THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

MUSA 3333 – Instrumental Conducting II
MUSA 2033 – Instrumental Conducting Lab
Spring 2026
Section 001 – Tuesday/Thursday, 9:00-10:20 AM
CRN: 20755/20662

Instructors: Dr. Brandon Houghtalen
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Office Phone: (915) 747-7796
Office Hours: T/TH 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM or by appointment

Instructor Biography:

Dr. Brandon Houghtalen currently serves as Director of Athletic Bands and Associate Director of Bands at the University of Texas at El Paso. In this position he conducts the Symphonic Band, teaches undergraduate and graduate conducting, and provides administrative leadership for all aspects of the athletic band program. He previously held conducting positions at Abilene Christian University, the Georgia Institute of Technology, and the University of New Mexico. In 2018 he founded the On the List Project, a group of teachers that assists states as they work to strengthen their required music lists.

Ensembles under Dr. Houghtalen's leadership have performed at conferences and events in the US and Mexico, including the 2023 MusicMexico Symposium, 2024 Bands of America West Texas Regional Championship, and the 2025 UIL 6A State Marching Contest. In 2015, he served as a featured clinician of the First National Band Camp of Guatemala, where he taught conducting, wind instrument pedagogy, and co-directed the first national marching band of Guatemalan students. His professional activities also include frequent engagements as a guest conductor, clinician, and adjudicator of events administered by the UIL and Music for All.

Houghtalen earned degrees in music education and conducting from the University of Tennessee, University of Colorado, and Arizona State University. His primary conducting teachers were Allan McMurray and Gary Hill. He is a member of CBDNA, TMEA, TBA, NBA, Phi Mu Alpha, and is proud to serve as the Sponsor of the Alpha Chi Chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi.

Course Description:

Advanced Conducting Techniques (3-0) Continued study of conducting begun in MUSA 3331. Prerequisite: MUSA 3331 with a grade of C or better AND MUSA 2033 with a grade of S. Restricted to majors: MUSG/ALMI major.

Method of Teaching: Lecture/Laboratory

Required Materials:

Text: Scores to be purchased throughout semester
Conducting baton (style and length to be approved by instructor)
Instrument (brought to class each day)

Suggested Reading:

Nachmanovitch, Stephen. *Free Play*. New York: Putnam, 1991.

Ruhlman, Michael. *The Soul of a Chef.* New York: Penguin, 2001.

And these conducting books…

Battisti, Frank L. *On Becoming a Conductor: Lessons and Meditations On the Art of Conducting*. Galesville, MD: Meredith Music, 2007.

Battisti, Frank et al., *The Conductor's Legacy: Conductors on Conducting for Wind Band*. Edited by Paula A. Crider. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2010.

Green, Elizabeth A H., and Mark Gibson. *The Modern Conductor*. 7th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004.

Schuller, Gunther. *The Compleat Conductor*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Williamson, John E. *Rehearsing the Band*. Edited by Kenneth L. Neidig. Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications, 2008. (all volumes)

Wittry, Diane. *Beyond the Baton: What Every Conductor Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Attendance:

Attendance at all class sessions is imperative, as the exchange of thoughts and ideas (not to mention the ensemble) are of particular importance to this course. Therefore, each unexcused absence will lower the final grade by one letter. Two unexcused tardy arrivals will count as one unexcused absence. For an absence to be excused it must either be cleared prior to class or a message (email preferable, phone acceptable) must be left prior to the beginning of the class session and are subject to the approval/disapproval of the instructor. **An uninformed absence is an unexcused absence – no exceptions will be made.**

- Two unexcused absence = maximum grade of B
- Three unexcused absences = maximum grade of C
- Four unexcused absences = maximum grade of F
- Two unexcused tardies = one unexcused absence
    - **Note: everyone gets ONE "freebie," but it must be communicated in advance and cannot be on a day in which you are scheduled to conduct.**

Learning Objectives/Outcomes:

The major emphases of this course are three-fold: the mastery of basic musical concepts related to the rehearsal of instrumental ensembles, a fundamental understanding of the process of score study as it relates to rehearsal and performance, and the development of the physical skills required for accurate, clear, and expressive conducting. Objectives designed to attain these learning outcomes are as follows:

1. Students will be able to define and, where applicable, translate basic musical terminology in English, Italian, and German both on a written examination and contextually from given score examples.
2. Students will be able to transpose from concert pitch to all common transposing instruments, from transposed instruments to concert pitch, and from one transposed instrument to a differently transposed instrument on both a written examination and contextually from given score examples.
3. Students will be able to identify written pitches in the treble, bass, and various C-clefs.
4. Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the construction of all common forms of simple and compound meter and will be able to perform basic metric modulations through common rhythmic elements. Assessment will be measured both on written examinations as well as conducting laboratory evaluations.

