

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DON WRIGHT FACULTY OF MUSIC
DEPARTMENT of MUSIC RESEARCH and COMPOSITION**

MUSIC 1629A: Introduction to Composition

Instructor: Dr. Bekah Simms

Office location & email: TC 230, bsimms@uwo.ca

Office hours: *by appointment*

Fall Term 2021 - Monday 10:30-11:20am, Wednesday 10:30-12:20pm (TC101)

Course Prerequisites: None, but restricted to students enrolled in the Don Wright Faculty of Music.

Please note that prerequisites are no longer automatically checked prior to course registration. It is the responsibility of each student to ensure that he or she has the specified prerequisites. Unless you either have the requisites for this course or special permission from the Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Description: Structured composition assignments in shorter forms, guided score analysis, and listening assignments with a predominant focus on 20th and 21st-century examples in order to provide compositional, listening, and discussion opportunities to students. Topics covered are intended to be survey-style overviews.

Outcomes: To define personal style and personal musical interests/identity; to increase musical vocabulary and ability to assess both objective and subjective/personal observations about contemporary music; to integrate various compositional techniques through analysis of their usage and perceived effectiveness; to begin the establishment of a practice that consolidates new compositional techniques with one's personal vocabulary; to encourage experimentation and investigation through exposure of diverse musical styles/techniques.

Late Assignments: *All assignments are due one week from their assignment date at the beginning of class. Penalty for lateness is 5% for each day up to a week. Assignments will not be accepted one week after due date.*

Required Course Materials:

Staff paper, pencils, and good quality eraser

While assignments may be submitted in digital PDF format using notation software, most classes involve in-class composing by hand.

Grade Distribution:

Take-home Assignments

40% (10% each)

- Assignment 1: Theme and variations (flute and cello) - **due Sept 27**
- Assignment 2: Unpitched percussion/objects trio - **due November 8**
- Assignment 3: Concert review (>75% post-1950 music) - **due anytime before November 15**
 - All concert-types eligible: in-person, online, on-campus, off-campus, etc.
- Assignment 4: Self-imposed limitations or “rules” (any instrument) - **due November 22**

Presentation: 5-minute “lightning” presentation

of chosen work (post-1980) – **Oct 18, 20** 10%

Listening Test – Nov 8 10%

Reading session – Nov 29, Dec 1, 6, 8 10%

Final Composition w/Technical Note – due Dec 8 30%

*1–2-page piece for 2-4 instruments, accompanied by a technical note describing compositional approaches and choices.

Classes on November 29, December 1, December 6, and December 8 will consist of in-class readings of student compositions in Studio 242.

Each student will choose **one** piece/assignment (*in-class or take-home*) that they have composed during the term, and present a reading of the work. The set-up of the piece and performance must collectively be **under 10 minutes**.

It will be the responsibility of each student to enlist and rehearse any performers for a successful reading.

Evaluation will be provided on a rubric, and include points for **craft** (integration of class concepts); **orchestration** (strength in writing for the selected instrument(s)); **clarity** of ideas/intention (success of the piece as a singular entity and/or the strength/accuracy of its accompanying description); and **notation** (effectiveness in clearly communicating and notating the musical ideas.)

Grading scale: A+=90-100%, A=80-89%, B=70-79%, C=60-69%, D=50-59%, F=0-49%.

A+: One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level

A: Superior work which is clearly above average

B: Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory

C: Competent work, meeting requirements

D: Fair work, minimally acceptable

F: Fail

The instructor will provide written evaluations of each assignment within a week of the due date of any assignment.

Students will be expected to wear triple layer non-medical masks at all times in the classroom as per Western policy and public health directives except when directed to remove them by your instructor for essential instructional purposes.

Academic Consideration for Student Absence: Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are not met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. **Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.**

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office. For the Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Consideration_for_absences.pdf

and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Special Note for Covid-19-related Situations:

As a guideline, if a student has been contacted by the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) to self-quarantine due to a Covid-19-related situation, then the Self-Reported Absence system is not to be used to report this absence or to request an academic accommodation. The student should contact the Academic Counselling office as soon as they are notified.

In general, students are advised to not self-determine when to self-isolate. Unless directed by the MLHU students should go about their business as usual. But if a student chooses to self-isolate due to a

suspected Covid-19-related situation while waiting to receive direction from the MLHU then the student is directed to contact the Academic Counselling office as soon as possible for further direction on receiving accommodation consideration.

Academic Consideration for Missing Work: In cases where students are unable to submit work due to medical illness or compassionate grounds, if an online self-reported absence is submitted, or if appropriate supporting documentation is submitted to the Associate Dean's office, and the accommodation is granted, then the missed assessments may be rescheduled or discounted in the calculation of the final grade for the course, at the discretion of the instructor. If neither a self-reported absence nor an appropriate supporting document is submitted to the appropriate office, then the missed assignments will receive a grade of zero.

