

# MUSA 1185 Individual Instruction – Voice

---

Spring 2026: CRN: 21118

## Mr. Brian Downen, Associate Professor of Voice

Fox Fine Arts Center, M333

bghdownen@utep.edu

Office: (915) 747-6352 or Cell: (646) 591-6471

Office Hours: M, W, F, 10:30-11:20 a.m., or by appointment

## Prerequisite

Enrollment as a music major and a successful placement audition for the voice faculty.

## Course Description

The study of traditional classical vocal technique and its application in the performance of classical vocal repertoire from various periods and styles, and in multiple languages to develop the singing voice, advance communication and performance skills, develop understanding of vocal pedagogy, and to expand knowledge of vocal literature.

## To Ensure Success in the Course

- Attend all lessons and record them on your cell phone or other recording device
- Review the recording of each lesson, incorporating vocalises and musical corrections into your practice.
- **Practice and study** for 1–2 hours daily to develop technical skills and learn assigned repertoire (Total practice per week: 7–9 hours. Not all practice is singing!)
- Complete written work per the “written work for all repertoire” section below
- Rehearse weekly with your collaborative pianist
- Perform at least twice on Voice Area Recital
- Attend weekly studio classes and perform at least twice
- Perform 3 pieces of the semester’s repertoire from memory on a mid-term exam lesson
- Perform a successful jury for the voice faculty as the final exam

The professor is to mentor, educate, and equip students with the tools needed to fully realize their potential.

The student is to dedicate themselves fully to advancing their instrument and learning assigned repertoire. Consistent, engaged participation in this collaborative process is essential to the student’s growth and success.

## Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

You will perform your assigned repertoire from memory in studio classes, area recitals, juries, and other performances demonstrating...

consistent vocal development	<i>leading to</i>	pedagogical understanding
correct pitches and rhythms	<i>leading to</i>	<i>basic</i> proficiency as a musician
fluent execution of diction	<i>leading to</i>	correct singing in multiple languages
vocal mastery of the music	<i>leading to</i>	mastery of vocal technique
artistic phrasing and musicality	<i>leading to</i>	<i>advanced</i> proficiency as a musician
compelling dramatic expression	<i>leading to</i>	transformation from singer to artist

## Minimum Repertoire Guidelines

Semester	Number of Selections	Languages Explored
All	5-8 selections in contrasting styles from the classical repertoire	English, Italian, Spanish, French and German

### Written Work Required for all Repertoire

- Create a journal containing:
  - Written research on the composers, poets or lyricists, and historical period
  - A three-line word-for-word translation (not poetic) with accompanying IPA symbols (example attached).
  - Any other journaling you create concerning the piece, (i.e., character study, thoughts about your learning process, notes from your lesson recordings, etc.)
- In your music, write the word-for-word (not poetic) translation of the text and the IPA transcription above or below the original text.
- In Microsoft Word, create a side-by-side translation document, following this procedure: (example attached)
  - Create a two or three-column table with multiple rows.
  - Input each line of the original text with all diacritical markings in a separate cell of column one.
  - Input the corresponding literal (not poetic) line-by-line English translation for each line into the cells in column two.
  - If you are also translating into Spanish, input the corresponding Spanish word-for-word translation (not poetic) for each line in the cells in column three.
  - Save a separate document for each song.
  - This will be for use in memorizing poetry, its translation into your first language, and in degree recital programs.
- Study several recordings performed by recognized professionals in the genre of each piece using sources such as YouTube, Spotify, etc.

#### *For repertoire from a musical or an opera, also:*

- Read a synopsis of the complete work.
- Study the character and understand who they are in the context of the work.
- Study the scene to which the piece belongs.

#### *For pop, jazz, or rock repertoire, also:*

- Study several recordings, arrangements, and remakes of the song, using sources such as YouTube, Spotify, etc.

## Materials and Personal Equipment

- Copies of your music either in a three-ring binder or on a tablet large enough for you to read
- Research Journal (composition notebook)
- Audio or Video recording device (iPhone or similar okay)
- Access to the Internet and Blackboard

## Accompanists

You are required to hire a pianist to play for the second half of each voice lesson. You are also expected to rehearse with your pianist for an additional one-half hour each week.

## Studio Class

You are expected to attend weekly studio classes and perform from memory as set forth in the Studio Class Schedule.

