

WESTERN UNIVERSITY  
DON WRIGHT FACULTY OF MUSIC

**Music 9576 – Advanced Choral Techniques**  
Winter 2025

Instructor: Dr. Mark Ramsay  
Pronouns: he/him  
Email: [mramsay9@uwo.ca](mailto:mramsay9@uwo.ca)  
Office Hours: by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Catalina Teican  
Email: [cteican@uwo.ca](mailto:cteican@uwo.ca)  
Office Hours: by appointment

**Course Description:**

Advanced study and preparation of choral scores with emphasis on major works of the choral literature.

Together, we will explore how to select appropriate repertoire for different choral ensembles, refine our score study skills to better inform rehearsal approaches, and build rehearsal plans that support various learners in an ensemble setting. In-class conducting opportunities will help to expand our toolbox of possible conducting gestures and rehearsal strategies. Throughout the course of the semester, we will refine our ability to provide supportive feedback to others while modeling inclusive language and investigate contemporary issues impacting the choral field.

You will be expected to complete readings and written assignments, and to participate in, as well as lead, musical activities and class discussions. Assignments include the building of repertoire lists, in-class rehearsal segments, and a final project that incorporates in-class teaching, long-term rehearsal planning, and score study of a major work. A weekly announcement will be posted on our Brightspace site to assist with preparation for the following week. You will be required to video record your own conducting and teaching and store the footage in an online portfolio.

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Identify a variety of major choral works
2. Analyze musical scores to inform rehearsal planning
3. Develop long-term rehearsal plans that support the successful preparation of an extended work
4. Implement effective rehearsal strategies to benefit an ensemble
5. Demonstrate comfort and ability in leading others in rehearsal
6. Communicate musical intentions through conducting gestures
7. Aurally identify areas for improvement within an ensemble
8. Utilize inclusive and supportive language
9. Demonstrate care and consideration for the vocal health of a choral ensemble
10. Dialogue effectively with peers, instructors, and community music leaders to seek answers and build knowledge
11. Participate thoughtfully to class discussions and contribute to group music-making opportunities
12. Enhance evaluative skills through self and peer evaluation

**Course Materials:**

Supplemental materials, scores, assignments, and announcements will be available on the Brightspace course page. Be sure to check the course page regularly for updates. Classes will require singing and active participation.

You will be required to video record your conducting and teaching throughout the semester. These videos must be uploaded to an online platform that will allow you to easily review them throughout the semester and share them with others for viewing as required.

You will be required to select and study a complete major work for your final project. A personal copy of the score will be required as you will need to mark the entire score. If the score you select is outside of the public domain, you will need to purchase the score.

**Evaluation:**

**Grading Scale:** A = 80 – 100%; B = 70 – 79%; C = 60 – 69%; F 00 – 59%

**Participation and Classwork:**      **10%**  
Weekly

This course will require you to work independently as well as in small groups and with the entire class. You are expected to attend and be punctual for all classes, to prepare weekly readings and tasks with care and consideration, to meaningfully contribute to class discussions, to provide helpful feedback to classmates, as well as appropriately receive feedback from others. You will be required to actively participate as a singer in the class and will have multiple opportunities to act as a musical leader for the class. You must be prepared. You will be expected to read, reflect on, and be prepared to discuss one reading of your choice from the Reading Folder (found on Brightspace) each week. In addition, you will maintain a learning log throughout the course that includes your evolving learning goals, self-reflections from your in-class teaching experiences, links to recorded videos of your teaching, feedback from instructors, and weekly readings you complete. Assessment criteria includes: consistent commitment to preparation; care and consideration of others; demonstration of effort and initiative; and punctuality and consistent attendance.

**Repertoire Lists:**      **30% (15% + 15%)**  
Due dates: Feb. 10 and Mar. 17

You will construct two detailed repertoire lists (of 10 titles each) throughout the semester. The first will showcase major choral works that are a cappella or use minimal accompanying forces (piano, organ, one instrument, etc.). The second will showcase major choral works that use larger instrumental forces (orchestra, brass ensemble, etc.). The repertoire list will include access information for both scores and recordings, as well as basic analysis information including background and historical context, forces required, text, form, and general performance challenges. The purpose of the assignment is for you to expand your knowledge of existing major choral works. Completed repertoire lists will be shared with classmates. Assessment criteria includes: breadth and variety of repertoire included as well as the accuracy and completeness of analysis.

**Conducting and Teaching Opportunities (CTO): 30% (10% + 10% + 10%)**

Due dates: #1: Jan. 30 #2: March 6 #3: April 3

Throughout the semester you will have the opportunity to lead the class in rehearsal. Three of these opportunities will be formally evaluated and a schedule of conductors will be posted one week in advance. For each of these opportunities you will be required to prepare a written plan, execute the plan within the given time while responding to the needs of the ensemble, and reflect afterwards on the effectiveness of your mini-rehearsal. Feedback and support during the rehearsals as well as afterwards will be provided by the instructors and your peers. Assessment criteria includes: evidence of preparation; appropriateness of selected rehearsal strategies; ability to identify areas for improvement and effectively respond to the ensemble; demonstration of effective gestures and rehearsal strategies as well as inclusive and support language.

