

## **Semester Syllabus:**

# **Western History of Music and Composition**

General Music Course, Grades 9-12

### *Course Philosophy*

This is an elective music history and composition course that also teaches advanced theory and analysis. Rudimentary theory is recommended, but is not required. Our goal is to give students of all high school ages a foundation of Western music history background needed for understanding western classical music. Since composition is a type of creation in higher level thinking, the compositions will reflect a rudimentary understanding and analysis of concepts discussed in the development of Western music. This creation and analysis is important for developing students' higher level thinking basis for their musical lives.

### *School and Classroom Setting*

The class will be in a suburban school setting with up to 20 students in the class. The class will be made up of students interested in composition and furthering their musicianship through musicology. Most of the students will be engaged with other music ensembles, and some will be commercial music students interested in composing. All students are required to be able to read music. The room will need to be a computer lab that can accommodate 20 students.

Resources needed:

- Finale/Sibelius music notation program
- Headphones
- High Speed internet connection
- Technology for class presentations
- Blackboard with music staves

### *Overall Course Objectives*

- Learn necessary music theory needed for completing composition assignments
- Have students be comfortable with composing on a regular basis, and becoming comfortable with both giving and receiving critical feedback to other students and their compositions
- Learn/analyze and discuss history, composers and compositions of the Classical Era, 19th century, and 20th century
- Compose with the same ideas, techniques and styles discussed in each era.
- Combine compositions throughout the semester to create a symphony

## Week 1: Basic Theory for Composing

### *Educational Goals:*

- Overview of the course
- Have students learn and/or review notes on staves; major scale construction and minor scale construction; key signatures; chord structure; chord function-including inversions, intro to motives

### *Assignments/Activities:*

- Introduction to class, ice-breakers for meeting class members
- WebQuest for learning basic theory concepts through [musictheory.net](http://musictheory.net).
- Ice-breaker worksheets for composing introducing ideas behind composing
- ASSIGNMENT: Composition project, due Monday of Week 3:
  - Compose a 16 bar idea (melody and harmony,) creating a theme that you will expand throughout your assignments for this unit, resulting in the final project for this unit

## Weekly Schedule for Units

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
-1st half: listen to weekly composition assignments, give feedback	-Historical context lecture -Activities for composing -Analysis of Era compositions	-Lecture -Activities -Analysis of Era compositions	-Work day for project due on Monday	-Lecture -Activities-Essay questions that engage concepts learned throughout lectures -Assign project due Monday after next

## UNIT ONE: Western Music in the Classic Era

### *Unit Objectives:*

- Gain an understanding of musical trends in the Classical Era
- Become familiar with significant works and composers of the Classical Era
- Have students complete smaller composition assignments that incorporate concepts for basic compositional techniques and styles from different eras.
- Compose a Classical style sonata

## **Week 2: Introducing Themes and Haydn**

### *Educational Goals:*

- Identify themes in classical music
- Explore music and background of Haydn

### *Assignments/Activities:*

- Listening activity to identify recurring thematic material, new material, etc
- Class composition- Create a theme together and explore ways to expand
- Analysis of Haydn's 1st movement of the Military Symphony
- ASSIGNMENT: Composition project, due Monday of Week 4:
  - Revise your Week 3 assignment and use that as the A theme of a Sonata. Create another 16 bar idea to become your B theme

## **Week 3: Looking into Sonata Allegro Form**

### *Educational Goals:*

- Define what Sonata Allegro Form is and its context in the Classic era
- Overview of the form itself, focusing on main characteristics of the form, the use of themes within the form, cadences, and introducing the use of modulation
- Writing Roman numerals underneath chords
- Analysis of simple Sonata Allegro Form compositions from the Classic era

### *Assignments/Activities:*

- ASSIGNMENT: Composition project, due Monday of Week 5:
  - Orchestrate your existing compositions the way you think Mozart or Haydn would. Be prepared to explain your choices. Use at least 5 different instruments