5. Students will be able to identify all instruments called for in a given score, as well as basic formal/thematic identification, pitch content and ranges, and basic principles of scholastic grading systems.
6. Students will be able to identify all parts of the conducting baton and will be able to demonstrate a standard baton grip in all physical exercises.
7. Students will be able to execute a stylistically appropriate preparatory beat for all beats in all meters studied during the course, including proper breath and "impulse of will."
8. Students will be able to demonstrate *legato, staccato, marcato*, and neutral styles of ictus within a variety of meters.
9. Students will be able to demonstrate a variety of musical gestures indicating an "entrance into silence."
10. Students will be able to execute given conducting patterns in focal point, arch, and loop forms where appropriate.
11. Students will be able to demonstrate the three forms of fermatas: caesura, caesura with breath (release in tempo), and non-caesura (continuation).
12. Students will be able to demonstrate three elements of left hand integration into conducting gestures: mirroring, isolation, and independence. This will include some stylized cuing as well as an understanding of how the left hand enters and exits the frame of activity.
13. Students will be able to diagnose common errors in rehearsal and performance and offer corrective solutions.
14. Students will demonstrate musical fluency and independent music thought through physical gesture, modeling, and verbal instruction to an ensemble.

Grading Policy:

The grading scale in this course will be a standard ten-point scale as outlined below:

A = 90-100
B = 80-89.99
C = 70-79.99
D = 60-69.99
F = 0-59.99

Students who fail to bring materials required for each class session will not be given the opportunity to earn credit for that session's tasks. All assignments/evaluations will be weighted to reflect the significance of the assignment to the overall learning objectives and the amount of time dedicated to their completion. Students should assume that all assigned tasks are graded and will be reflected in the final course grade. The final grade will be derived from the following:

1. Daily assignments – These may include review questions at the conclusion of each chapter of the textbook, written assignments covering score study techniques, transposition, clefs, and meter.
2. Conducting assignments – Brief, more informal conducting rounds covering exercises in the textbook will be graded based upon participation and evidence of preparation. Formal evaluations will be graded based upon effectiveness of physical gesture, evidence of preparation, and a *self-evaluation*, which must be completed upon video review before the following class session.
3. Written examinations – Assessments will include quizzes on basic musicianship objectives as well as a midterm and final examination.
4. Conductor Observation Assignments – Students will be given a template to fill out after observing two different conductors: one in rehearsal, one in performance.

Late Assignments and Extra Credit:

Assignments that are turned in after the designated time will not be accepted. Likewise, there will be no extra credit assignments given under any circumstances – this course is designed in such a way that the diligent student-musician will be rewarded for a semester of fastidious work.

Accomodations Policy

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students who become pregnant may also request reasonable accommodations, in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations and University policy. Accommodations that constitute undue hardship are not reasonable. To make a request, please register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact CASS at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC DISHONESTY STATEMENT

Cheating/Plagiarism: Cheating is unethical and not acceptable. Plagiarism is using information or original wording in a paper without giving credit to the source of that information or wording: it is also not acceptable. Do not submit work under your name that you did not do yourself. You may not submit work for this class that you did for another class. If you are found to be cheating or plagiarizing, you will be subject to disciplinary action, per UTEP catalog policy. Refer to http://sa.utep.edu/osccr/academic-integrity for further information.

DISABILITIES STATEMENT

Disabilities: I will make any reasonable accommodations for students with limitations due to disabilities, including learning disabilities. Please see me personally before or after class in the first two weeks or make an appointment, to discuss any special needs you might have. If you have a documented disability and require specific accommodations, you will need to contact the Disabled Student Services Office in the East Union Bldg., Room 106 within the first two weeks of classes. The Center for Accommodations and Support Services can also be reached: http://sa.utep.edu/cass/