**Final Project: major work analysis and rehearsal planning 30%**

Due date: Friday, April 4

The purpose of this assignment is to combine your programming, score study, and rehearsal planning skills into one final product. It is important that the final product is practical and useful to you in the future so choose your repertoire wisely. Select one major choral work of your choice, complete a full score study of the work, write a program note that includes background and historical contextual information, and construct a long-term rehearsal schedule that extends from a first rehearsal to the final performance. Opportunities will be created for you to share your progress with instructors and peers to receive feedback. The final product will include a copy of the program note, the analyzed score, and the long-term rehearsal schedule. Assessment criteria includes: ability to thoroughly analyze the musical score; clarity and accuracy of program note, ability to construct a long-term rehearsal schedule informed by musical analysis.

**General Notes:**

**i) Academic Offences:** Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

**ii) Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:** Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

[https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html) To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

**iii) Enrollment Restrictions:** Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in Music.

**iv) Health and Wellness:** Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health Support at <https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

**v) Accessible Education Western:** Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

**vi) Written Work and the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI):** The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools/software/apps is not permitted in the written work for this course. All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

**vii) Accommodation on Medical or Compassionate Grounds:** Western recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, at times, be impaired by medical illness or exceptional circumstances. Instructors will use good judgment and ensure fair treatment in determining how or if work missed in such cases will be accommodated. If work missed because of medical or non-medical reasons is worth more than 10% of the final grade, documentation is required. Any documentation, when required, is processed through the Office of the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) and should be sent directly to this office, not to the instructor.

**viii) Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:** Western accommodates students with disabilities, subject to not compromising the academic integrity of the course or program. Students seeking accommodation must contact Accessible Education ([aew@uwo.ca](mailto:aew@uwo.ca)), which provides recommendations based on disability documentation and other considerations. Reasonable academic accommodation is a cooperative process between the University, the student, and the instructor. All participants in the process must fulfil their respective obligations as set out in this Policy and the associated Procedures: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation\\_disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf)

**ix) Religious Accommodation:** When scheduling of course requirements conflicts with religious holidays that require absence from the University or that prohibit or require certain activities on the part of the student, the student will not be penalized for absence because of religious reasons. If a suitable arrangement involving a graduate course cannot be worked out between the student and instructor involved, they should consult the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies).

Further information can be found here: <https://www.edi.uwo.ca/resources/2025-Diversity-Calendar-PDF.pdf>

**Class Schedule:** *(subject to change)*

	Date	Topics	Assignments Due
W E E K 1	M. Jan. 6	Welcome, introductions, and course overview	
	Th. Jan. 9	Introduce: Where do we start? - <i>purpose of score study</i> - <i>warm-up structure</i> - <i>linking strategies with purpose</i>	
W E E K 2	M. Jan. 13	Focus on SA choirs. <i>(Combined class with MUS 2832 in MB 254)</i>	
	Th. Jan. 16	Introduce: Where do we start? <i>(continued)</i>	
W E E K 3	M. Jan. 20	Focus on TB choirs. <i>(Combined class with MUS 2832 in MB 227)</i>	
	Th. Jan. 23	Introduce: Where do we start? <i>(continued)</i>	
W E E K 4	M. Jan. 27	"Where do I find music? Should we sing this?"	
	Th. Jan. 30	<b>Conducting and Teaching Opportunity #1</b> <i>Introduce</i>	
W E E K 5	M. Feb. 3	"Changing voices: What do I do?"	
	Th. Feb. 6	Reinforce: What am I hearing? - <i>identifying what you hear</i> - <i>responding with strategies</i> - <i>evaluating</i>	
W E E K 6	M. Feb. 10	Reinforce: What am I hearing? <i>(continued)</i>	<b>Repertoire List #1 due</b>
	Th. Feb. 13	Reinforce: What am I hearing? <i>(continued)</i>	
	M. Feb. 17 and 20	Reading Week (no classes)	
W E E K 7	M. Feb. 24	Individual lessons	
	Th. Feb. 27	Individual lessons	
W E E K 8	M. Mar. 3	Reinforce: What am I hearing? <i>(continued)</i>	
	Th. Mar. 6	<b>Conducting and Teaching Opportunity #2</b> <i>Reinforce</i>	

W E E K 9	M. Mar. 10	"But that has nothing to do with making music."	
	Th. Mar. 13	Refine: How can we improve? - <i>building understanding</i> - <i>adding nuance and polish</i>	
W E E K 10	M. Mar. 17	Refine: How can we improve? <i>(continued)</i>	<b>Repertoire List #2 due</b>
	Th. Mar. 20	<i>No class today. Time for coachings and work on final project.</i>	
W E E K 11	M. Mar. 24	"Now what? How do I keep learning?"	
	Th. Mar. 27	Refine: How can we improve? <i>(continued)</i>	
W E E K 12	M. Mar. 31	Refine: How can we improve? <i>(continued)</i>	
	Th. Apr. 3	<b>Conducting and Teaching Opportunity #3</b> <i>Introduce, Reinforce, and Refine</i>	
	F. Apr. 4	<b>Final Project due</b>	