

# Aural Skills III (hybrid)

MUST 2111

Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Brian Jarvis ([bejarvis@utep.edu](mailto:bejarvis@utep.edu))

The University of Texas at El Paso – Fall 2023

## Course description

This is a hybrid course that is mostly online. Aural Skills III is a continuation of Aural Skills II. Aural Skills III focuses on developing and improving a number of skills related to hearing, singing, and understanding tonal music. In this course, students will improve their aural skills in the following areas: intervals, chord quality, scale-degree recognition & reproduction, harmonic paradigms & progressions, rhythmic performance, sight singing, solfege, and in rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic dictation. Concerning pitch, this course works to build your sense of relative pitch and is unrelated to absolute pitch (a.k.a. “perfect” pitch) and we’ll use moveable *do* solfege (*do*-based minor) to support that emphasis.

Unfortunately, no aural-skills course will completely prepare you for the future because there are simply too many types of music and musical phenomena and only so much time, making that an impossible goal. Your future is unique and unknown and everyone will take a different path to get there. This course is designed to build a solid foundation of generally applicable skills that you will use, hone, and build upon in your unique future as a musician.

Aural skills tend to develop slowly but with consistent practice and dedication, the results will become apparent over time. Much like learning a difficult piece of music, it’s difficult to measure progress on a daily basis, but easy to see the progress after a month or year. Another particularly important aspect of improving is the *desire* to improve. Without this, your brain is likely to focus on improving other things instead (the things you actually have the desire to improve). So, if you find that you are working on the exercises and not improving over time, you might reexamine your goals with this course and explore new ways to create the desire to dedicate yourself to improving (your brain will follow). The desire to simply finish an exercise and move on, is not the same as the desire to successfully complete an exercise in order to improve your musicianship skills.

## Learning and Practice

This course is primarily a skill-building course and because of that, it requires very little lecture. Instead, it requires exploring strategies and approaches for improving. I have created videos covering each new topic in this course. In these videos, I advocate for approaches that I think will serve you well in the long run. There always multiple ways to think about these topics and some will help you build long-lasting skills, and honestly other approaches will keep you at the same level. Melodic dictation, for example could easily be accomplished by sitting at a piano and plunking out every single note until you get the entire melody. However, if that’s the only way you can hear and identify notes, how’s that supposed to help you when you’re leading an ensemble? Each time a wrong note is played, you walk to a keyboard, plunk a bunch of notes until you figure out what the wrong note was, and then walk back to the podium to continue rehearsal now that you know problem note? Or, do you hope to reach that point in your life and think, there’s a wrong note on the last beat of measure 3. I know it's supposed to be an authentic cadence, but where I expected a dominant seventh chord,

I hear a major seventh chord. Oh, that's because the flute didn't read the key signature, and they are playing B natural when they should be playing B flat. All of that can take place in your head, but it requires a lot of knowledge about the piece and the ability to identify detailed music phenomena in real time. The point being, there are approaches that will help you complete the assignment as fast as possible and there are approaches that will elevate your musical ability. Think about where you want to be in the future and work hard toward those goals.

## Useful information

<b>Course website</b>	The course website (Blackboard) has course documents, video tips and strategies, homework, handouts, weekly quizzes, and proficiency quizzes. It also contains useful links to helpful websites and printable staff paper.
<b>Office hours:</b>	<p><b>Office Hour #1:</b> 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM either Wednesday or Friday, depending on which day we have in-person Analysis Days. This meeting can also be available by Zoom but you need to make a request for it.</p> <p><b>Office Hour #2</b> Online via Zoom - 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM every Monday</p> <p><b>By Appointment</b> Meetings can also be scheduled by appointment (just email me to set up a meeting).</p>
<b>Email</b>	UTEP email is the best way to contact me. I will make every attempt to respond to your email within 24-48 hours of receipt. Please feel free to email at any time. If it's late, I turn my notifications off, so it won't bother me. If I ask you a question in my response, please write me back. When I say "please let me know either way," I'm serious and I am awaiting your response 😊.

## Checking your email

Our primary communication will be done by email so it's critical that you get in the habit of checking your UTEP email every day. I recommend that you check it at least twice each day.

## Required textbook

- Rogers, Ottman, *Music for Sight Singing*, 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> edition
  - You must purchase the textbook (unless you already have it).
  - Only the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> edition will work for this course, previous editions will not work.

*Music for Sight Singing* is a collection of sight-singing, rhythmic, and improvisation exercises. We will be using this text regularly and it needs to be brought to class each day. This text is available at the campus Bookstore or you can buy it online. You will be using it throughout Aural Skills I-IV.

