APPLIED COMPOSITION SYLLABUS

COURSE:
MUTC 3329
3 semester hours
Scheduled 50-minute weekly lesson and weekly studio class (Wednesdays at 3:00)

INSTRUCTOR:
Dr. Ben Morris  Benjamin.morris@sfasu.edu
McKibben 401  Office Hours: TBA or by appointment
(973) 722-0460  School of Music

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
50-minute private instruction in composition plus one hour of studio class each week. Each semester of composition will take the student on a progressive exploration of the materials, skills, styles, techniques, and aesthetics involved in composing original music. When appropriate, specific content may be included to assist individuals in achieving their creative and/or professional goals, or to rectify a deficiency in their technique. Students are expected to devote approximately 15 hours per week working on their compositions (over a 15-week semester). Prerequisite: four semesters of MUTC 1219.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES
#1 – Students will demonstrate the ability to hear, identify, and work conceptually with the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements of music, including sight-singing, analysis, and error detection.

#3 – Students will demonstrate proficiency in their degree track by completing projects, preparing performances, creating original content, and mastering skills as appropriate for their field.

#5 – Students will demonstrate a critical thinking and application of knowledge in music history and literature from the Western art tradition, with supporting related studies in non-western traditions, practices, and cultures.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:
• Students will compose original works of music in a variety of styles as assigned by instructor. (PLO#1, PLO#5)
• Students will prepare effective musical notation of their original works. (PLO#3)
• When possible, students will work with performers to bring their works to fruition in readings and performances. (PLO#3)
TEXTBOOK/MATERIALS:

*Essential Dictionary of Orchestration* (Alfred)
*Essential Dictionary of Music Notation* (Alfred)
*Handy Manual Fingering Charts* by Clarence Hendrickson

All other materials will be provided by the instructor, placed online for download, or placed on reserve in the library or in the composition room.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attend weekly 50-minute lesson with applied instructor and complete composition assignments and any additional exploratory learning as assigned. Attend weekly studio class and submit any assigned work.

GRADING:

Lesson Average = 50%
Semester Portfolio = 30%
Studio Class = 20%

Lesson Grades are produced using this rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quantity</strong></td>
<td>40 points</td>
<td>35 points</td>
<td>30 points</td>
<td>25 points</td>
<td>20 points</td>
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<td>Exceeds expectations.</td>
<td>Meets expectations.</td>
<td>Acceptable, but a little less than expected.</td>
<td>Considerably less than expected.</td>
<td>Minimal or none. Falls far below expectations.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quality</strong></td>
<td>40 points</td>
<td>35 points</td>
<td>30 points</td>
<td>25 points</td>
<td>20 points</td>
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<td>Excellent for a student at this level.</td>
<td>Admirable for a student at this level.</td>
<td>Average for a student at this level.</td>
<td>Weak for a student at this level.</td>
<td>Unacceptable for a student at this level.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exploratory or Directed Learning</strong></td>
<td>20 points</td>
<td>15 points</td>
<td>10 points</td>
<td>5 points</td>
<td>0 points</td>
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<td>Profound discoveries made during multifaceted self-directed learning. Paradigm shifts in thinking.</td>
<td>Reading and research on multiple planes that led to meaningful discovery.</td>
<td>Acceptable amount of reading and/or listening that represents multiple levels.</td>
<td>Cursory or minimal information gleaned. Tendency to gravitate to what you already know.</td>
<td>Nothing to report.</td>
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</table>
Each lesson grade (as calculated by this rubric) can be adjusted up or down by the instructor for reasons such as punctuality, attitude, related achievement, etc. Each adjustment will be documented with a rationale.

*Assessment of quality includes the following: creativity, artistic merit, idiomatic use of instruments, correct notation, inclusion of expression and articulation, and how well it fulfills the goals of the assignment.

**Exploratory or Directed Learning:** Many weeks, you will receive a specific assignment – a score, composer, or article to absorb. In these cases, please come to the next lesson prepared to lead a brief discussion about this content. What interested you? What confused you? What questions, comments or objections do you have in response to it? If no other assignment was given, in preparation for their lessons, students should engage in exploratory learning on their own.

**Composition Studio Class** meets from 3:00-3:50 on Wednesdays. MUTC 3329 students are required to attend. This is a time of interaction during which we cover a variety of topics. Weekly subjects might include listening to each other’s works, guest lectures, field trips, studies of great works, lessons on compositional technique, and group discussion. Although studio class does not generally include homework, there are occasionally required readings or written responses. If you have a legitimate reason to be absent, it must be arranged in advance. Unscheduled absences result in a point deducted from your final grade.

**Semester Portfolios:** At the conclusion of each semester, students will submit an electronic portfolio of the work they completed during the semester. Specific requirements of what to include, formatting guidelines, evaluation rubric, and deadlines will be provided in a timely manner. Portfolios will be evaluated by a panel of composition teachers, and the average of the panelist’s grades will constitute 30% of the final semester grade.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Students are expected to attend all lessons. If it is necessary to be absent, you must notify the instructor in advance. When notification occurs the day before the lesson, every effort will be made to reschedule the lesson for an alternate time. When notification happens the same day as the lesson, the lesson may still be rescheduled, but 20 points will be deducted from the grade. Unexcused absences will be counted as a zero and cannot be made up. Students must attend at least 12 lessons and each semester.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student,
(2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

**Withheld Grades & Semester Grades Policy:**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the coursework because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to [https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf](https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf).

**Students with Disabilities:**

To obtain disability-related accommodations, alternate formats, and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided.
Failure to request services promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

**Student Wellness and Well-Being:**

SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc.

