

Vocal Pedagogy - MUS 9510 - Course Outline (2025/26)

Instructor: Torin W. Chiles, lecturer
Graduate Teaching Assistant:
Shuwei Zhang, DMA candidate



Purpose: This course is offered to help singers acquire and develop an understanding of vocal function (anatomical, acoustic, and artistic) and the traditions of *Bel Canto* voice training. A survey of historical treatises and the traditions of vocal pedagogy will be made from the earliest roots of *Bel Canto* to the most recent scientific studies of voice technique and quality of tone. ***It is a premise of the course that the students are already offering voice training to students. Students will apply the knowledge acquired through the lectures, reading and course work to the voice instruction they offer their students.***

Textbooks: *(copies are in the library; the criminally minded may discover free PDF versions online)*

1. Stark, James. ***Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy***. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.
2. Miller, Richard. ***The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique***. New York: Schirmer Books, 1996.

Methods of Evaluation:

Attendance.....	10%
Class Participation, monthly Teaching Logs and Class Presentations.....	15%
October 31 st Anatomy Test.....	15%
December Mid-Term Exam.....	20%
Research Paper.....	20%
April Final Exam.....	20%

Attendance:

The nature of a survey/lecture course requires students' presence for each class. A mark of zero will be recorded for each absence and the corollary ratio deducted from the 10% Attendance component of the final grade.

Class Participation etc:

Weekly participation is expected in the class discussion based upon the readings, lecture, and audio/video recordings. Students will present their research paper to the class in March. The Instructor and GTA will monitor the monthly Teaching Logs submitted by the students as well as each student's engagement based upon the student's readings for their research paper, course readings and class discussions.

Research Paper:

Due by April 3rd, 2026 — an Abstract/Proposal is due by March 6th, 2026. The papers and bibliographies will be gathered and bound into a *Festschrift* at the end of the year. *(Previous Festschrifts are on reserve in the library and may be a useful source of inspiration as well as research.)*

Please call me Torin — everyone does!
I keep regular hours in my studio from 8:30am-5:30pm each weekday and I am happy to chat as my applied teaching schedule allows (posted on my door).

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ex84323
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The Fine Print:



Senate Mandated Graduate Course Outline NOTES:

Statement on 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 website:

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

Note especially that plagiarism is a major scholastic offence. Students are expected to write all assignments in their own words. If you take an idea from another author, you must acknowledge this by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing.

Statement on 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/gethelp.html To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Enrolment Restrictions:

Enrolment in this course is restricted to graduate students in Music, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enrol in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

Health and Wellness Services:

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.

Accessible Education Western (AEW):

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.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Plagerism:

While AI may be used as a tool, scholars do not claim the works of others as their own, and therefore it would be a scholastic offence to submit for grading work that is AI generated. Similarly, plagiarism is a serious scholastic offence. 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>).

Grading Guidelines for Graduate Courses: A=80-100%, B=70-79%, C=60-69%, F=00-59%



The topic for your *research paper* is something to consider carefully and to discuss at length with the instructor and especially the GTA who will mark your papers at the end of the second term. Often, people consider possibilities during the first term and settle on a topic upon which they can read and write throughout the second term. Our GTA, *Shuwei Zhang*, will be a valuable resource for you as you develop your ideas, research your topic, and begin to write early drafts.

First Term Exam – December 2025

Vocal Pedagogy 4961y/9510



Please respond concisely and elegantly (essay format) to each of the following points:

1. Trace the historical and artistic origins and evolution of *bel canto*. (10marks)
2. Describe the Phonatory Process using appropriate anatomical terms and relevant physiological, myoelastic and aerodynamic principles. (20 marks)
3. Outline an approach (or approaches) to Breath Management and the “Supported Voice” with specific references to the respiratory cycle and the relevant thoracic and abdominal anatomy. (25 marks)
4. With specific references to ideas and terms developed by Caccini, Mancini, Garcia, Lamperti, Helmholtz, Fant, Sundberg and perhaps others, outline an evolution of the concept of Vocal Resonance. (20 marks)
5. Using specific terms and citations outline the theories of Vocal Registers and strategies for vocal registration (including vowel modification). (25 marks)