Academic Offences: Submission of work with which you have received help from someone else (other than the course instructor or TA) is an example of plagiarism, which is considered a major academic offence. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found at:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Mental Health & Wellness: Students that are in emotional/mental distress should refer to the Health and Wellness at Western page (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help or to go to the Wellness Education Centre located in UCC room 76. Students in crisis in need of immediate care are directed to go directly to Student Health Services in UC11 or to click on the green "I Need Help Now" button on the Health and Wellness page above.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities: Students work with Accessible Education Western (AEW, formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf

Religious Accommodation: Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

<http://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>

Contingency Plan: In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online at the discretion of the course instructor.

We acknowledge the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples, whose traditional lands we gather upon each week.

MUSIC 1629A: Introduction to Composition

Detailed Outline:

Sept 8: Introductory lecture & listening exercise – the modern composer’s position and identity in a polystylistic landscape; establishing a vocabulary for describing music; discussion and written statements on personal musical interests [*to be compared/contrasted to an updated statement at end of term*]

Week of Sept 13: Modes and melodic contour/line, phrases/periods, in-class melodic exercise for flute – idiomatic writing for flute to be discussed

Repertoire: Various melodies, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594); “Piano Concerto in A major no. 23 K. 488 mvt. II” (1786), Wolfgang Mozart; “Melody” from “Album for the Young” (1848), Robert Schumann; “Romance in Bb” (1853) Clara Schumann; “Syrinx” (1913), Claude Debussy; “Three Little Pieces” (1914), Anton Webern; “Pierrot Lunaire,” (1912), Arnold Schoneberg; “Hold Fast to Dreams” (1945) Florence Price; “I Hear the Water Dreaming” (1987) Toru Takemitsu; “Cello Concerto” (2006-08) Unsuk Chin

Week of Sept 20: Motif and development; historical and contemporary usage of musical “economy;” intro to texture/counterpoint; theme and variation; in-class motif study for cello – idiomatic writing for cello to be discussed
[*assignment 1 & 3 distributed*]

Repertoire: “C Major Invention (BWV 772)” (1723), Johann Sebastian Bach; “Symphony No. 5, movement 1: Allegro con brio” 1808), Ludwig van Beethoven; “Chromatic Invention, Mikrokosmos, Vol. III, No. 91,” (1939) Béla Bartók (1939); “Ludus Tonalis” (1942), Paul Hindemith; “Appalachian Spring” (1944), Aaron Copland; “Lick” (1994) Julia Wolfe; “Piano Phase” (1967) Steve Reich; “Shark Theme” (1975), John Williams; “Cantus in Memoriam Benjamin Britten” (1977), Arvo Pärt; “Legend of Zelda Theme” (1986), Koji Kondo; “Life Lines” (2010), Natalie Joachim

Week of Sept 27: Counterpoint and harmony; intro to harmonic approaches outside Western common practice era: extended tertian harmony, pentatonic & whole tone scales, quartal harmony, harmonic planing/parallel harmony; in-class harmonic study for piano – idiomatic chordal writing for piano to be discussed
[*assignment 1 due*]

[presentation guidelines distributed – please confirm pieces with instructor beforehand!]

Repertoire: “Symphony No. 9, movement 4: Presto” (1822-24), Ludwig van Beethoven; “Etude op. 10 no. 5 in G flat major “Black Keys” (1830), Frédéric Chopin; “Morning Mood” from “Peer Gynt Suite No. 1” (1888-91), Edvard Grieg; “Prelude” from Les Filles du Calvaire” (1891), Erik Satie; “Fêtes” and “Nuages” from “Nocturnes” (1892-1909), “The Cage” (1906), Charles Ives; Claude Debussy; “Voiles” (1909), Claude Debussy; “Laideronnette” from “Ma mère l’Oye” (1910), Maurice Ravel; La cathédrale engloutie” (1910), Claude Debussy; “Mikrokosmos, Vol. V, No. 131 “Fourths” (1926-29), Bela Bartok; “Piano Concerto No. 2” (1930-31), Bela Bartok; “Flute Sonata movement 2: Sehr langsam” (1936), Paul Hindemith; “So What” (1959), Miles Davis; “Contemplation” (1967), McCoy Tyner; “Missing Moon” and “Sunrain” from “Eight Memories in Water Color” (1978-79), Tan Dun; “Gerudo Theme (Night)” by Manaka Kataoka (2017)

Week of Oct 4: Compositional parameters to consider outside of pitch/harmony (register, rhythm, role, timbre, intensity, drama/arc) with in-class listening discussions; On giving and receiving musical feedback (constructive) from peers and the masterclass or “crit” format; group lesson #1 (10 mins/piece.)

