

# Syllabus:

## MUSA 5391 Individual Instruction – Voice

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University of Texas El Paso, Department of Music  
Spring 2019

### Mr. Brian Downen, Assistant Professor of Voice

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Office Hours: posted on office door, or by appointment

### Prerequisite

Successful audition for the voice faculty and admission into a UTEP Department of Music graduate degree program.

### Course Description

The study of “classical” vocal technique and the application of that technique in specific vocal repertoire. Additional study in historical and genre-specific performance practice and self- and peer-assessment.

### Course Content

Student shall:

- Independently practice assigned vocal exercises specifically designed to promote vocal growth and a better understanding of the fundamental concepts of classical vocal technique.
- Independently prepare and memorize assigned vocal repertoire in line with the guidelines outlined in the UTEP Vocal Division Handbook for each major and level of study.
  - For all repertoire:
    - Learn and memorize assigned repertoire with accuracy of pitch, rhythm, diction, appropriate vocal style and musical expression.
    - Research the composer, poet or lyricist, historical period and context of the piece.
    - Listen to several recordings performed by recognized professionals in the genre of each piece using sources such as YouTube, Spotify, Rhapsody, etc.
  - For repertoire in a language other than English:
    - Obtain and type (using Microsoft Word or similar) a literal (non poetic) line-by-line English translation in a side-by-side format with the original text for use in study, presentation in studio class and for use in recital and concert programs. (example attached)
      - Resources
        - IPASource.com (English translations and IPA)(available free when using a UTEP owned computer)

- Aria-database.com (Synopsis and translations of operatic arias)(free)
- 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.)
- The Ring of Words (English translations of art songs and arias)(Philip Lieson Miller) (available at UTEP main library ML54.6.M5R5 1973)
- Phonetic Readings of Songs and Arias (Berton Coffin) (available at UTEP main library ML54.6.W65 v.1)
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- Write the literal (not poetic) line-by-line translation and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols for the text into student's copy of the music. Provide a three-hole punched back-to-back copy of this work for placement in Mr. Downen's office binder. (example attached)
- Write the original language with literal (non-poetic) line-by-line translation below and International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols above in your studio journal. (example attached)
- For repertoire from a musical or an opera the student will also:
  - Obtain and study a synopsis of the complete work.
  - Research the character and understand who he/she is in the context of the work.
  - Research the scene to which the piece belongs.
- For pop, jazz or rock repertoire:
  - Study several recordings, arrangements and remakes of the song, using sources such as YouTube, Spotify, Rhapsody, etc.
- Perform all assigned repertoire to a level acceptable for professional presentation with accuracy of pitch, rhythm, text, diction and with appropriate vocal style and dramatic expression appropriate for the piece.
- Evaluate self- and peer-performances with appropriate terminology and constructive commentary, in person and in writing.

## Course Objectives

The objectives of this course are to enhance the student's ability to:

- Develop consistent mastery of the primary vocal concepts of respiration, phonation, resonance.
- Develop appropriate posture for singing.
- Develop and utilize research skills in order to adequately prepare a piece of music for study and performance.
- Develop and utilize efficient practice skills.
- Develop the skills necessary to combine technical and expressive qualities of singing to create an artistically fulfilling performance.
- Objectively assess their own performances and those of their peers through in-person discussion and written essay.

## Course Outcomes

At the completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Effectively vocalize to balance the voice and body in preparation for practice or performance.
- Identify and utilize specific vocal exercises in order to promote vocal growth.
- Perform 7-9 songs from memory, in a variety of languages and from a variety of genres and styles with accuracy of pitch, rhythm, diction, appropriate tone quality and musical expression.
- Use objective criticism to evaluate personal performances and performances of peers in order to inform their own artistic progress.

