

The University of Vermont
Music 157/256: Composition and Advanced Composition
TR 2:30-4:00 Southwick 206 Spring 2014
www.uvm.edu/~dfeurzei/comp_class

Prerequisite for MU 256: MU 157 Prerequisite for MU 157: MU 110 or instructor permission
Dr. David Feurzeig Southwick A316 david.feurzeig@uvm.edu (802) 656-1498
Office Hours: T & Th 9:20-10:40 and other times by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Introduction to composition for acoustic instruments via directed composition projects, improvisation, listenings, readings, and analysis.

REQUIRED MATERIALS (available at the UVM Bookstore)

- Black and Gerou, *Essential Dictionary of Orchestration*. Alfred Publ. ISBN 0739000217
- Manuscript paper, good pencils, plenty of eraser
- 3-ring binder for handouts (recommended)

Some assignments will specify handwritten, others computer notation. The Music Department Technology Lab, Southwick 200D, is available to you during all regular building hours (7:00am–midnight, 7 days a week) except during class times as posted on the door.

COMPONENTS

Composition assignments

Directed assignments with specified parameters. Evaluation is based on fidelity to instructions, timely completion, legibility, and scope of effort. Assignments will be penalized by one full grade for each calendar day late.

Discussion

...of listening and reading assignments and of each others' work. Listenings will be available online. Readings will be posted online or available on reserve in the music office.

Analysis

Composition and analysis are related processes. The point of assigned listening is not simply to let the music wash over you, but to listen attentively to *how* it is put together. If you like something, you should try to figure out how you can achieve similar effects; if you dislike something, you should be figuring out what to avoid. Class discussion is an opportunity to share insights and demonstrate your attention to a wide range of ideas and models.

Improvisation

Some class meetings will include improvisation activities. Whether or not you are a performing improviser, improvisation is part of the composition process, along with deliberate planning and analysis. Besides offering instant, real-time feedback on musical ideas, it is a window into your intuitive musicianship, which in some ways is more sophisticated than step-by-step, constructional thinking. Intuition is *not* a synonym for instinct—it is developed and refined through practice, as well as through analysis and fully thought-out composition.

Performance

Most of the composition assignments will be for forces drawn from the class. Usually you will write for *others*, not yourself. This provides valuable insight on both ends. What information do you need to provide? What sorts of detail are helpful, and what is confusing or counterproductive? What's the clearest, most direct way to convey your intention? What unexpected elements (good or bad) did the performers bring to your piece? What do you find yourself doing in order to make sense of someone else's notation, and to make it into music?

Quizzes

Occasional short quizzes *may* be given, comprising ID of assigned listening excerpts (naming title and composer) and questions about terms and concepts from assigned reading and discussion. **There is no final exam.**

Concert write-ups

In the course of the semester you will attend three concerts of your choice consisting primarily of new and recent music, and turn in a printed, 2-3 page write-up of each concert. You may not be a participant in any of the concerts you write up, and at most one may be of a pop/rock/traditional event. The goal is to describe the music vividly, not primarily to say whether you liked the music or performance (though you may say *how* the music or playing was good or bad). At least one of the write-ups must be turned in before spring break; the other two are due on or before the last day of class. Links to suggested performances will be posted online.

Final project

Details of the final project will be tailored to students' interest and developing skills. The pool of performers consists of the members of the class supplemented by others at the composer's initiative. I can provide suggestions, coaching, and moral support, but getting commitments from additional performers is ultimately your responsibility. All pieces will be performed at the UVM Music Factory concert in Southwick Recital Hall on **Saturday, April 26 at 1:00 p.m.** Attendance is a requirement of the course. Students in MU 157 may rarely (in discussion with me) opt out of the final concert performance, in which case other components will be counted proportionally more in your grade.

Post concert write-up

Along with your final performance score, you will submit a report describing what you were trying to achieve, how well you feel you achieved it in your score, how well the performers realized your intentions, and how you might revise your score or adjust your conception for better results in the future.

CLASS SCHEDULE

The schedule will be shaped to the backgrounds and performance skills of the class. Assignments and due dates will be announced in class and also posted online, along with links to most of the listening and reading materials.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Your attendance is necessary for discussion, improvisation, and performance, some combination of which will take place at every meeting. There is no separate grade for attendance per se. If you must miss a class, please notify me as early as possible, but at least 24 hours in advance for all non-emergency situations.

GRADING

Composition assignments/projects (approx. 3 projects and several smaller assignments)	50%
Final project for April 29 concert	25%
In-class discussion	7%
In-class performance and improvisation	7%
New-music concert write-ups (3 total)	6%
Post-concert write-up (self-assessment)	5%
Quizzes on listenings and readings	(TBD, up to 10%)

If these become necessary, other component percentages will be adjusted accordingly

HELP

I am available to help you outside of class, via email, phone, and in person. Do not hesitate to schedule additional meeting times outside of my regular office hours if necessary.

Religious Holidays: students should submit in writing to their instructors by the end of the second full week of classes their documented religious holiday schedule for the semester.

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please inform me as soon as possible.