## Required technology items

- Internet-connected, Windows or Mac laptop or desktop computer with a webcam and microphone (**available for free to UTEP students in the main library**)
  - Our exams will be taken online using the Respondus Monitor software

- See the section below on Respondus Monitor for more information
- Regular access to a Windows or Mac (MacOS, **not** iOS **nor** iPadOS), laptop or desktop computer
  - If you don't have one, [apply for a long-term laptop from UTEP](#)
  - Needs a current version of Google's Chrome browser
  - NOTE: The Blackboard "app" is not supported in this course
  - NOTE: Phones and tablets are not supported. They may often work, but expect occasional issues that are only solvable by using a Windows or Mac laptop or desktop computer. In particular, Respondus Monitor does not work on iPad or Android tablets (I don't think it works on Chrome Books either).
- Audio recording device (typically your laptop but phones work well too)
- Headphones
  - You'll be doing dictation homework and exams on the computer, so you need headphones that are good enough to allow *you* to hear clearly.

## Grading

- Your overall grade for the semester will be calculated as outlined below:
  - Daily Proficiency Quizzes 12.5%
  - Contextual listening assignments 12.5%
  - Online singing submissions 12.5%
  - Weekly skills quizzes 12.5%
  - Sight-Singing exams (4) (5% each) 20%
  - Dictation Exams (4) (7.5% each) 30%
- Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

A	90-100	B	80-89	C	70-79	D	60-69	F	Below 60
---	--------	---	-------	---	-------	---	-------	---	----------

- Grade updates will be provided weekly throughout the semester via the email address on file in Blackboard. Please feel free to inquire about your current average at any time.
- **In order to pass this course, you need to have an overall course grade of C or higher (70%).**

## Course Format

- **Hybrid Course**
  - This course is a hybrid of traditional face-to-face interaction and online, technology-based interaction. We will combine the strengths of meeting in a real classroom, with a piano, and amongst a group of people with the efficient power of computers into a course that will provide you with the opportunity to individualize your practice until you can reach the required level of skill.
- **Due Dates**
  - All online quizzes will be due *before* midnight on the scheduled due date. Just so you know, if something is due before midnight, Blackboard will count it late if you submit it *at* midnight instead of before it.

- **Availability of Materials**
  - The entire week's worth of materials will typically become available some time on Friday or Saturday the previous week at the latest.
- **Online Quizzes**
  - Most of the work in this course will be in the form of repeatable quizzes that have a required minimum grade. There are two types, weekly quizzes and proficiency quizzes (both described below). While available, they can be taken as many times as necessary and you will be able to review the results immediately upon completing each quiz. Only the highest score ever recorded during the period of availability will count toward your grade. These quizzes are graded pass/fail. So, if the minimum is 80% and you scored an 85% you will get full credit for that quiz (you can think of it as 100% if you want).
- **Weekly Skills Quizzes**
  - Weekly quizzes cover the topic of the week. You can expect that a weekly quiz will take more time to complete than proficiency quizzes (discussed below) because you've had less practice with the topic.
- **Daily Proficiency Quizzes**
  - There are two sets of proficiency quizzes due each week. These are different than the weekly quizzes mentioned above. The proficiency quizzes are meant to give you regular, ongoing practice with core concepts as well as review with more recent concepts.

## Contextual Listening Homework Assignments

Contextual listening assignments are typically due every other week. These are an opportunity to apply the concepts you've been learning in the course, to a real piece of music. Your entire musical life will revolve around "real" music so please take these assignments seriously as they are meant as a critical stepping stone towards attaining practical skills in this course. To that end, I encourage you to practice transcription of music that you are personally interested in. This is a GREAT way to develop aural skills and it's always fun to spend quality time with pieces of music that are personally meaningful to you.

They are to be completed by you alone and *without* reference to a musical score. Recordings will be provided on Blackboard. Collaborating with anyone else (including tutors) on these assignments (or any other work in this course) is not acceptable and all suspected cases of collaboration will be submitted to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution for consideration. You can only speak about the details of the assignments with Dr. Jarvis.

## Issues Uploading to Blackboard

If an assignment needs to be uploaded to Blackboard but, for whatever reason, it's not working, you can email me the assignment BEFORE the due date AS A PLACEHOLDER. You still need to upload it to Blackboard by the end of the day it was due to receive credit. Please write text in the body of the email so that I know why you're emailing me a file. It can be something simple like, "Dr. Jarvis, I can't get the file to upload to Blackboard so I'm emailing you before the due date with my assignment as a placeholder. I'll try again later today."

