similar to our choral ensembles: each
  student will be allowed two unexcused absences. Each unexcused absence beyond two will
  lower the grade one letter. If you must miss class for illness or an emergency, contact the
  instructor as soon as possible.