## Course Requirements

- Attend all scheduled lessons.
- Audio or video record all lessons on a portable device (i.e., cell phone)
- Review your personal recording of each lesson, taking note of assigned vocalises, corrections made in music, etc.
- Practice 1–2 hours daily in order to master vocal exercises assigned in lessons and to study and learn assigned repertoire. Total practice per week: 7–9 hours.
- Record all practice on the reverse side of your weekly assignment page provided by Mr. Downen.
- Prepare and memorize 7-9 songs in in a variety of languages and from a variety of genres and styles with accuracy of pitch, rhythm, diction, appropriate tone quality and musical expression.
- Maintain a research journal for each assigned piece that includes your three- line text translations into English and IPA, synopsis, character analysis, acting notes and student’s own thoughts about the text, music, recordings listened to, arrangements, ideas for performance, and the emotional or theatrical landscape of the piece.
- Perform at least once on Voice Area Recital.
- Attendance at and performing on studio classes is strongly recommended.
- Provide 5 written critiques of live performances of vocal peers from area recital, departmental recital or studio class.
- Perform a jury for the voice faculty. This is the final exam for the course and will be graded based on criteria found in the Vocal Area Handbook.

## Materials and Personal Equipment

- Two three ring binders
  - One for you in which you keep your assigned music and related materials
  - One for Mr. Downen’s office
- 3 copies of each assigned piece.
  - One for your binder
  - One for Mr. Downen’s binder
  - One for your accompanist
- Research Journal (composition notebook)
- Audio or Video recording device (iPhone or similar okay)
- A copy of the International Phonetic Alphabet pronunciation guide for English, Spanish, Italian, French and German
- Access to the Internet

## Accompanists

Students are expected to retain the services of a qualified pianist for one hour per week. The pianist is expected to attend the LAST 30 minutes of your weekly lesson and you are expected to rehearse with your pianist for a separate 30-minute session each week.

## Grading

Grades are based on the following criteria:

- 30%: Weekly lesson grades
  - Attendance (see attendance policy below)
  - Arrival with voice in teachable condition
  - Active Participation in the lesson
  - Completion of assignments (i.e., text translations and IPA work)
- 30%: Evidence of weekly practice:
  - Mastery of assigned exercises and concepts
  - Preparation of assigned repertoire and ability to sing it with accompaniment
  - Completion of weekly practice log located on the reverse of each week's assignment sheet provided by Mr. Downen
- 10%: Written Work
  - Written critiques of peer performances
  - Completion and quality of research journal
- 30%: Jury Grade
  - Average of grades assigned by the Voice Area faculty.

NOTE: No automatic withdrawals will be given by the instructor.

## Attendance Policy

- Students are required to attend 14 one-hour (50-minute) lessons or 28 half hour (25-minute) lessons each semester. Lessons will be scheduled at the beginning of the semester and constitute a class that meets weekly at the same time. The instructor will determine whether the student takes one 50-minute lesson or two 25-minute lessons per week.

## Absences

- Students are permitted one absence per semester without grade penalty. More than one absence, no matter the reason, will reflect poorly on your grade.

## Lateness

- The student forfeits the lesson if they arrive more than 10 minutes late for a 25-minute lesson or more than 15 minutes late for a 50-minute lesson.

## Lesson Cancellation Policy

- Notify Mr. Downen as soon as possible, but no later than 9:00 a.m. the day of your lesson. Email or text Mr. Downen.

## Make-up Lesson Policy

- Lessons missed by Mr. Downen will be made up.

- Lessons missed or cancelled by the student will be made up at the discretion of Mr. Downen. However, lessons cancelled by the student that are made up, will not negate the absence policy.

### Communication

- Student will communicate with Mr. Downen by email, or when time is of the essence or in case of emergency, by text message or phone call. Be sure that you receive confirmation from Mr. Downen that your message has been received.
- Mr. Downen will communicate with the student by email. It is the responsibility of the student to check their UTEP email twice daily. If time is of the essence or in case of emergency, communication will be by text message or by phone call.

### Concert Attendance

- Students are expected to attend all choral music concerts and one performance of each Opera UTEP production.
- Students are expected to attend all voice recitals.

### Extracurricular Performance Policy

According to the UTEP Vocal Area Handbook, all performance and/or coaching opportunities outside the UTEP Vocal Area should be discussed with Mr. Downen before accepting. This includes: UTEP Dinner Theater, Theatre Department productions, professional choirs, master classes with guest artists or local teachers. AUDITION FOR EVERYTHING, but discuss with Mr. Downen before accepting anything.

### Vocal Health

Effective practice is very important in order to progress toward your vocal and performance potential. However, excessive practice or singing in excess of 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.).

### Academic Honesty

Please refer to the university's policy: <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html>

### Accommodations

**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). *CASS' Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.*