

Course Syllabus

Updated 9/12/09

Course Description

This class, simply put, prepares you to take the Advanced Placement Music Theory Exam in May. What does this test entail? According to the CollegeBoard website:

The AP Music Theory Examination tests the student's understanding of musical structure and compositional procedures through recorded and notated examples. Strong emphasis is given to listening skills, particularly those involving recognition and comprehension of melodic and rhythmic patterns, harmonic functions, small forms, and compositional techniques. Most of the musical examples are taken from standard repertoire, although some examples of contemporary, jazz, vernacular music, or music beyond the Western tradition are included for testing basic concepts. The examination assumes fluency in reading musical notation and a strong grounding in music fundamentals, terminology, and analysis. A list of commonly used terms that may appear in the examination can be found in the current edition of the Teacher's Guide. A full list of topics that may be covered in the examination is available in the current Course Description.

In other words, this class is meant to provide you with, more or less, the equivalent of a college semester of an introductory harmony and counterpoint class. This includes developing **analytical skills**, **composition skills**, **aural skills**, and **performance skills**. Not only will a successful musician possess these capabilities, but he or she will also use each area to reinforce the others. This may sound like a lot, but remember that the course is introductory; no one is expected to produce a symphony by the end of the year.

Textbook

Clendinning, Jane Piper, and Elizabeth West Marvin. 2005. *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis, with Workbook and Anthology*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Schedule

We will be meeting once a week, every Sunday, from 1:30 to 5:00 pm. (And by “every week” I mean most weeks, as you will see below.) The course will be divided into five general topics, corresponding to five of the parts of the textbook that we will be using:

- Part I: Building a Musical Vocabulary
- Part II: Linking Musical Elements in Time
- Part III: The Phrase Model
- Part IV: Further Expansion of the Harmonic Vocabulary
- Part V: Musical Form and Interpretation

Following is a tentative week-by-week schedule of topics:

Week	Date	Reading	Topics
1	9/13/09	Chapters 1-2	Pitch and Pitch Class; Beat, Meter, and Rhythm: Simple Meters
2	9/20/09	Chapter 3	Pitch Collections, Scales, and Major Keys
3	9/27/09	Chapter 4	Minor Keys and Diatonic Modes, Pentatonic Scales
4	10/4/09	Chapter 5	Beat, Meter, and Rhythm: Compound Meters
5	10/11/09	Chapter 6	Pitch Intervals
6	10/18/09	Chapter 7	Triads
7	10/25/09	Chapter 7	Seventh Chords
8	11/1/09	Chapter 8	Intervals in Action
9	11/8/09	Chapter 9	Melodic and Rhythmic Embellishment in Two-Voice Composition
10	11/15/09	Chapter 10	Notation and Scoring
	11/22/09		<i>NO CLASS – Splash!</i>
	11/29/09		<i>NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Weekend</i>
11	12/6/09	Chapter 11	Voicing Chords in Multiple Parts: Instrumentation
12	12/13/09		<i>Interlude I – To Be Announced</i> [MIT Final Exams]
	12/20/09		<i>NO CLASS – Winter Break</i>
	12/27/09		<i>NO CLASS – Winter Break</i>
13	1/3/10	Chapter 12	The Basic Phrase Model: Tonic and Dominant Voice-Leading
14	1/10/10	Chapter 13	Embellishing Tones
15	1/17/10	Chapter 14	Chorale Harmonization and Figured Bass
16	1/24/10	Chapter 15	Expanding the Basic Phrase: Leading-Tone, Predominant, and 6/4 Chords
17	1/31/10	Chapter 16	Further Expansions of the Basic Phrase: Tonic Expansions, Root Progressions, and the Mediant Triad
18	2/7/10	Chapter 17	The Interaction of Melody and Harmony: More on Cadence, Phrase, and Melody
19	2/14/10		<i>Interlude II – To Be Announced</i> [Presidents Day Weekend]
20	2/21/10	Chapter 18	Diatonic Sequences
21	2/28/10	Chapter 19	Intensifying the Dominant: Secondary Dominants and Secondary Leading-Tone Chords; New Voice-Leading Chords
22	3/7/10	Chapter 20	Phrase Rhythm and Motivic Analysis
23	3/14/10	Chapter 21	Tonicizing Scale Degrees Other Than V
	3/21/10		<i>NO CLASS – MIT Spring Break</i>
24	3/28/10	Chapter 22	Modulation to Closely Related Keys
25	4/4/10	Chapter 24	Color and Drama in Composition
26	4/11/10	Chapters 26-27	Popular Song and Art Song; Variation and Rondo
27	4/18/10		<i>Interlude III – To Be Announced</i> [Patriots Day Weekend]
28	4/25/10	Chapters 23, 28	Binary and Ternary Forms; Sonata-Form Movements
29	5/2/10	Chapter 29	Chromaticism, Whole-tone Scales; Introduction to 20 th Century Composing Techniques
30	5/9/10		Review & Practice
	5/10/10		AP Music Theory Test

