

Spring 2-1-2016

MUSI 280.01: Composition II

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Composition I & Composition II, MUSI 180 & MUSI 280
University of Montana

Dr. Emilie LeBel
emilie.lebel@umontana.edu
Office: Room 203
Office hours: By appointment
Class times: TR 1:10 - 2:00 PM, Room 103

Course description:

This course explores the craft of contemporary art music composition through the original musical works, and the study of composition techniques and repertoire from the past century. Students will gain knowledge of a broad range of repertoire, aesthetics, and compositional techniques. creation of

Course Objectives:

- To understand the fundamentals of contemporary art music composition
- To develop one's own compositional voice and artistic interests
- To develop knowledge of a broad range of contemporary art music repertoire
- To gain experience thinking critically about contemporary music
- To gain experience effectively communicating about contemporary music

Required materials:

- Manuscript paper, pencils, eraser, and a ruler
- Listening assignments, readings, and additional materials will be posted on-line or handed out during class

Additional / suggested resources:

- Adler, Samuel. *The Study of Orchestration*
- Heussenstamm, George. *The Norton Manual of Music Notation*

General expectations:

- Regular attendance and active participation in weekly class activities
- All assignments are to be handed-in on their due date at the beginning of class
- Reviewing any listening and reading assignments that are assigned, so that you are able to participate in class discussions and activities
- Please check your email regularly for updates / communications
- Attendance at concerts and special events related to the composition program is **mandatory** (see course schedule and take note of dates)

Evaluation:

40% Instrument Project
20% Composition Project 1
30% Composition Project 2
10% Participation and professionalism

Grading:

Compositions will be graded taking into account efforts to incorporate knowledge acquired from course materials, and instructor feedback. Grading for composition assignments will be assessed taking into account:

Work /effort /ambition
Creativity / risk-taking
Technical / mechanics
Structure

Assignment submission:

- All assignments are due at the beginning of class on their due date, or they are considered late (no exceptions!)
- Late projects will be subject to a penalty of 2% per day (or partial day) of the week (including weekends)
- All compositions are to be neatly hand written using a ruler and a sharp pencil on manuscript paper, single-sided
- All written components of assignments are to be typed

Attendance, professionalism and participation:

Attendance and participation in all classes is required, and excessive absences will be reflected in your final grade. Attendance at concerts and special events related to the composition program is **mandatory** (see course outline for important dates). The following rubric gives a general indication of expectations:

- 9-10% - No problems with attendance; Very strong evidence of professionalism and participation
- 7-8.99% - No problems with attendance; Strong evidence of professionalism and participation
- 5-6.99% - Minor problems with attendance, lack of professionalism and/or participation
- below 5% - Major problems with attendance, lack of professionalism and/or participation

Laptop policy:

I do not permit the use of laptop computers, cell phones, tablets, etc. during the lecture and discussion portions of the class. Our department is very interested in technology and its artistic and academic applications, but laptops are not appropriate for taking notes in this class, and we wish to avoid the potential for distraction to both laptop users and nearby students. Additionally, students may not use cellular phones during class. If you disrupt class by using these devices, you will be asked to leave class for the day.

Academic honesty:

All work submitted in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. For the consequences of academic dishonesty, refer to the “Student Conduct Code” available here: http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.

We take violations very seriously and they will be noted on student disciplinary records. We will not tolerate any dishonesty or plagiarism. If you are in doubt regarding any aspect of these issues as they pertain to this course, please consult with me before you complete any relevant requirements of the course.

Disability services:

If you are a student with a disability who will require reasonable program modifications in this course, please meet with Disability Services for Students in Lommasson 154 for assistance in developing a plan to address program modifications. If you are already working with Disability Services arrange to meet with me during my office hours to discuss reasonable modifications that may be necessary. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at <http://www.umt.edu/disability>.

