

**Western University Don Wright Faculty of Music
2831A – Choral Conducting Foundations**

**Instructor: Dr. Patrick Murray, MB 245, pmurra29@uwo.ca
TAs: Lorinda van Wyk (ivanwyk3@uwo.ca), Gankun Zhang (g Zhang84@uwo.ca)
M 9:30-10:30am | W 10:30-12:30am – MB 254
Office Hours: By appointment**

Course Description

Choral Conducting Foundations introduces students to the fundamentals of choral conducting, literature, and methods applicable to choral leadership in community and educational settings. Through guided learning and teaching exercises that engage a variety of choral repertoire, students will develop the fundamental tools of gestural technique, score reading, and ensemble listening and vocal performance that will enable them to convey their musical intent from the podium in collaboration with their ensembles. Students will be expected to learn, conduct, and sing several choral works throughout the term in graded assignments, lead the class in a systematic choral warmup, participate actively in the class choir as singers and accompanists, provide reflective feedback on their own and peers' conducting through in-class activities and online assignments, and complete two choral rehearsal observation assignments.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for the course.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to...

- Employ effective, relevant, and confident conducting technique to convey their musical intent as related to the printed score in guided conducting assignments.
- Demonstrate an understanding of healthy singing technique through vocal modeling and sequential choral warmups.
- Assess specific works of choral repertoire for their unique musical features and the relationship of those features to gesture through score marking and analysis.
- Develop a choral sound concept from a printed score as evidenced through gesture.
- Demonstrate an understanding of choral rehearsal principles through written observations of choral rehearsals.
- Assess their own and peers' gestural development through constructive commentary on video review.
- Exhibit confidence, leadership, and developing artistry as educators and conductors from the podium.

Required Materials

Packet of choral works (to be purchased as a class)
Set of coloured pencils for score marking
Course readings as assigned (available on OWL)

Required Readings

- Apfelstadt, Hilary. "Choral Pedagogy: the Anatomy of the Rehearsal Process." In *Teaching Music Through Performance in Choir: Vol 4*, 15-39. Chicago: GIA, 2017.
- Davids, Julia and Stephen LaTour. "A Productive Warm-Up." In *Vocal Technique: A Guide for Conductors, Teachers, and Singers*, 247-259. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2012.
- Jordan, James and Michelle Holt. "Achieving Blend." In *The School Choral Program*, 160-172. Chicago: GIA, 2008.
- McElheran, Brock. "Beat Patterns – Specific," and "Fermatas." In *Conducting Technique: For Beginners and Professionals*, 3rd ed., 22-36, 85-90. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Nagowski, Amelia. "Teaching Diction." In *The Choral Rehearsal Vol. 1*, edited by James Jordan, 275-288. Chicago: GIA, 2007.
- Smith, Brenda and Robert Sataloff. "Anatomy and Physiology of the Voice" and "Rehearsal Techniques." In *Choral Pedagogy*, 3rd edition. San Diego: Plural Publishing, 2013.

Assessment

- Podium Assessments (50%)
 - Warm-up (10%)
 - Conducting Assessment 1 (15%)
 - Conducting Assessment 2 (25%)
- Rehearsal Observations x2 (10% each = 20%)
- Online self and peer feedback x4 (5% each = 20%)
- Attendance and Participation (10%)

Course components

Podium Assessments (50%)

Choral Warm-Up (10%)

- Design and lead the class in a 5-minute group vocal warmup that incorporates at least 3 different exercises addressing different aspects of vocal technique.
- Your warmup should be appropriately sequenced following principles discussed in class.
- You are welcome to incorporate both a combination of familiar and original warmups. However, you should aim to introduce at least one exercise that you think will be unique and beneficial for the class.
- Create a warm-up instruction sheet using sequential description of activities and musical notation as necessary, such that another choral leader could follow or recreate your exercises AND understand the rationale behind them. An example will be provided.
- Following your class demonstration, you will hand in your warm-up sheet. All warm-up sheets will be distributed to the entire class as a group resource for future use!
- You will be graded on the utility of your chosen exercises, the clarity of your written description, the appropriateness of your exercises at addressing identified aspects of

vocal technique, appropriate sequencing of exercises, and the effectiveness of your vocal and physical demonstration.

