

# Music Theory 1

MUSC 1301

Dr. Geyer

Fall 2018

8:50–9:40 MWF

Humanities 331

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Office Hours: Regular drop-in times TBD; schedule flexible appointments via email

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**Course Description:** An initial study of music fundamentals, theory, literature, score reading, and SATB part writing. MUSC 1401 must be taken concurrently. Students complete assignments by using traditional methods and by using the tools of music technology.

**Learning Outcomes:** The student must demonstrate...

1. knowledge and understandings of the elements of music (duration, intensity, pitch, and timbre).
  2. the ability to write notation following proper manuscript procedures using traditional methods and the tools of music technology.
  3. an understanding of and the ability to write and use staves, clefs, note symbols, rest symbols, grand staff, accidentals, intervals, harmonic series, meter, rhythm, pulse, meter signatures, division and subdivision of beat, and tempo.
  4. an understanding of and the ability to analyze and compose tetrachords, scales, circle of fourths/ fifths, and key signatures.
  5. an understanding of and the ability to analyze and compose melody and form, including periods, phrases, motives, double periods, contour, repetition, and two- and three-part forms.
  6. an understanding of and the ability to analyze and compose textures, including monophony, polyphony, and homophony.
  7. an understanding of and the ability to analyze and compose harmony, including major, minor, diminished triads in root position and in first and second inversion.
  8. an understanding of and the ability to analyze and compose four-part writing, including doubling, spacing, and voice leading.
  9. an understanding of and the ability to analyze and compose functional harmony, including tonic-dominant and tonic-subdominant progressions; authentic (perfect and imperfect), plagal, half, deceptive, and Phrygian cadences.
  10. an understanding of and the ability to analyze and compose dominant seventh chords, chord qualities, figured bass, inversions, resolutions, function of the chord in tonal harmony.
  11. an understanding of and the ability to analyze and compose nonharmonic tones, including passing tones (unaccented, accented, consecutive), neighboring tones (upper and lower), changing tones (double auxiliary), pedal points, appoggiatura, escape tones, anticipation, suspension, and retardation.
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## Required Materials:

- Course Pack; I'll let you know when this is available for purchase from the bookstore.
- Medium-sized 3-ring binder, staff paper, lined paper, mechanical pencils, erasers
- Access to a computer with internet connectivity, Microsoft Office, and Audacity
- Smartphone, charged and ready for class each day. \*\*If you do not own have a smartphone, please let me know immediately and I will make sure to accommodate you.\*\*

## Unit Topics:

1. Music–Spatial Reasoning
2. Perceiving Rhythm
3. Introduction to Analytical Tools

## Work and Assessment

**Assessment Types.** This class has three assessment types: low-stakes formative assessments, medium-stakes portfolios, and high-stakes summative assessments. These assessments are weighted on a point scale (not a percentage) of 100–200 total semester points.

- **Low-stakes** formative assessments are given 1 point for satisfactory completion and 0 points for incomplete or unsatisfactory work. These are worth very little to give you a chance to learn the material before it effects your grade very much. Any quizzes and in-class activities may count as low-stakes assignments.

- **Medium-stakes** portfolios are a chance to synthesize the unit's content once it has been presented and practiced, in preparation for the high-stakes assessment. They are worth between 10 and 20 semester points.
- **High-stakes** assessments are either projects or exams, to be determined by the instructor after discussion with the class. These are worth 30 semester points, and they form a significant portion of your grade since they are summative, assessing your skills and knowledge after you've had a chance to work through the material carefully.
- **Final Exam:** We will have a final exam at 8:00–10:00 a.m. on December 10. The exam will cover Units 1 & 3, and will be worth 60 semester points. **Scores of less than 80% on Unit 1 questions will result in an automatic fail of the class.** You have all semester to work on your music–spatial reasoning, and fluency is required to proceed to Theory II.

**Description of Unit Makeup.** Each unit will involve three stages, each with a different type of assessment. The first stage, occupying 7–8 class meetings, will involve low-stakes assignments, which we will work on together in class. Any part of an assignment remaining at the end of that day's class will be due five minutes before the subsequent meeting for online assignments in Unit 1, or at the beginning of the subsequent class meeting for Units 2 and 3; these are strict deadlines.