Sight-Singing

In addition to the material we cover each week from our textbook, we will work on developing our sight-singing skills. Not only is sight-singing a component of the AP test, but it also is an important means of developing musicianship skills in general. Below is the schedule specific to sight-singing (note that the topics listed under each week are generally the chapter titles of the book we'll be working from):

Week	Date	Section	Topics
2	9/20/09	Chapter 1	Simple Meters; the Beat and Its Division into Two Parts
3	9/27/09	Chapter 2	Stepwise Melodies, Major Keys
4	10/4/09	Chapter 2	Simple Meters; the Beat and Its Division into Two Parts
5	10/11/09		Hearing (and singing) Different Intervals
6	10/18/09	Chapter 3	Intervals from the Tonic Triad, Major Keys
8	11/1/09	Chapter 3	Simple Meters
9	11/8/09	Chapter 4	Intervals from the Tonic Triad, Major Keys
10	11/15/09	Chapter 4	Compound Meters; the Beat and Its Division into Three Parts
11	12/6/09	Chapters 1-4	Review
13	1/3/10	Chapter 5	Minor Keys; Intervals from the Tonic Triad
14	1/10/10	Chapter 5	Simple and Compound Meters
16	1/24/10	Chapter 6	Intervals from the Dominant Triad; Major and Minor Keys
17	1/31/10	Chapter 6	Simple and Compound Meters
18	2/7/10	Chapters 5-6	Review
20	2/21/10	Chapter 8	Further Use of Diatonic Intervals
21	2/28/10	Chapter 8	Simple and Compound Meters
22	3/7/10	Chapter 9	Intervals from the Dominant Seventh Chord;
23	3/14/10	Chapter 9	Other Diatonic Intervals of the Seventh Simple and Compound Meters
24	3/28/10	Chapters 8-9	Review
25	4/4/10	Chapter 10	The Subdivision of the Beat: the Simple Beat into Four Parts, the Compound Beat into Six Parts
26	4/11/10	Chapter 11	Intervals from the Tonic and Dominant Triads
28	4/25/10	Chapter 11	Subdivision in Simple and Compound Meters
29	5/2/10	Chapter 12	Further Use of Diatonic Intervals Subdivision in Simple and Compound Meters
30	5/9/10		Review & Practice

Homework

The primary component of the homework each week will be to read from the textbook about the following week's topic(s). There will also be short worksheets to help you comprehend what you are reading and to make our class time as effective and as useful as possible.

Practice Tests & Exams

In addition to learning about music theory, one of the ultimate goals of the class is to prepare you to take the AP Music Theory test in May. Subsequently, from time to time there will be assignments, either in class or as homework, that are comparable to the types of questions you will potentially see on the AP test.

Furthermore, there will likely be tests of some sort at the end of each unit that we study. The purpose of these tests will obviously not be to provide a means for grading you, but rather as checkpoints to ensure that we're actually making progress.

Expectations

While the goals of this class are probably similar to many (if not all) of the classes you are taking in high school, the nature of this course is notably different. Though you may ultimately receive some college credit should you take the AP test and do well on it, it is unlikely that you will receive any credit directly from taking this class. For all intents and purposes, this course is an extracurricular activity.

Having been in high school once myself, I am aware and respectful of the fact that your regular classes in school are your top priority. Concerning this class, all I ask is for you to dedicate as much time as you can reasonably afford to dedicate and to take what we do here seriously. Come to class when you can, and when you cannot, do your best to keep up with what we are studying. I understand that some weeks you will be able to devote more time than other weeks; at the end of the day, how much you get out of this course is closely related to how much you put into it.

Most importantly, you should enjoy yourself – studying music has been immensely rewarding for me, and it is my hope that it will be for you too.