## Dictation Exams

There are four dictation exams in this course. No notes or external materials are allowed. They are cumulative by nature and the material on each exam is more advanced than the material of the previous exams. The online, weekly quizzes & proficiency quizzes are what will prepare you. The level and content of the weekly quizzes will be exactly the level and content of the material on these exams. All dictation exams will be online using the Respondus Monitor software which requires a webcam and microphone (see section below on Respondus Monitor for details). Your grades on the dictation exams are very important and they reflect your current ability in the class.

- **Your work only:**
  - All work needs to be your own (i.e., no help from other people, notes, electronic devices, etc.) - Cell phones, tablets, and other electronic devices need to be put away and cannot be used during the entire exam. - No musical instruments (digital or acoustic) can be used on this exam. - No notes, books, or reference materials are allowed.
- **Limited number of hearings**
  - Each example will only be played a set number of times. The typical number of hearings are as follows:
    - Short melodies – 4 hearings
    - Longer melodies – 2 memory hearings + 4 regular hearings
    - Rhythmic patterns – 4 hearings
    - Longer Rhythmic dictation – 4 hearings
    - Harmonic progressions – 4 hearings
- **Timed:**
  - These exams are timed and will auto-submit when time is up. There is a countdown timer at the top of the exam to help you keep time.
- **No singing or humming:**
  - As was the case with in-class exams, you are NOT allowed to sing and/or hum while taking this exam. The only exception is that you can and should sing the tonic of the excerpt only while the key is being setup before the actual example starts to play.
- **Paper:**
  - You are allowed (and encouraged) to bring and use one sheet of blank paper and/or blank staff paper during your exam. You must show the camera both sides of each piece of paper when you start the exam to verify that the paper is blank.
- **Volume:**
  - While taking the exam, all other software on your computer will be unavailable including software volume controls. Check your volume before you start the exam by testing the level with the provided test audio file. If your keyboard has volume controls, you should be able to adjust your volume using those keys during the test, only software volume controls will be unavailable.
- **Take Exam in 1 Sitting:**
  - Once you have started the exam you need to complete it in one sitting just like an in-class exam.
- **Problems?**
  - If you run into any significant issues, please email me right away to find a solution.

## Respondus Monitor Software

The dictation exams in the course are all online. We will be using the digital proctoring software that UTEP subscribes to called Respondus Monitor and Respondus Lock-Down Browser (both are free for you to use as UTEP students). In order to use these programs, you need to have a Windows or Mac, laptop or desktop computer with a webcam, microphone, and you'll need your headphones. The company claims that it also works for iPad but that functionality is currently not-functioning correctly and won't work so do not expect it to. The main UTEP library has many, many computers with everything you need to sit down and take the exam. You can even check out headphones in the main library, one floor up from the main computer area. You can use your own computer as well, assuming it meets the requirements to run both programs.

## Online Recorded Singing: Submission of Prepared Singing Assignments

Usually every other week, selected melodies and rhythms from *Music for Sight Singing* are assigned. These items need to be prepared outside of class. Students will record themselves singing all assigned melodies & rhythms and submit their recordings online via Blackboard following the instructions below:

### Submission requirements

- Always sing with solfege syllables
  - Observe chromatic inflections (e.g., fi, ri, etc.)
  - Observe modulations (if the tonic changes, you should change your tonic to reflect the modulation)
- If the excerpt is rhythm only, use rhythm syllables as follows:
  - Simple meters (2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 2/2, etc.): 1-e-&a, 2-e-&a
  - Compound meters (6/8, 9/8, 12/8, 6/4, etc.): 1-guh-da-guh-di-guh, 2-guh-da-guh-di-guh
- Don't play along while you sing
  - You can establish the key **before** you start and/or provide yourself with the starting note **before** you sing but the recording needs to be your voice only
  - You can use a metronome in your recording as long as it does not provide you with pitches
  - Using a fixed-pitch instrument or computer aid more than once in the singing of exercises will receive no credit.
  - No other aids should be used while making the recording you are submitting.
- At any time, I may request that a student re-sing a melody outside of class and any significant disparity in performance will be perused as cheating.
- All recordings need to be submitted before class time on the due date.
- Audio recordings can be in any standard format (M4A and MP3 are preferred but not required)
  - If I can't open your file, you'll have to resubmit it until I can before it can count for credit
- Record all prepared items for the week in individual files
- File names should include your name and the example number
  - LastName\_Firstname-ExampleNumber
    - For example: Jarvis\_Brian-16.1
- Submission process
  - Record your examples
  - Save them on your computer, phone/tablet, or online storage (Google, Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive, iCloud, etc.)