Repertoire: “Presto” (2011), Beat Furrer; “Only the Words Themselves Mean What They Say” (2011) by Kate Soper; “Biyán ~ Song” (2011) by Raven Chacon; “BIG Talk” (2016), Shelley Washington; “Bone Games” by Sabrina Shroeder (2016)

Oct 11: Thanksgiving – NO CLASS

Oct 13: Group lesson #2 (10 mins/piece)

Week of Oct 18: Presentations: 5 minute “lightening” analyses/presentations that touch on salient musical features and character and answers the question: “Should you listen to this piece”?

Must be accompanied by a 30 second excerpt (emailed to the professor) to support the conclusion.

[final assignment distributed]

Week of Oct 25: Writing rhythm without pitch – metre, subdivision, accent, musical elements vs. noise elements and combinations, timbre; in-class performances with found objects; in-class unpitched miniatures for 1 player with objects

[assignment 2 distributed]

Repertoire: “Ionisation (1929–1931)”, Edgard Varèse; “Six Dances in Bulgarian Rhythm (II)” from Mikrokosmos (1939), Bela Bartok; “America” from “West Side Story” (1961), Leonard Bernstein;

“Clapping Music” (1972), Steve Reich; “?Corporel” (1985), Vinko Globokar; “Rebonds B” (1987-89), Iannis Xenakis; “Six Japanese Gardens” (1994), Kaija Saariaho; “Mother Earth Death Possession” (2015), James O’Callaghan; “Aura” (2015), Anna Thorvaldsdóttir; “eyes on” (2019), Kelley Sheehan; “Brimming Air” (2020), Kimia Koochakzadeh-Yazdi

Week of Nov 1: NO CLASSES - Fall Reading Week

Week of Nov 8: Listening test covering selected repertoire played in class: identification along with salient features/techniques utilized; the use of self-imposed musical constraints; in-class creation and testing of a set of unique personalized constraints considering all musical parameters including contour, counterpoint, register, rhythm, etc.

[assignment 2 due]

[assignment 4 distributed]

Repertoire: Revisiting Palestrina; “Allegro fantastic” from 3 Etudes (1911-1912), Alexander Scriabin; “Musica Ricercata,” Gyorgy Ligeti (1951-53), “Variations on one chord” (1965), Alfred Schnittke; “Etudes,” Op. 42 (1968), Einojuhani Rautavaara; “Music in Fifths” (1969), Philip Glass; “Having never written a note for percussion” (1971), James Tenney; “The Four Note Opera” (1972), Tom Johnson; “Love Song” from “Am Himmel Wandere Ich...” (1972), Karlheinz Stockhausen; “Variations for the healing of Arinushka” (1977), Arvo Part; “Gay Guerilla” (1979), Julius Eastman; “Glass Houses No.5” (1981), Ann Southam; “Ritual I :: Commitment :: BiIM” (2011), Jessie Marino

Week of Nov 15:

Textural/timbral possibilities in monophonic instruments; writing without notes – indeterminate and instruction-based text scores; performance of some repertoire scores; performance of in-class instruction-based miniatures for one player/person (part 1)
[assignment 3 deadline – concert reviews can be handed in any time before this date as well]
[assignment 4 due]

Repertoire: “Voice Piece for Soprano,” Yoko Ono (1961), “Right Durations,” Karlheinz Stockhausen (1968), “The Tuning Mediation,” Pauline Oliveros (1971), “Earth Ears: A Sonic Ritual,” Pauline Oliveros (1982/85), “In a large, open space,” James Tenney (1994), “Spill,” Erik Griswald (2007), “things whole and not whole,” James Saunders (2011), “Heavy Stop,” Vanessa Tomlinson (2019)

Week of Nov 22: Performance of in-class instruction-based miniatures for one player/person (continued); revisiting written statements on personal musical interests/composer identity and their evolution with class discussion; group lesson #3 (10 mins/piece.)

Week of Nov 29: reading sessions

Week of Dec 6: reading sessions

Dec 8: Final project due: 1–2-page piece for 2-4 instruments, accompanied by a technical note describing compositional approaches and choices.

*There is approximately 5.5 hours of reading sessions across 2 weeks. Each student will have approximately 10 minutes for set up and performance/reading of their piece. **As such, pieces must be under 8 minutes.***

*Shorter works will not be penalized – these sessions are meant for you to hear things by live musicians that **you deem to be educational to your craft and/or beneficial for you to have recorded.***