The second stage will be a medium-stakes Portfolio, due about a week after the last low-stakes assessment. For Units 2 and 3, the Portfolio will include corrected and revised versions of every assignment from the unit as well as a summary of the subject matter and a self-assessment of your learning. Your portfolio must be complete; I will simply hand the portfolio back to you if any assignment from the unit is missing. The portfolio will lose 10% of its total value for each day it is late.

The third stage of each unit will involve a high-stakes assessment due about a week after the Portfolio—a model composition, essay, road map, or exam. We will discuss how to assess the unit as a group, though I reserve the right to make the final decision.

**Unit 1 Details.** Unit 1 will work differently from any other unit in the theory curriculum, and its details require some explanation. Your goal in Unit 1, “Music Fundamentals,” is *to become fluent in a specialized kind of spatial reasoning about the way musical notes relate to each other*. This unit's difficulty comes primarily from the consistency required to build fluency in music–spatial reasoning.

In each class meeting, I will introduce one or more concepts in a PowerPoint, and you will spend the remaining class time practicing problem sets to gain fluency around that concept. Most of these problem sets are on [musictheory.net](http://musictheory.net), which will generate a report that will provide a link once you sign digitally. You will report and track your progress by copying and pasting that link into a Google spreadsheet that I will share with you; please fill in your score in the spreadsheet.

Your priorities in these exercises should be (1) accuracy and (2) speed: “It's not how fast you mow, it's how well you mow fast.”<sup>1</sup> All of the problem sets for the day must be completed and reported (discussed below) by at least five minutes ahead of the subsequent class meeting (8:45 a.m.). You will get full credit for each day of completed problem sets; if any problem sets are missing, you forfeit credit for the entire day's assignment. I do not excuse missing homework, but your consistency in this unit is especially important. This work is simply not optional.

For many reasons (often beyond individual control), different students have different levels of success with music–spatial reasoning. Struggling students will need to practice the problem sets multiple times until their scores improve. If on your first try you score 80% or better, you do not need to continue working, though it will serve you well in the long run to aim for 100%. As a principle, if you score less than 80% on a problem set, please review the PowerPoint and then try it

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<sup>1</sup> John Deere commercial.

again. **Pay careful attention to this:** If your second attempt is still substantially lower than 80%, do two things: (1) immediately email [bgeyer@westga.edu](mailto:bgeyer@westga.edu) to make an appointment with me for an office hour and (2) move on to the next set. *I do not want you to endure significant frustration or to spend more than an hour on any day's work; if you are struggling, you are to get help directly from me.*

We will review for multiple class meetings after completing the low-stakes portion of Unit 1. During that time, you will work to improve your scores on select exercise sets provided at that time. Those scores will be weighted at 2 semester points each as your medium-stakes grade for the unit.

### Grading

Your semester grade will be determined on a point system (not a percentage). Each day of punctual attendance will be worth one point. Each low-stakes assignment will be worth one point. We will plan on about seven assignments per unit for a total of about 21 points, although this number may change, and larger assignments may be worth double.

The same low-stakes assignments will be re-graded for two points each when submitted in the Portfolios. For Unit 1, you will work to improve your scores on online problem sets until the exam begins; I will specify which problem sets will contribute to your Portfolio grade. For Units 2 and 3, an additional content summary and self-assessment will each be worth 2 points, making each Portfolio worth 18 points (assuming seven low-stakes assignments), and totaling 50 semester points.

Each high-stakes assessment will be worth 30 points, totaling 90 semester points.

The final exam will be worth 60 points, with a minimum of 80% on Unit 1 questions.