- You may want to save it on a flash drive as well so that you have a backup.
  - Submit them online via Blackboard (see the video instructions online if you need help)
- Grading guidelines for recorded homework singing:

Excellent (95% correct pitches, rhythms, and solfege)	100%
Good with a few glitches that don't impair "flow" (90% correct pitches, rhythms, and solfege)	90%
Errors impair flow but student fixes (85% correct pitches, rhythms, and solfege)	80%
Many errors to flow/solfege (75% correct pitches, rhythms, and solfege) <b>NOTE:</b> This is the highest score possible for a student who doesn't use solfege or sings solfege in the wrong key (i.e., the piece was in A minor but you sang C major)	70%
Generally poor, but tune still recognizable (65% correct pitches, rhythms, and solfege)	50%
Tune no longer recognizable, but some pitches, rhythms, and solfege are still correct	30%
Submitted, but most pitches, rhythms, and solfege are incorrect	10%

## No late work

Late work is **NOT** accepted. Unless you have made prior arrangements with the instructor, any missed homework, quizzes, and exams will receive a grade of a zero. Exceptions can be made in the case of a genuine emergency or significant illness if written documentation is shown to the instructor within one week after the due date (e.g., a note excusing you from class from a health care provider, an accident report, etc.). Conflicts between work and school will **NOT** count as reasons for late work. Email the instructor (Dr. Jarvis) if you are unsure about whether a situation qualifies as a genuine emergency that would qualify for an exception.

## Attendance policy

This course has in-person meetings every Tuesday (except during exam weeks). Thursdays are fully online, and asynchronous. Both days have assigned online work. Attendance at the in-person meetings is not strictly required. Attending at least 7 of the in-person days **unlocks the possibility** of getting an A in the course. If you decide to attend less than 7 days, getting an A in the course is not possible. This plays no other role in determining your grade. For example, if you're earning a B, C, D, or F and you attend all in-person days, you will simply get the grade you earned, nothing will change. One last example, if you attend less than 7 in-person days and you have scored perfectly on all tests, assignments, and online work – because you have not unlocked the possibility of getting an A – your grade will be converted to a B. Lack of attendance will **NOT** cause you to fail the course.

During the in-person meetings, you will (1) get strategies and tips for successful dictation and singing activities, (2) participate in group singing, and (3) get your questions answered.

This course requires regular attention. There are two deadlines each week: Tuesday at midnight and Thursday at midnight. The amount of time it takes you to complete each exercise is difficult to specify. Everyone has such different strengths in aural-skills courses. So, while you might blow right past the rhythmic dictation, others will be spending a lot of time on that topic and every beat will be hard won. You'll need to figure out where your strengths and weaknesses are and then schedule your time appropriately.

## Exam Dates

Dictation Exam 1	Week 4 – Thursday, September 21 <sup>st</sup> (online)
Dictation Exam 2	Week 8 – Thursday, October 19 <sup>th</sup> (online)
Dictation Exam 3	Week 12 – Thursday, November 16 <sup>th</sup> (online)
Dictation Exam 4	Week 16 – Final Exam Week – Before end of day on Thursday, December 14 <sup>th</sup> (online)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>You'll sign up for an available timeslot for each sight-singing exam</b></li> <li>• <b>The singing exams are in person</b></li> </ul>
Sight-Singing Exam 1	Week 4
Sight-Singing Exam 2	Week 8
Sight-Singing Exam 3	Week 12
Sight-Singing Exam 4	Week 15

Be sure to mark these dates on your calendar and let the instructor know about conflicts within the first week of class.

## Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty

Information about The University of Texas at El Paso's definitions and expectations regarding academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty can be found at <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html>. In this course, all homework, quizzes, and exams are to be completed on your own. That means you should not discuss answers with anyone besides me, Dr. Jarvis. Do not listen to the examples together. When working with tutors, you cannot work on answers to assignments or quizzes that count towards your grade. You are allowed and encouraged to work on anything from the "Practice Area" on Blackboard with other people. You can practice concepts together when using non-assignment and non-quiz material. For example, you can practice harmonic analysis together by analyzing Clementi's piano sonatas as long the excerpts you practice with are not on the assignments or quizzes. Actual or attempted cheating, plagiarism, and collusion will not be tolerated. Suspected violations will go directly to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution for consideration.

## Accommodations and Support Services:

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Center for Accommodations and Support Services and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at [www.sa.utep.edu/cass](http://www.sa.utep.edu/cass).



## Syllabus Change Policy

The information on this syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced via email and the new syllabus will be posted on Blackboard.