## **Week 4: Mozart Madness**

### *Educational Goals:*

- Analysis of slightly more difficult Sonata Allegro form compositions of the Classical era
- Explore music and background of Mozart

### *Assignments/Activities:*

- Listen to a Mozart sonata, identify sections as a class by raising hands
- A deeper look at 1st movement of Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik
- Listening worksheet for another Mozart or Haydn sonata
- ASSIGNMENT: Composition project, due Monday of Week 6:
  - Transpose your B theme so that its tonal center is V of your A theme. Using secondary dominants, create a transition into the B theme and also write a variation of the two themes to use as a development section

## **Week 5: Secondary Dominants**

### *Educational Goals:*

- Create a harmonic progression involving a secondary dominant chord
- Look at examples of secondary dominants in music be able to identify when they happen in music through analysis. Aural identification of secondary dominant in classical and popular music.
- Being write roman numeral analysis for identifying chords

*Assignments/Activities:*

- Listen to examples in Classical music, and corresponding secondary dominants in popular music.
- Individual research of classical music
- Less discussion this week, more work time in preparation for final unit project
- Work on project for Week 6
  - Continue to develop compositions towards final unit project
- UNIT 1 ASSIGNMENT: Composition project using classical era techniques to create a sonata using Sonata Allegro Form--Counts as 1st movement towards the Final symphony project
  - Compositional Techniques to be included in your composition
    - Themes must fit typical Sonata-Allegro Form and must include characteristics such as proper cadences, key changes, motivic development
    - Themes must use secondary dominants
  - Due Monday of Week 7

## **Week 6: Modulation**

*Educational Goals:*

- Be able to smoothly modulate from I to both IV and V
- Identify common chords between I, IV, and V

*Assignments/Activities:*

- Less lecture this week, more work time in preparation for final unit project
- Closer analysis of past classical pieces and their modulation techniques with chromaticism and secondary dominants; roman numeral analysis with these pieces

## **Week 7: Classical Presentations**

*Educational Goals:*

- Listen to and critique class compositions

*Assignments/Activities:*

- ASSIGNMENT: Composition project, due Monday of Week 9:
  - Create a short musical idea (melodic or rhythmic) and then compose 8 different variations of it

# **UNIT TWO: Western Music in the Romantic Era/19<sup>th</sup> Century**

*Unit Objectives:*

- Gain an understanding of musical trends in the 19th Century
- Become familiar with significant works and composers of the 19th Century
- Have students complete smaller composition assignments that incorporate concepts for basic compositional techniques and styles from different eras.
- Compose a 19th Century programmatic composition

## **Week 8: 19th Century Introduction**

### *Educational Goals:*

- Explore the music and background of Beethoven, particularly the Fifth Symphony

### *Assignments/Activities:*

- Look at the different variations of the theme/motif of the Fifth Symphony
- As a class, come up with more variations of the theme
- ASSIGNMENT: Composition project, due Monday of Week 10:
  - Pick a popular story and create two leitmotifs for characters or situations in the story. Set each of them two different ways

## **Week 9: The Symphony**

### *Educational Goals:*

- Explore the music and background of Wagner
- Discuss and be able to create leitmotifs

### *Assignments/Activities:*

- Listen to Star Wars leitmotifs and discuss why they are effective
- ASSIGNMENT: Composition project, due Monday of Week 11:
  - Write 32 bars either for solo piano or for a chamber orchestra, using intense chromaticism

## **Week 10: The Three Cs**

### *Educational Goals:*

- Explore the music and background of Chopin
- Analyze 19th century works with intense chromaticism
- Discuss the chamber orchestra and examine chamber pieces

### *Assignments/Activities:*

- In-depth Listening Worksheet and listening assignment with one of Chopin's Preludes
- ASSIGNMENT: Composition project, due Monday of Week 12:
  - Write a Ringtone that is described by a single word-the word can be a feeling, an object or idea.
  - The Ringtone can be as long as the student chooses, but has to be a minimum of 8 bars. This ringtone will serve as a theme in the unit 2 assignment. Will be revised to fit adagio movement later.