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- *Please ensure that your name is inscribed on each exam booklet that you submit or that your electronic file has your name in the filename.*
 - *There is no need to respond in numerical order but please ensure that each response is clearly numbered.*
 - *There is paper available for rough notes.*
 - *The exam period runs for up to three hours.*
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Second Term Exam – April 2026

Vocal Pedagogy 4961Y/9510



Please respond concisely and elegantly (essay format) to each of the following points:

1. Define and explain what Stark calls *Vocal Tremulousness*. Outline various types of vocal tone modulation and their causes. Outline some of the controversies surrounding the application of this "ornament". (10 Marks)
2. Demonstrate the challenges of teaching voice students "Idiom and Expression". (10 Marks)
3. Discuss the importance of repertoire as a didactic device. (10 Marks)
4. Outline various approaches to lesson planning and structure. (10 Marks)
5. Define the following terms as they relate to the principles of *bel canto* voice technique. (5 Marks **each**)
 - *agilità*
 - *sostenuto*
 - *messa di voce*
6. Describe the qualities of vocal tone displayed in **each** of the attached spectrographic images. [Figures 1-3] (5 Marks **each**)
7. Write an adjudication for the recordings of the following singers. (10 Marks **each**)
 - Angela R.
 - Graham B.
 - Tim K.

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- *Please ensure that your name is inscribed on each exam booklet that you submit or that your electronic file has your name in the filename.*
 - *There is no need to respond in numerical order but please ensure that each response is clearly numbered.*
 - *There is paper available for rough notes.*
 - *The exam period runs for up to three hours.*
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TA: **Shuwei Zhang**, DMA Candidate
Office hours: *Please email to book an appointment*
Room:
Email: szhan855@uwo.ca

2025/26 Vocal Pedagogy Lecture Schedule:

Sept. 5th – Introductory Seminar (Aesthetics & Practice)
Sept. 12th – *Bel Canto*; Context, Evolution and Controversy
Sept. 19th – Laryngeal Anatomy
Sept. 26th – Phonation 1
Oct. 3th – Phonation 2
Oct. 10th – Breath Management 1
Oct. 17th – **Study Break (no class)**
Oct. 24th – Breath management 2
Oct. 31st – Breath management 3 (**Anatomy Quiz!**)
Nov. 7th – Resonance 1
Nov. 14th – Resonance 2
Nov. 21st – Registration 1
Nov. 28th – Registration 2
Dec. 5th – Exam Review Class

Jan. 9th – Second Term Introduction
Jan. 16th – Vibrancy
Jan. 23rd – *agilità, sostenuto, messa di voce*
Jan. 30th – Idiom and Expression
Feb. 6th – Didactic Repertoire
Feb. 13th – Teaching Styles
Feb. 20th – **Reading Week (no class)**
Feb. 27th – Lesson Planning and Structure
March 6th – Private Studio Management
(Research Paper Abstracts due!)
March 13th – Ethics/Presentations
March 20th – Presentations
March 27th – Presentations
April 3rd – *no class Good Friday* (**Research Papers Due!**)
TBA – *Optional* Exam Review Class

Learning Outcomes:

After taking this course students will have surveyed the literature (historical treatises to most recent research), techniques, vocal aesthetics and traditions of *Bel Canto*. They will demonstrate their ability to verbalize this knowledge through the November Anatomy Quiz, a research paper and the long essay answer exams. Armed with the specific and accurate knowledge of *what* to teach and *how* to teach it, they will be effective teachers of singers of all voice types, all ages and all levels of ability. Students will develop their vocal diagnostic skills (through a written adjudication process) and be able to respond prescriptively and diplomatically to singers to identify and correct vocal faults, and skillfully and insightfully train voices in the *Bel Canto* tradition.