

MUSC 220: Fundamentals of Music Theory + Ear-Training Lab

Fall 2024

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Hayden Hall, room 105
T: 12:30 - 1:45
W: 1:00 - 1:50 (lab)
F: 12:30 - 1:45

Welcome to Fundamentals of Theory! In this class we will learn about the basic materials that make up music. We'll learn about musical notation, rhythms, intervals, chords, scales, chord progressions and more. In our lab we'll focus on "sight-singing" (figuring out what a melody sounds like by looking at the notation) and "dictation" (understanding music by ear and writing it down.) These subjects can help you better understand, perform and compose music of all kinds.

Textbook + Daily Requirements

We will use my own free materials for class. I'll give you our theory textbook in a binder at the beginning of the semester. You don't need to bring that one to class each day.

Students should bring a pencil and eraser to each lesson. Also, please have your "anthologies" (clef reading / melodies / rhythms) available each session, either in the physical binder or electronically. Music paper will be provided as needed, but it's a good idea to have your own supply.

Class Website

We will have a class blog on davesmey.com, where we will archive all of our documents, keep track of class activities, and keep up-to-the-minute grade information. All students should visit the site within the first week of classes and register a personal account.

Grade

Your overall grade in the class will be calculated with the following plan:

Four ear-training grades, 5% each (= 20%)

Homework 25%

Three theory quizzes, 10% each (= 30%)

Theory Final 25%

Homework Grading

Homework is graded on a “check plus” (= excellent, worth 100 points), “check” (= pretty good, 92 points) and “check minus” (60 points) system. The criteria for what constitutes a check plus varies from assignment to assignment and depends somewhat on how your work compares to that of your classmates. I accept late homework up to four weeks after the due date, but the best grade you can get on it is a check.

Attendance + Participation

In addition, an attendance-and-participation modifier will be added to your overall grade. This can give you a modest bonus or cost you a significant penalty. We’ll use the following table to calculate your score:

0-2 absences	3 point bonus
3 absences	2 point bonus
4 absences	1 point bonus
5-6 absences	no bonus, no penalty
7+ absences	3 point penalty for each absence over 6

Note that this is a “no excuses” or “everything counts” policy – all of the typical causes of absence (like illness, work conflicts, extracurricular activities etc.) count toward your attendance total. My hope is that all students can meet our attendance goals, regardless of what happens. However, if something truly extreme or traumatic does occur I will try to work with you to help you complete the class without a penalty.

In general this is a fairly “liberal” attendance policy, since one can miss a large number of sessions and still pass. However, I strongly recommend that all students strive for that 3-point bonus, since being present for most of your classes is simply the best approach to college, and poor attendance usually correlates with poor test grades.

Being late to class may be counted as a quarter or half of an absence.

Failure to meet the expectations of positive in-class participation can also cause additional demerits to be added to your attendance tally. Rude, disruptive, or inattentive behavior can cause you to be marked absent for the day.

Finally, it is very important that you make it to our quizzes at their scheduled times. If something will prevent you from attending, you must contact me ASAP. I reserve the right to give you a zero if I don’t think you have a legitimate reason for missing a test.

Masking in class

All students should feel free to wear a mask in class, for any reason. I would strongly encourage everyone to mask up and test if they have any cold, flu, or covid-like symptoms, and please stay home if you have a sore throat or fever.

Testing out

In the second week of the semester I will offer a chance to “test out” of part of the class. Essentially I believe that students who have prior experience in this subject should have the opportunity to demonstrate that knowledge and skip some in-class instruction. All students who try this are expected to do the same 8 quizzes and tests as their in-class classmates and earn at least a 90 on each. However, I would also encourage everyone to consider the alternative benefits of simply relaxing, remaining in class, and interacting with your fellow students. 😊

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 (Aug 27, 28, and 30):

Simple rhythms in 4/4, clefs, sharps and flats, piano keyboard

Ear training: Intro to treble clef, solfege syllables, melodies in C

Week 2 (Sept 3, 4, and 6):

Whole steps and half steps, major scales, key signatures, circle of fifths

Ear training: First one-on-one singing appointments (ungraded)

Week 3 (Sept 10, 11, and 13):

Dotted rhythms in 4/4, intro to 3/4

Ear training: Rhythms in 4/4

Week 4 (Sept 17, 18, and 20):

Theory Quiz 1. Intro to minor scales

Ear training: intro to rhythms in 6/8

Week 5 (Sept 24, 25, and 27):

Triads, Intervals

Ear training: **Singing Quiz 1**

Week 6 (Oct 1, 2, and 4):

Ear training: **First Dictation Grade**

Week 7 (Oct 8, 9, and 11):

More intervals. **Theory Quiz 2.**

Week 8 (Oct 16 and 18):

Tuesday October 15 will follow a Monday schedule and we will not meet.

Diatonic triads

Ear-training: Identifying triads and intervals by ear

Week 9 (Oct 22, 23, and 25):

Inverted triads. Intro to counterpoint.

Ear-training: Rhythms with 16ths, intro to the V chord

Week 10 (Oct 27, 28, and Nov 1):

Writing + playing I-V-I progressions, extended circle-of-fifths sequences

Week 11 (Nov 5, 6, and 8):

Writing + playing ii-V-I, IV-V-I

Ear-training: Minor keys

Week 12 (Nov 12, 13, and 15):

Writing + playing progressions-by-third. **Theory Quiz 3**

Week 13 (Nov 19, 20, and 22):

Seventh chords

Ear-training: **Singing Quiz 2**

Week 14 (Nov 26):

November 27-29 is off for Thanksgiving.

Intro to music analysis

Week 15 (Dec 3, 4, and 6):

Ear-training: **Second Dictation Grade**

Final Exam (Dec 13):

The **Theory Final Exam** is currently scheduled for Friday, Dec 13 at 11:00am.