If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

**On-campus Resources:**

**The Dean of Students Office** (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)

www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents
936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu

**SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic** Human Services, Room 202

www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp
936.468.1041

**The Health and Wellness Hub** “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.

To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:

- Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Student Outreach and Support
- Food Pantry
- Wellness Coaching
- Alcohol and Other Drug Education

www.sfasu.edu/thehub
936.468.4008
thehub@sfasu.edu

**Crisis Resources:**

- Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
- National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- johCrisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741
SETTING YOUR PRIORITIES

Nothing causes more problems for composition majors than poor decisions and confusion concerning priorities. There are lots of exciting opportunities available to music students at SFA and it is imperative that everyone have some “guiding principles” to help them make wise choices about their time and commitments. The following table should help composition students understand what is expected of them with regards to priorities and academic performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST PRIORITY (Composition and Related Courses)</th>
<th>Composition Lessons</th>
<th>Recital Attendance</th>
<th>Music Theory</th>
<th>Aural Skills</th>
<th>Scoring and Arranging</th>
<th>Counterpoint</th>
<th>Composition Software</th>
<th>Film Music</th>
<th>Collaboration Projects</th>
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<tr>
<td>These courses focus on skills that are central to the composer’s career. Composition majors are expected not only to consistently earn A’s in these courses, but to regularly go beyond the requirements and pursue the highest level of excellence. If you find that you are unwilling, or unable, to do this, you should seriously consider whether you are in the right major.</td>
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<th>SECOND PRIORITY (Music Core)</th>
<th>Intro to Music Literature</th>
<th>Music History</th>
<th>Required Ensembles</th>
<th>Applied Instruction</th>
<th>Conducting</th>
<th>Functional Piano</th>
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<td>These classes provide much of the foundation and background composers need to succeed in their field. Composition majors are expected to consistently get high grades (A’s and B’s) in these classes.</td>
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<th>THIRD PRIORITY (General Education Courses)</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Communications</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Natural Sciences</th>
<th>Visual &amp; Performing Arts</th>
<th>Humanities</th>
<th>US History</th>
<th>Political Science</th>
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<td>Creative works in the fine arts must engage the emotions and intellect, and comment on the human condition. For this reason, students who are well informed and knowledgeable in a variety of academic disciplines are far better equipped to write music of meaning and lasting value. While composition students are expected to do their best in all classes, these Gen. Ed. classes should never take precedence over first or second priority classes. A’s and B’s are desirable with occasional C’s.</td>
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<tr>
<th>LOW PRIORITY</th>
<th>Electives</th>
<th>Non-Degree Courses</th>
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<td>Composition students should only enroll in electives and non-degree courses when the demands of these courses will not interfere with the students’ performance in first, second, and third priority items. Students who consistently find themselves dedicating time to these courses at the expense of higher priority items will be asked to drop the extra courses, put on probation, or expelled from the composition degree.</td>
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<tr>
<th>LAST PRIORITY</th>
<th>Social Activities</th>
<th>Jobs</th>
<th>Sports/Recreation</th>
<th>Gigs</th>
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<tr>
<td>There are many exciting activities available to college. While it is important to gain experience, and develop lasting personal relationships, the university experience must ultimately be focused on completing a degree. Some students are able to meet all their high priority requirements admirably, while still participating in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Others must guard their time more carefully if they are to fulfill the most important obligations well.</td>
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How to screw up:

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<tr>
<th>Things that will result in a composition major being placed on probation</th>
<th>Semester GPA of lower than 2.6 in music classes</th>
<th>C in Applied Composition, Music Theory, or Aural Skills</th>
<th>Consistent failure to fulfill assignments or show initiative.</th>
<th>Failing to show sufficient compositional skills.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Things that will result in expulsion from the composition major</td>
<td>2nd semester GPA of lower than 2.6 in music classes</td>
<td>2nd semester with a C in Composition, Theory, or Aural Skills</td>
<td>D or F in Applied Composition, Music Theory, or Aural Skills</td>
<td>Being placed on university academic probation</td>
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Probation Contracts

Students who are placed on composition probation will be asked to sign a contract that details their situation and clearly indicates what is expected of them in order to continue in the program. Students on a contract may be permitted to continue taking applied composition at the discretion of the professor. Failure to meet all the requirements of the contract will result in permanent exclusion from the composition studio. This is a policy that I have to use far more than I would like, and at least five students have been casualties of this process over the last few years.

Philosophical Matters

Take Bold Steps — This is a difficult concept to quantify, but one that we believe in very deeply. When we trace our best successes back to find their starting point, it is inevitably because of some scary, daring, or expensive thing that we chose to do in spite of lots of reasons not to. Traveling to a far-away place alone; spending more than we could afford to get the best performers; bartering with a local recording studio to make a much-needed demo; applying for something that everyone thought was out of our league; these are all “bold steps” in their own way. They are evidence of an inner passion that refuses to live inside safe boundaries — a faith in our works that causes us to aim high and create opportunities where none exist. You will find that you need to remind yourself to think this way frequently as life has a tendency to put out the fires of our passion.

Building your Network — Your success will depend largely on the network of colleagues, friends, performers, conductors, teachers, and students you develop over the years. No composer can grow, have works performed, or gain employment without this principle working in their life to some degree. This does NOT mean that you should actively recruit acquaintances and then exploit — quite the contrary. What you need is genuine relationships built on trust and mutual admiration. This is only accomplished the hard way: by being a genuinely trustworthy, reliable, and likeable person. If you could look ten years into the future and see who is commissioning you, or hiring you for a job, or inviting you to score a film, or playing your pieces on concerts, you would be shocked to discover how many of those people are sitting next to you in class right now, or living right down the hall, or chatting with you on Facebook. These people are your future. Take relationships seriously and work to be the sort of person that people trust. This would be the right thing to do even if it had no effect on your career.