Assessment	Value Per Assessment	Value Per Unit	Value Per Semester
<b>Attendance</b>	1		44
<b>Low-Stakes Assignments</b>	1	~7	~21
<b>Portfolio</b>			
Assignment Revisions	2	~14	~42
Content Summary	2	2	4 (not in Unit 1)
Self-Assessment	2	2	4 (not in Unit 1)
<b>High Stakes</b>	30	30	90
<b>Final Exam</b>	60		60
<b>Total</b>		~55	~265

Low-stakes assignments will usually be graded as “complete” (✓) or incomplete (0). Since you are required to fully correct and revise these assignments for submission with your Unit 2 and 3 Portfolios, I will guide you by circling incorrect answers.

For low-stakes assignments as revised for the Portfolio, and when we require more specific grades, we will use the following rubric, which measures your command over the assignment and your demonstrated commitment to the work:

- 100%: complete command and commitment
- 90%: “almost there” except for a minor problem
- 80%: Satisfactory
- 67%: Struggling
- 0%: Incomplete or unsatisfactory

Your grade will be calculated as a percentage of total points earned out of the total points available, and converted into a letter grade according to the following scale:

90–100%: A    80–89%: B    70–79%: C    60–69%: D    59% and under: F

*Note: the Music Education major requires a minimum of a C in all Music Theory classes.*

### **Peer Learning**

You may not consult peers on high-stakes assessments unless they have been specifically assigned as group work. I encourage you work with peers on low-stakes assessments, with four conditions:

1. Write all collaborators' names on your paper.
2. Work with no more than two other people on any assignment.
3. Each student completes their own work; teamwork is for consultation or checking completed answers once all group members have done a problem, not for copying answers.
4. Most importantly: *make group work a learning experience, not a short-cut*. Remember: if you provide anyone with an answer, you're robbing them of the opportunity to learn on their own!

I reserve the right to revoke peer learning privileges if I find that they are causing problems in individual cases. **The departure from any of these procedures will be treated as a violation of UWG's academic integrity policy.**

One of the chief values I hope to teach you is the importance of forming your own intellectual personhood. I have observed in many students an unfortunate habit of looking to their peers before attempting to form their own understandings. While I recognize the value of peer learning, it is a mistake to lean too heavily on stronger (or more responsible) students. College is a privilege that comes with an individual responsibility to treasure and protect your personal intellectual development.

Perhaps due to the emphasis on testing in secondary schools, many of my students have had a product-driven approach to learning—they want to get correct answers right away. To be an effective college student in my classroom, you must work to develop a process-oriented approach, which means paying attention to the small details, the big picture, and the connections in between. Take control of your own learning by being bold in the questions you ask and refusing to let the process slip by you. If you are missing parts of the process, you must come directly to me, your instructor, because no one else in the room has been through the entire process yet. As a process-based learner, your grade will take care of itself, and you will prepare yourself to keep learning for the rest of your life.

### **Attendance**

I will take attendance at the start time of each class meeting. If you are in the room, you will count as present. I will not differentiate between excused and unexcused, or late and absent. Each day's attendance is worth one semester point, which equates to well under a percentage point. If you are usually present and punctual, a few absences will have very little effect on your grade; if you are frequently late or absent, it will be detrimental. (Incidentally, the role of low-stakes assignments follows the same thinking: if you're consistent, a few missed assignments will not impact your grade drastically.)

**Common Language for UWG Syllabi:** For policies pertaining to all classes (including this one) please go to <https://www.westga.edu/UWGSyllabusPolicies/>.

**Schedule**  
(Subject to Change)

**Unit 1:** Music–Spatial Reasoning

Online Problem Sets: 8/15–8/31  
Improve problem set scores until 9/12  
High-Stakes Assessment 1 (Exam): 9/12

(No class 9/3 for Labor Day)

**Unit 2:** Perceiving Rhythm

Low-Stakes Assessments: 9/14–9/28  
Portfolio: 10/10  
High-Stakes Assessment: 10/17

(No class 10/5 for Fall Break)

**Unit 3:** Introduction to Analytical Tools

Low-Stakes Assessments: 10/19–11/7  
Portfolio: 11/14  
High-Stakes Assessment: 11/30

(No class 11/2 for Society for Music Theory Conference or 11/19–11/23 for Thanksgiving)

**Cumulative Final Exam:** Monday, December 8, 8–10 a.m.