

The University of Texas at El Paso
MUST 2219: Introduction to Composition
Spring 2025 / 2 Credits
Time TBA / FFA 401C

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Dominic Dousa
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OFFICE HOURS: TBA

For information about the instructor, please click [here](#) (UTEP Department of Music website).

Prerequisites: A grade of ‘C’ in MUST 1112 *and* MUST 1314, approval of instructor and department

COURSE MATERIALS

- Notation software (Finale, Sibelius, or MuseScore)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

▪ MUST 2219 is an introductory course for beginning students of composition. Students will explore traditional and contemporary compositional techniques, mainly in the context of small forms. Through the detailed study of music from the standard literature and individual work in composition, students will gain an appreciation for and understanding of how the organization of the various musical elements (melody, harmony, rhythm, etc.) helps shape musical form and how an effective organization of these elements creates a coherent musical composition.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to

- demonstrate an understanding of traditional and contemporary compositional techniques through the analysis of works from the standard literature.
- complete a composition project that demonstrates their proficiency in handling melody, harmony, rhythm, form, texture, and musical style.
- write idiomatically for selected musical instruments.
- implement proper conventions in preparing a score for performance and gain experience in organizing a public presentation of their compositions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

▪ *Lessons.* Most weeks, students will meet individually for lessons. Some weeks all students in MUST 2219 will meet as a group to discuss various compositional topics and/or to present current projects. You are expected to come to lessons/meetings on time, having prepared any writing, listening, and analysis assignments. Specific guidelines for composition assignments will be given weekly.

At lessons, you are expected to be able to answer any questions about the musical features of what you have written in your compositions — melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, form, etc. **Failure to explain clearly the technical aspects of your work on more than two occasions is grounds for dismissal from MUST 2219 and a semester grade of ‘F’.**

▪ *Concert Attendance.* You should make every effort to attend as many concerts as possible, especially concerts that involve contemporary compositions. Attendance at specific concerts may be required. Information regarding these concerts will be announced during the semester.

**** An unexcused absence for a lesson or concert will result in the lowering of your overall semester grade by one letter grade. More than two unexcused absences of any kind will result in dismissal from MUST 2219 and a semester grade of ‘F’.**

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

- A regular weekly meeting time for individual lessons will be arranged. Meeting times for group meetings will be determined as necessary. Dates for recitals and other required events will be announced during the semester.

GRADING

- As this course is repeatable and available to prospective Theory & Composition majors and to non-majors taking the course as an elective, the scope of the project will be determined at the beginning of the semester, based on the student's background and experience.
- Grades will be based on assignments and composition projects. Both the musical content and preparation of the score will be assigned a letter grade, based on the following outline.

	Musical Content	Notation and Preparation of Score
A (EXCELLENT WORK)	All assignments and projects are completed with <i>careful attention to detail</i> . Compositions demonstrate a command of melody, harmony, rhythm, form, texture, and style appropriate for the assignment or project. Only a few <i>minor</i> errors (up to 10% of the total work) in musical elements (e.g., chord voicing, harmonic progression, form, texture, voice leading, idiomatic use of instruments, etc.).	Score and parts are neat and <i>professional</i> in appearance. <i>Careful attention to detail</i> is given in observing correct notational convention (dynamics, articulation, marks of expression, tempo indications, etc.). Only a few <i>minor</i> errors (up to 10% of the total work) in notational convention (e.g., stem direction, placement of dynamics, marks of expression, etc.) or neatness (formatting, spacing, etc.).
B (ABOVE-AVERAGE WORK)	All assignments and projects are completed and meet general expectations. There may be a few more errors or deficiencies in the handling of musical elements than at the 'A' level, though any problems are <i>minor</i> and <i>not consistent</i> . Overall the pieces demonstrate a high level of compositional craftsmanship.	Score and parts are neat in appearance, though there may be a few more problems in neatness, formatting, or notational convention than at the 'A' level. These problems, though, are all <i>minor</i> and <i>not consistent</i> (e.g., occasional problems with neatness, missing dynamics & slurs, etc.).
C (AVERAGE WORK)	All assignments are completed, though there may be more numerous and/or more consistent minor errors or deficiencies. Inappropriate 'cutting and pasting' of sections would fall under this category. Compositions are finished works that still demonstrate basic competence in compositional craftsmanship.	Score and parts are legible and usable for performance, though there may be more numerous and/or more consistent minor problems in neatness, formatting, or notational convention (e.g., missing articulations & dynamics, poor spacing, formatting, etc.).
D (BELOW-AVERAGE WORK)	Assignments are completed, though the amount and quality of work falls clearly below expectations and guidelines for assignments. Errors and problems with the handling of musical elements may be more extensive.	Score and parts are still usable for performance, but may have more extensive problems in neatness, formatting, or notational convention.
F	Significant incomplete work or lack of mastery of compositional craft.	Score and parts are difficult to read for performers, with extensive major problems in neatness, notational convention, etc.

- The letter grade will then be converted into a numerical grade as follows, with the number indicating more specifically the level of work within each letter grade:

A = 90% up to 100% B = 80% up to 90% C = 70% up to 80% D = 60% up to 70% F = Below 60%

Each component of the above outline will be equally weighted in determining the final grade, which will be assigned according to the outline below.

Grading Scale

90% and above	A
80% up to 90%	B
70% up to 80%	C
60% up to 70%	D
Below 60%	F

- For students with final grades within 1% of the next grade level (59%, 69%, 79%, 89%), the instructor may assign a higher grade if the student has (1) attended class regularly, (2) demonstrated consistent effort in mastering class material, and (3) shown a trajectory of improvement in completing the project.

JURY EVALUATION

- At the end of the semester, the student's work will be evaluated by a jury of three faculty from the Theory and Composition area. As this course is open to those intending to major in Theory and Composition, as well as those in other music concentrations, a part of this assessment will involve evaluating the readiness of candidates for MUST 3319: Advanced Composition.

OTHER COURSE INFORMATION

- Census Day is the last day to drop a course without a grade of 'W'. A grade of 'W' will be reported only if the student withdraws from the course by the Course Drop Deadline. Please check UTEP's Academic Calendar for specific dates.
- A grade of 'I' will be reported only if extenuating circumstances (extended illness, legal matters, emergency) prevent the student from completing the course. An 'I' will not be given as a substitute for a failing grade. The student and instructor will determine a timetable for completion of all course requirements in a time frame that is in accordance with UTEP policy.
- *Academic Dishonesty.* Cheating is unethical, not acceptable, and a serious matter. Students found to be cheating will be subject to disciplinary action according to UTEP policy. For more information, please see <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html>.
- *Special Needs.* 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 Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148 or at cass@utep.edu, or stop by at Room 106 in the Union East Building.

****PLEASE NOTE: The information on this syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and/or via email.**