

The University of Texas at El Paso
MUST 5325: Graduate Composition
Spring 2025 / 3 Credits

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: Admission to the graduate Theory & Composition program, or approval of instructor

COURSE MATERIALS

- Notation software (Finale, Sibelius, or MuseScore)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

- MUST 5325 is a course in private composition study for graduate students. Students will continue to develop their compositional technique and complete works that are of a scope and complexity appropriate for the graduate student in composition.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Students will complete assigned compositional projects that demonstrate their proficiency in handling melody, harmony, rhythm, form, texture, instrumentation and musical style at a level expected of a graduate composition student.
- Students will implement proper conventions in preparing a score for performance and gain experience in organizing a public presentation of their compositions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- *Private Lessons/Preparation.* You are expected to come to lessons 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 — 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 5325 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. Attendance at the following events is required.

**** 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 5325 and a semester grade of 'F'.**

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

- A regular weekly meeting time will be arranged. Dates for recitals and other required events will be announced during the semester.

- 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. Part of this assessment will involve evaluating the progress of students toward the recital, which is a requirement for completing an M.M. degree in Theory and 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/oscct/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.**