

Music 296 Syllabus

Music 296, Music Theory 4 (3 credits)
Section 1: MWF 8-8:50 a.m. E353
Section 2: MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. E371

Professor: Dr. Neil Thornock
Office hours: knock or by appointment, E-570 HFAC
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Course Description and Objectives

I have two primary objectives for you in this course: the first is to help you learn to love a broader range of music created since 1900, and the second is to help you understand some of the basic techniques used in creating and/or understanding this music.

Prerequisites

You must have passed Music 293, 295, and 297 with a C- or higher to enroll for this course.

Materials

Music 296 Course Packet
Paper/pencils/etc.
ALWAYS have ample staff paper on hand!

Grading

You have three options for succeeding in this course. See the rest of the syllabus, especially the Assignments section, for further clarification.

	Option A	Option B	Option C
Assignments due:	—	As wanted (to 10%)	Weekly (to 15%)
Participation	15-30%	10-25%	10-20%
Listening Reports	20%	15%	15%
Analysis Project	15%	15%	15%
Compositions 1-4	Remainder	Remainder	Remainder

Option A:

Choose this option if you feel that you can learn the material solely from in-class work. I will provide many opportunities in class for you to work individually and together to understand the topics presented. Greater weight will be given to the listening reports and composition projects.

Option B:

Choose this option if you want to receive credit for homework but do not want to be accountable for homework each week. This way you can reinforce concepts of your choosing when you feel necessary. You may receive credit for up to 20 assignments.

Option C:

Choose this option if you feel you need to be accountable for homework on a regular basis. This will allow you to reinforce concepts outside of class. You may turn in up to three assignments in a week. You may receive credit for up to 30 assignments. Any week in which you do not turn in an assignment will reduce your final grade by 1%.

Assignments

Each completed assignment receives a passing grade, which will contribute a total of 1/2% to your final grade. Assignments are available online at www.neilthornock.net/courses/296.html. You may choose to do any assignment you like, whenever you want to do it. I may ask you to redo an assignment if you do not understand the concept; usually you will receive credit for both attempts.

Participation

You earn the participation grade in the following ways:

1. Attendance. Be on time. Stay for the whole class.
2. Contributing to a distraction-free environment:
 - Cell phones turned completely off for the entire class.
 - No food or drink.
 - Conversation kept on-topic.
3. Active participation in group work. Learning is best accomplished as a community, so much of the class time this term will be spent working in groups or pairs. I expect each person to contribute whatever you have to offer – if you understand a topic well, take time to teach your struggling classmate. If you do not yet understand a topic, ask those with whom you work for clarification.
4. Respect and kindness toward everyone.

At the end of the semester, you will assign yourself a 1-10 grade for participation with a brief (two- or three-sentence) explanation. The participation grade is due by email by the end of finals week. If I do not receive a participation grade from you, the highest grade you can receive is an 8.

Listening Reports

Listening reports are due weekly by Friday before class. They will not receive credit if turned in late. Each week you will listen to music written after 1900. See the attached Listening Lists to choose a composer to listen to for each assignment. You should listen to at least 10 minutes of music. This may be one piece, a selection of pieces or movements, or a portion of a larger work. The write-up will consist of one or two pages answering (briefly!) the following questions:

1. What are the most characteristic features of this music (what do you most remember when it's over)?
2. Briefly describe each of the following (at least one sentence for each):
 - duration (rhythm, meter, etc.)
 - timbre
 - texture
 - dynamic
 - pitch

Which are most important?

3. What is your personal response to the music? Do you like it? Do you despise it? How do you respond emotionally?

Analysis Project

You will analyze a work of your choice by one of the composers listed on the Listening Lists. You will turn in a score with your analytical markings and a write-up of 5 to 6 pages in length. Make sure the score reflects information in your write-up. In your analysis, address the following:

1. How might pitch be organized in this piece (scales, sets, intervals, etc.)? Attempt an analysis (it doesn't have to be perfect, or even correct – just see how far you get!).
2. Describe the durational aspects of the work (rhythm, meter, proportion).
3. Is register, texture, dynamic, or timbre important in the work? If so, discuss it.
4. If you were to perform or conduct this piece, what questions might you have for the composer (if any)? What challenges would you anticipate in learning the piece?

Composition Projects

You will display your knowledge of techniques discussed in class through composition projects. You will receive a sheet describing the composition project for each unit.

Exams

No exams. Sorry. Not even a final (we'll perform Composition 4 instead).

Listening Lists

This list does not represent all of the last century's most important composers, only a very slim representation of some of the schools of composition.

A

Béla Bartók
Harrison Birtwistle
Elliott Carter
George Crumb
Igor Stravinsky
Edgard Varèse

B

John Adams
Aaron Copland
Henry Cowell
Paul Hindemith
Darius Milhaud
Arvo Pärt

C

Milton Babbitt
Alban Berg
Pierre Boulez
Arnold Schoenberg
Anton Webern

D

John Cage
György Ligeti
Witold Lutoslawski
Olivier Messiaen
Harry Partch

Course Schedule

The Content column is subject to change as we go along. The Assigned column is fixed!

Date	Content	Assigned
Jan. 4	Syllabus; introduction	
6	Pitch conceptions	
8	Pitch-Class Set Theory	Listening 1 (List A)
11		
13		
15		Listening 2 (A)
18	No class	
20		
22		Listening 3 (A)
25		
27		
29		Listening 4 (List B)
Feb. 1		
3	Pandiatonicism (including Minimalism)	Composition 1 Due
5		Listening 5 (B)
8		
10	Bichord/Bitonal Harmony	
12		Listening 6 (B)
15	No class	
16	Monday classes – Quartal Harmony	
17		
19	Secundal Harmony	Listening 7 (B)
22		
24	Serialism	Composition 2 Due
26		Listening 8 (List C)
Mar. 1		
3		
5		Listening 9 (C)
8		
10		
12		Listening 10 (C)
15		
17		Composition 3 Due
19	Rhythm	Listening 11 (List D)
22		
24	Aleatory	
26		Listening 12 (D)
29		
31		
Apr. 2	Microtonality	Listening 13 (D)
5		
7		Analysis Project Due
9		Listening 14 (D)
12		

Final: Composition 4 due – **Sec. 1:** Monday Apr 19, 11 a.m. – **Sec. 2:** Friday Apr 16, 2:30 p.m.