Course Schedule & Important Dates:

- Week 1: January 25

- Week 2: February 1

- Week 3: February 8

Guest Mitch Renaud visiting Thursday and Friday (February 11 & 12)

Thursday February 11, 2pm special guest lecture with Mitch Renaud

Friday February 12, 5pm composer concert in recital hall

- Week 4: February 15

Composition Project 1 due Thursday February 18

- Week 5: February 22

In class presentations (4 people)

- Week 6: February 29

In class presentations (4 people)

- Week 7: March 7

In class presentations (4 people)

- Week 8: March 14

In class presentations (2 people)

Instrument Project due Thursday March 17

- Week 9: March 21

- Week 10: March 28

No classes this week!

- Week 11: April 4

Spring Break!

- Week 12: April 11

- Week 13: April 18

- Week 14: April 25

No classes this week because of Composers Showcase!

Guest Adam Vidiksis visiting Monday and Tuesday (April 25 & 26)

Composers Showcase – April 25 and 26 with concerts at 2 pm and 7:30 pm each day

- Week 15: May 3

Composition Project 2 due Tuesday May 4

In class presentations of final projects on Tuesday and Thursday

Assignment Descriptions:

Instrument Project

Due Thursday March 17

40% of your final grade

**Instruments and presentation dates will be chosen by lottery during first week of the semester.*

The assignment is to create a presentation, information handout, and solo composition for your assigned instrument. The assignment objective is to gain in-depth insight into the capabilities and idiomatic methods of writing for your chosen instrument, and to share this information with your classmates.

Your 15-20 minute class presentation will demonstrate important aspects of the instrument including range, transposition, specific capabilities, notation conventions, and extended techniques. Your presentation should also include some score and audio examples of compositions that are representative of skilled writing for the instrument. There are many excellent orchestration books that contain this information and appropriate score samples - this will be a good place for you to start! You will also want to consult websites, players at the school, and any other resources that will help you build a detailed profile on your instrument.

The handout will be a summary of your presentation (see attached reference handout). The goal at the end of this project is for each student to have a collection of information on all instruments presented during these presentations - their own "orchestration textbook".

After you have learned all this valuable information, you will create a 2 to 4 minute solo composition for your assigned instrument, demonstrating your new-found knowledge. Create a complete score for your composition including performance instructions, and a program note. Finally, include a short written essay/descriptive document containing meta-commentary on 3-5 composition decisions you made over the course of the project. For each decision, point specifically to the time-point in your project where the decision is demonstrated.

Assignment components:

20%

- Presentation

- Information handout (have 16 copies printed for your presentation)

Due on the date of your presentation

20%

- Composition (including a complete score for the solo composition with performance instructions, and a program note, plus descriptive written submission).

Due Thursday March 17

Composition Project 1
Due Thursday February 18
20% of your final grade

The assignment is to create a 3 to 5 minute trio. The composition will feature 3 different monophonic instruments, each written in a unique/different key from the others. Essentially your composition will contain 3 simultaneous key signatures! Your objective is to seek creative ways to assemble your composition, seeking the results that you desire sonically. There is a vast array of sonic possibilities, depending on how you approach this task. Focus on each of the three independent lines having it's own beauty and forward motion, and also how they interact to vertically to create harmony.

Create a complete score of your composition including performance instructions, and a program note. Finally, include a short written essay/descriptive document containing meta-commentary on 3-5 composition decisions you made over the course of the project. For each decision, point specifically to the time-point in your project where the decision is demonstrated.

Composition Project 2
Due Tuesday May 4
30% of your final grade

The assignment is to create a 3 to 5 minute chamber ensemble piece for 3 to 5 instruments. The composition must feature at least 3 different instruments (i.e. no pieces for 5 pianos!). Seek out a work from another artistic discipline that you find compelling as a starting point or inspiration for your own work. For instance, choose a poem or painting that captivates your imagination. How might this be a starting point to inspire structure, colour, texture, and/or narrative in your work? Allow this to be your starting point for creating your new composition.

Create a complete score of your composition including performance instructions, and a program note. Finally, include a short written essay/descriptive document containing meta-commentary on 3-5 composition decisions you made over the course of the project. For each decision, point specifically to the time-point in your project where the decision is demonstrated. Be sure to include information about the initial inspiration for the piece!