## Grading

### Grading Scale

- 100%-90% = A, 89%-80% = B, 79%-70% = C, 69%-60% = D, 59% and Below = F

### 40%: Weekly lesson grades

- Punctual arrival with your voice in teachable condition
- Evidence of weekly practice
- Preparation of assigned repertoire and the ability to sing it with accompaniment
- Demonstration of developing technique

### 20%: Completion of Written Work

- Repertoire Journal
- IPA and translation written into music
- Side by side MS Word translation
- Late written work will lose 10% for each weekly lesson it is late.

### 20%: Mid-term exam

- Perform 3 pieces of assigned repertoire from memory with accompaniment in the lesson the week of October 20

### 20%: Jury grade

- Average of the grades assigned by the Voice Area faculty.

## Course Communication

We will communicate through UTEP email which you are responsible for checking twice daily. If time is of the essence, you may send me a text message.

## Attendance Policy

Students are required to attend fourteen weekly 50-minute lessons.

### Lateness

The student forfeits the lesson if they arrive more than 15 minutes late.

### Lesson Cancellation Policy

Notify Mr. Downen by email or text message, but no later than 9:00 a.m. on the day of your lesson including the reason for your cancellation.

### Make-up Lesson Policy

Lessons canceled by Mr. Downen will be made up. Lessons canceled by the student for reasons of illness or emergency will be made up at the discretion of Mr. Downen.

## Drop Policy

If you are chronically absent, or not fulfilling the requirements of the course, I may drop you. If you find you are unable to complete the course, please discuss it with me. You must drop the course before the drop deadline. If you do not drop, you may receive a failing grade.

## Incomplete Grade Policy

An incomplete will only be given under exceptional circumstances, and if you have completed at least half of the course requirements. If given, a document outlining work to be completed with deadlines will be required.

## Concert Attendance

- You are expected to attend all choral concerts, one performance of each Opera UTEP production, and all voice degree recitals

## Vocal Health

Effective practice is very important to progress toward your vocal and performance potential. However, excessive practice or singing more than two hours per day can be counterproductive and dangerous to your vocal health. Listen to your body. Give yourself appropriate rest periods. Hydrate, do not smoke, avoid overuse of caffeine and alcohol, get adequate sleep, stay healthy, and do not abuse your voice (i.e., talking over loud environments, yelling at sporting events or concerts, etc.).

## Voice Area Handbook

The policies and procedures of the Voice Area are set forth in the Voice Area Handbook, which can be found on the [Voice at UTEP](#) page of the Department of Music website.

## Accommodations

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) will process requests for accommodations based on a disability, pregnancy, or parenting. Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu), or apply for accommodations online via the [CASS portal](#).

## Scholastic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as ones' own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be

tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the [Office of Community Standards](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

## Music Translation and IPA Resources

- ***IPASource.com*** (English translations and IPA): available for free when using a UTEP-owned computer
- ***Aria-database.com*** (synopsis & translations of operatic arias)
- ***Nico Castel Opera Libretti*** (English translations and IPA for complete operas): available at UTEP main library
- ***The Fischer Dieskau Book of Lieder*** (English translations of German Lieder): available in Mr. Downen's office
- ***The Ring of Words*** by Philip Lieson Miller (English translations of art songs and arias): available at UTEP main library ML54.6.M5R5 1973
- ***Phonetic Readings of Songs and Arias*** by Berton Coffin: available at UTEP main library ML54.6.W65 v.1

## Technology Resources

[UTEP Technology Support](#): Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Help Desk for assistance. Contact the Help Desk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus. (915) 747-HELP or [helpdesk@utep.edu](mailto:helpdesk@utep.edu).

## Academic Resources

- [University Library](#): Access a wide range of resources including online full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- [University Writing Center \(UWC\)](#): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help, and explore other writing resources.
- [Math Tutoring Center \(MaRCS\)](#): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- [History Tutoring Center \(HTC\)](#): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.
- [RefWorks](#): A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick Start Guide.
- [The Miner Learning Center](#): Join peer-led study sessions in person or online to review content and discover study strategies in core curriculum courses.
- [UTEP Edge](#): UTEP's cross-campus framework for student success and empowerment – develops students' assets through high-impact experiences made possible by the expertise and dedication of faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners.

## Individual Resources

- [Student Success Help Desk \(SSHD\)](#): Students experiencing challenges or obstacles to academic success including registration, financial, food, housing, and transposition resources may request assistance at [studentsuccess@utep.edu](mailto:studentsuccess@utep.edu)
- [Military Student Success Center](#): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- [Center for Accommodations and Support Services](#): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.

- [Counseling and Psychological Services](#): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.
- [UTEP Food Pantry](#): Non-perishable food items are available to students who are currently enrolled in classes. Bring a Miner Gold Card to Memorial Gym, Room 105, Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.