

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DON WRIGHT FACULTY OF MUSIC

Music 9874 – DMA Choral Seminar 1

Fall 2025 and Winter 2026

Instructor: Dr. Mark Ramsay

Pronouns: he/him

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Office Hours: by appointment

Class times and location are posted on the course Brightspace site.

Course Description:

Selecting repertoire is one of the most important responsibilities of any choral leader. This seminar focuses on the selection and analysis of repertoire through the lens of a modern choral conductor. Students will refine their ability to select and analyze repertoire, sharing their findings with their colleagues, and expanding the breadth of their own programming knowledge. Corresponding pedagogical approaches and rehearsal strategies will be explored and practiced. Students will investigate collections of repertoire and also consider how others analyze repertoire. Students will be required to make connections with active conductors and ensembles in the field.

Course Learning Outcomes:

Students will...

- expand knowledge of available choral repertoire.
- critically examine their own programming practices and priorities.
- analyze existing repertoire collections and programming practices.
- evaluate how other choral leaders analyze repertoire to better inform their own practice.
- improve repertoire analysis skills to better inform rehearsal approaches.
- enhance communication skills.
- engage with colleagues to consider multiple perspectives related to repertoire selection.

Methods of Evaluation:

Class Presentations (6)	60%
Repertoire selection with a purpose	20%
Score Reading Session	20%

Class Presentations

Every third week, students will have 30 minutes to present to the class on the identified topic. Each presentation should include (1) an overview of the topic showcasing the student's findings and (2) a specific focus on one related composition. The exploration of the composition should demonstrate your analysis skills and engage the class in active music-making where you can apply and refine your pedagogy skills. Evaluation will be based on the effectiveness and clarity of communication, the accuracy of your findings, and your ability to showcase effective analysis and rehearsal skills. See presenter schedule below.

Topics:

1. **Analyzing our own programming:** Return to programs you have presented in the past and examine your programming practices with a critical eye. What did you include and why? What are your priorities when programming? What do you avoid when programming? Select one piece. Complete the analysis form and introduce the piece to the class.
2. **Exploring other conductors' analysis practices:** The Choral Journal frequently publishes issues that highlight the analysis of a specific choral work as a featured article. Select one article and examine how that author analyzed the work. What is the structure of the analysis? How did they support their claims? What did they overlook or omit? What could you learn from this approach? Complete the analysis form for this piece and introduce the work to the class.
3. **Analyzing existing collections/anthologies:** Select one collection/anthology of repertoire and share an overview of the resource with the class. What is included? What is helpful about resource? How might conductors use the resource in their practice? Select one work from the collection, complete the analysis form, and introduce the work to the class.
4. **Discovering what is being programmed:** Identify and explore a programming question that requires you to compare programs of various sources. Some examples might include: What are adult chamber choirs in Canada singing this year? What has the Ontario Youth Choir performed in the last five years? What repertoire was performed at the last national conference? Present your findings to the class and choose one piece of repertoire you discovered, complete the analysis form, and introduce the work to the class.
5. **Examining different settings of the same text:** Find three settings of the same text and share your comparative analysis with the class. What similarities and differences did you find? What intentional choices did the composer make to highlight the text? Select the setting you feel is the most effective, complete the analysis form, and introduce the work to the class.
6. **Investigating someone else's programming methods:** Connect with a conductor of your choice and investigate their approach to programming. Summarize your findings for the class, including highlights of your conversation with the conductor. Choose one piece of repertoire the conductor referenced, complete the analysis form, and introduce the work to the class.

Repertoire selection with a purpose (due by December 16)

Students will identify a purpose for which they might select specific repertoire for an ensemble. For example, it may be to intentionally build tone, to refine rhythmic skills, or to improve pitch independence. Students will select and analyze 3 pieces that align with the identified purpose. The completed project will include: (1) a written description that identifies the overall purpose and explains how each piece would appropriately align with that purpose (2) an analysis of each piece. Evaluation will be based on the clarity of the information presented, the appropriateness of the selected repertoire, and the depth and accuracy of the analysis.

Score Reading Session (due by April 16)

You have been asked to lead a score reading session at an upcoming conference. Identify the focus of the session (theme, age-level, voicing, etc.) and select 8 pieces to present. The final product will contain: (1) a brief description of the session that could appear in the conference schedule and a 2-3 sentence description of each piece; (2) an outline of your 60-minute reading session that demonstrates which section(s) of each piece you will read with the attendees; and (3) an analysis of each piece to be included in the session. Evaluation will be based on the appropriateness of the repertoire selected, your written materials, and the depth and accuracy of the score analysis.

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

Course Materials

Sources for repertoire will be shared with students via Brightspace and together we will build an extensive list of sources students can use beyond the class. Students are encouraged to invest in purchasing musical scores to build their own music libraries as they are able.

Tentative Schedule

Revised versions will be discussed in class and available via Brightspace throughout the year.

Date	Topic and Presenter
September 8	Welcome, Overview, and Introductions
September 15	Analysis structure
September 22	1. Analyzing our own programming: Melissa
September 29	1. Analyzing our own programming: Emer
October 6	1. Analyzing our own programming: Aldo
October 13	Thanksgiving – no class
October 20	2. Exploring other conductor's analysis practices: Melissa
October 27	2. Exploring other conductor's analysis practices: Emer
November 3	Reading Week – no class
November 10	2. Exploring other conductor's analysis practices: Aldo
November 17	Final project meetings
November 24	3. Analyzing existing collections/anthologies: Melissa
December 1	3. Analyzing existing collections/anthologies: Emer
December 8	3. Analyzing existing collections/anthologies: Aldo
December 16	Last day to submit <i>Repertoire selection with a purpose</i>
January 5	Final project discussions and sharing
January 12	Professional development opportunities
January 19	4. Discovering what is being programmed: Melissa
January 26	4. Discovering what is being programmed: Emer
February 2	4. Discovering what is being programmed: Aldo
February 9	Final project meetings
February 16	Reading Week – no class
February 23	5. Examining different settings of the same text: Melissa
March 2	5. Examining different settings of the same text: Emer
March 9	5. Examining different settings of the same text: Aldo
March 16	6. Investigating someone else's programming methods: Melissa

March 23	6. Investigating someone else's programming methods: Emer
March 30	6. Investigating someone else's programming methods: Aldo
April 6*	Final project discussions and sharing
April 16	Last day to submit <i>Score Reading Session</i>

**Note: this is Easter Monday and the university has regularly scheduled classes and rehearsals.*

Enrollment Restrictions:

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

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 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. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

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): The use of generative AI on any assignments or projects in this course will not be treated as a scholastic offense (see previous note on Academic Offences). Please review the Principles of Using AI at Western here: <https://ai.uwo.ca/Guidance/Policy.html>