Conducting Assessments (2x 20% each)

- Duration: 6-8 minutes of podium time
- In consultation with the instructor, choose 1 piece or excerpt of a piece from the preceding unit to conduct in front of the class.
- During your podium time, you may be asked questions about your piece or what you hear from the choir, be asked to try out different conducting gestures, or be asked to sing one voice part.
- You will submit a copy of your marked score following your podium time, to be graded according to guidelines introduced in class.
- Conducting Assessment 1 will be focused on individual gestural development. Do you feel comfortable and confident with your gestural technique? Do your gestures relate to the music? Are you able to respond to adjustments suggested from the instructor? Can you notice and correct any of your own mistakes?
- Conducting Assessment 2 will be focused on the ensemble and your relationship to the ensemble as a leader. How does your gesture and demeanour on the podium relate to your music making? What do you hear and how do you respond to it, in gesture and rehearsal expectations? For Assessment 2, you will also submit an analysis chart for the piece.
- You will be graded on the effectiveness of your conducting gesture in conveying your musical intent in relation to your knowledge of the score, your ability to respond to instructor requests for gestural experimentation or singing of different parts, and the thoroughness and insightfulness of your marked score.
- A grading rubric will be provided prior to each assessment.

Rehearsal Observations (2 x 10% each)

- For each written observation, attend and observe 1 hour of a choral ensemble rehearsal. Faculty of music ensembles are a good starting point, or community or church choirs that are open to outside observers (pending pandemic restrictions)
- Ideally, observe a rehearsal of an ensemble of which you are not a member. Due to possible pandemic restrictions, if it becomes impossible to attend rehearsals of other ensembles, you may use your faculty ensemble or, if need be, discuss with the instructor the option of watching a pre-recorded online rehearsal.
- You will submit an approximately 3 page (typed, double spaced, 12 point font, 1" margins) written reflection on rehearsal challenges and techniques employed by the conductor, as well as any observations on relationships of gesture to sound. Possible prompts will be discussed and provided in class.

Online self-and-peer feedback (4 x 5% each)

- You will have a minimum of 4 practice podium sessions throughout the term. Each of these will be video-recorded and uploaded to our class OWL site for yours and peers' review. Technology to accomplish this will be discussed in class.
- In reviewing your video, you will first provide either a written or auditory commentary (depending on our chosen technology) on your own video. You will also be assigned two of your peers' videos to provide constructive feedback on. Prompts to guide your feedback will be discussed in class.
- Feedback and evaluation will be assessed on completion, engagement with terminology and concepts discussed in class, and evidence of critical reflective thinking.
- DUE: Monday at midnight following each practice podium session.

Attendance and Participation (10%)

- You will have frequent individual podium time to practice conducting and receive feedback in a constructive setting. During these class periods, you are expected to come with your music fully learned, marked, and prepared to conduct, and to be open to constructive criticism from the instructor and your peers. You will not be penalized for "mistakes."
- You are to remain engaged as a singer or rehearsal pianist when not conducting, prepare readings and lead discussions as assigned, participate actively in discussion, and provide feedback to your peers.
- Due to the participatory nature of this course, attendance is mandatory for all class periods. 2% will be deducted from your participation grade for each un-validated absence. Significant un-validated absences may result in failing the course. See the absence section below for more details.

Course Schedule

*Subject to change at instructor's discretion

Week	Monday	Wednesday
Sept 6	Labour Day – no class	Syllabus overview; Qualities of a conductor
Sept 13	Introduction to Conducting Technique: preparatory beats, ictus, beat plane, patterns (Read: B. McElheran- patterns)	Intro to conducting technique continued. Conducting Lab: Bring your own song
Sept 20	Choral warm-ups; modeling sound (Read: J. Davids)	Vocal technique basics; warm-up workshop (Read: Smith and Sataloff)
Sept 27	Repertoire introduction: Lab 1 Works in simple meters; conducting patterns review	Conducting Lab (full class)

Oct 4	Score reading and preparation; learning the score; score marking	Warm up presentations
Oct 11	Thanksgiving – no class	Technique: cues and cutoffs Conducting Lab (half class) Rehearsal Observation 1 due
Oct 18	Towards the rehearsal: choral techniques (Read: Smith and Sataloff)	Technique: Dynamics, articulation Conducting Lab (half class)
Oct 25	Repertoire Introduction: Lab 2 Works in compound meters Technique: tempo, fermatas (Read. B. McElheran - fermatas)	Conducting Assessment 1
Nov 1	Reading Week – no class	Reading Week – no class
Nov 8	Conductor’s analysis; charting the piece (Read: H. Apfelstadt)	Conducting Lab (full class)
Nov 15	Guest Lecture – Dr. Marques Garrett (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)	Choral diction (Read: A. Nagoski) Conducting Lab (half class)
Nov 22	TBA Rehearsal observation 2 due	Choral seating strategies (Read: J. Jordan) Conducting Lab (half class)
Nov 29	TBA	Conducting Assessment 2
Dec 6	Conducting Assessment 2 (overflow if necessary)	Ask me anything!

Additional Items

i) **Course Prerequisites: None.** Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this 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.

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

iii) **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.

iv) **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.

v) **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

vi) **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.**

vii) **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

viii) **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>

ix) **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.