

# Aural Skills IV (Online)

MUST 2112

Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Brian Jarvis (bejarvis@utep.edu)  
The University of Texas at El Paso – Spring 2021

## Course description

Aural Skills IV is a continuation of Aural Skills III. Aural Skills IV 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 function, phrase structure & form, cadences & modulation, rhythm, meter, sight singing, solfege, error detection, 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.

## Useful information

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<b>Course website</b>	The course website (Blackboard) has course documents, homework, handouts, skills quizzes, and proficiency quizzes. It also contains useful links to helpful websites and printable staff paper.
<b>Virtual Office hours:</b>	Online via Zoom 11:00am – Noon every Monday & Friday I will provide the link via email or through Blackboard By appointment (just email me to set up a meeting).
<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

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	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. 😊
<b>Free Tutor</b>	Free tutoring is offered for this course. See the "Free Tutoring Center" link on the course's Blackboard page for more information. (usually posted before the end of week 3)

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## Required textbooks

- Rogers, Ottman, *Music for Sight Singing*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition
  - You must purchase the textbook (unless you already have it).
  - Only the 9<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. You probably already have it, but if you need to buy it, it's available at the campus Bookstore or you can buy it online.

## Required Software

SmartMusic – This course will employ the online program SmartMusic for singing. SmartMusic requires a microphone. You may find that your device's built-in microphone works fine for you, but if you experience recording problems, they recommend using an external microphone. You can borrow one from the Music Department (just contact the music office about it) or you can buy your own, should you need to. They also recommend that you use headphones for an improved experience. The Music Department is paying for your subscription (yay!). Please wait until you hear from me before signing up.

I will email you instructions about how to sign up.

## 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), 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: Outside of recorded singing, 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.
- Audio recording device (typically your phone, but tablets and regular computers can work 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 15%
  - Contextual listening assignments 10%
  - Online singing submissions 15%
  - Weekly skills quizzes 15%
  - Singing Exams (3) (5% each) 15%
  - Dictation Exams (3) (10% each) 30%
- Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

A	90-100	B	80-89	C	70-79	D	60-69	F	Below 60
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- Grade updates will be provided almost every week throughout the semester. Please feel free to inquire about your current average at any time.
- **In order to pass this course**
  - you need to have an average of 70% or higher on the dictation exams.
  - **AND, you need an overall course grade of C or higher.**

## Course Format

- **Fully Online Course**
  - This course is fully online and has no required in-time meetings. The course takes place within Blackboard and the SmartMusic website.
- **Due Dates**
  - All online quizzes will be due *before* noon on the scheduled due date. Just so you know, if something is due before noon, Blackboard will count it late if you submit it *at* noon instead of *before* it (i.e., it counts things submitted at exactly 12:00 as late).
  - “Why not midnight like in my other classes?”
    - This is so that I can actually be there to help you when you submit your assignments. Most people submit their work close to the deadline but when they run into problems, they email me for help. The problem is, I can’t provide quick help if I’m already asleep for the night 😊. So, I make the deadline noon so that I can actually be there to help before the deadline when people are actively working. This also helps people that prefer to work at night because they can still submit it the night before and if they email me at night while they’re working and I’m sleeping, I can still write them back in the morning before the deadline.
- **Availability of Materials**
  - The entire week’s worth of materials will typically become available some time on Friday of the previous week.
- **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 class, 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 three 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. **In order to pass the course, you need to have an average of 70% or higher on the dictation exams & an overall course grade of C.** If you do not meet the exam-score requirement, an average course grade of less than 70% but greater than or equal to 60% will result in an overall course grade of D. If you don't

meet the exam-score requirement and you have an average course grade of below 60%, your overall course grade will be an F.

- **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 Melodies

Weekly or every-other week, selected melodies and rhythms from *Music for Sight Singing* are assigned and are to be completed on the SmartMusic website.

### 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.
- All recordings need to be submitted on the SmartMusic website before noon on the due date.
- Because SmartMusic assesses your singing in real-time, most of your recordings will be graded automatically. However, some may be reviewed manually and reassessed.
- Though SmartMusic will assign you a specific grade, I will typically override its grading and separate grades into three categories:

Category	Grade Shown in SmartMusic	Resulting Grade
Meets Expectations	85-100%	100%
Below Expectations but still acceptable	70-85%	(no change)
Does not meet expectations	Below 70%	0%

- Not using solfege will result a 30% deduction for the resulting grade.

## No late homework

Late homework 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.). See the instructor if you are unsure about whether your absence will be counted as excused or unexcused.

## “Attendance” policy

This course requires regular attention. There are two deadlines each week: Tuesday at noon and Thursday at noon. 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.

## Netiquette

As we know, sometimes communication online can be challenging. It's possible to miscommunicate what we mean or to misunderstand what our classmates mean given the lack of body language and immediate feedback. Therefore, please keep these “netiquette” (network etiquette) guidelines in mind. Failure to observe them may result in disciplinary action.

- o Always consider audience. This is a college-level course; therefore, all communication should reflect polite consideration of other's ideas.
- o Respect and courtesy must be provided to classmates and to the instructor at all times. No harassment or inappropriate postings will be tolerated.
- o When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.
- o Blackboard is not a public internet venue; all postings to it should be considered private and confidential (however the University has access to all courses and emails, so it's not private in that sense). Whatever is posted on in these online spaces is intended for classmates and the professor only. Please do not copy documents and paste them to a publicly accessible website, blog, or other space.

## Exam Dates

Dictation Exam 1	Week 6 – Tuesday, February 23 <sup>rd</sup> (online)
Dictation Exam 2	Week 10 – Tuesday March 30 <sup>th</sup> (online)
Dictation Exam 3	Week 16 – Final Exam Week – Before end of day on Thursday, May 13 <sup>th</sup> (Online)
Sight Singing Exam 1	Week 6 – Thursday, February 25 <sup>th</sup> (online)
Sight Singing Exam 2	Week 10 – Thursday April 1 <sup>st</sup> (online)
Sight Singing Exam 3	Week 16 – Final Exam Week – Before end of day on Thursday, May 13 <sup>th</sup> (Online)

Be sure to mark these dates on your calendar and let the instructor know about conflicts within the first two weeks of class. The university policy regarding final exams will be strictly adhered to.

## 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