## **Week 11: Art Songs and Character Pieces**

### *Educational Goals:*

- Explore music and background of Schubert, Wolf, and Grieg
- Listen to and discuss German lieder, art songs, and character pieces

### *Assignments/Activities:*

- Listen to instrumental character pieces and discuss the ideas students got from them, and then reveal what they are actually about
- Listening day with the Erlking piece by Schubert, and a modern pop piece that also incorporates character changes
- Work on project for Week 12
  - Continue to develop compositions towards final unit project
- UNIT 2 ASSIGNMENT: Composition project using 19th Century techniques to create a Adagio movement--Counts as 2nd movement towards the Final symphony project
  - Assignment will be a Programmatic composition-Students will need to write out a program for the audience for understanding the story or idea being portrayed in the composition. You are welcome to use or edit previous assignments in your composition and you must incorporate the ringtone assignment as one of the main themes.
  - Students should use several of the following compositional techniques
    - Chromaticism
    - Expressing emotion through composition
    - Using the same motivic idea that is manipulated throughout composition as basis for unifying the movement
    - Must include at least 2 modulations
  - Due Monday of Week 13

## **Week 12: By Strauss!**

### *Educational Goals:*

- Discuss the waltz and Strauss's involvement
- Explore the music and background of Strauss

### *Assignments/Activities:*

- Analyze the Blue Danube Waltz as a class
- Research Strauss background with WebQuest
- Rewrite an existing composition in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. Revised composition should have a waltz-like feel with stress on the first beat of every measure and unstressed 2nd and 3rd beats

## **Week 13: 19th Century Presentations**

### *Educational Goals:*

- Listen to and critique class compositions

### *Assignments/Activities:*

- **ASSIGNMENT:** Composition project, due Monday of Week 15:
  - Compose water music! You are to create a piece of music that sounds like the flowing aspects of water.
  - Composition will be 32 bars using secondary dominants, a small unifying motive and is an attempt to sound like water

## **UNIT THREE: Western Music in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

### *Unit Objectives:*

- Gain an understanding of musical trends in the 20th Century
- Become familiar with significant works and composers of the 20th Century
- Have students complete smaller composition assignments that incorporate concepts for basic compositional techniques and styles from different eras.
- Compose a 20th Century style composition

### **Week 14: Introduction to 20th Century**

#### *Educational Goals:*

- Examine 19th century art, discuss expansion, emotion, and the new role of the performer
- Explore music and background of Debussy

#### *Assignments/Activities:*

- Listening day for Debussy's La Mer, Eric Whitacre's water music, and other pieces to help stimulate ideas for current composition assignment
- Listen to The Sunken Cathedral and discuss what it makes students think of
- **ASSIGNMENT:** Composition project, due Monday of Week 16:
  - Pick short snippets of three popular melodies (these can be a pop song, a folk song, anything you like!) and incorporate them into a piece of at least 16 bars in the style of Charles Ives

### **Week 15: My Country, 'Tis of Thee**

#### *Educational Goals:*

- Explore music and background of Ives
- Explore polytonality in 20th century compositions
- Identify when a composer is quoting folk melodies and be able to do the same

#### *Assignments/Activities:*

- Listen to Ives and Copland and identify folk songs
- **ASSIGNMENT:** Composition project, due Monday of Week 17:
  - Rework your previous folk song assignment using polytonality. You can use the same melody in two different keys at once, or change the key of the bass line

## Week 16: Rhythm

### *Educational Goals:*

- Explore music and background of Stravinsky and Bartok
- Understand and be able to compose music with unusual rhythmic stress and irregular meters

### *Assignments/Activities:*

- In-depth rhythmic analysis of the Rite of Spring
- A look at some of Bartok's music with irregular meters and keys
- ASSIGNMENT: Composition project, due Monday of Week 18:
  - Write 4 bars derived from a 12-tone row and be able to explain the process by which you came to it.
- FINAL PROJECT ASSIGNMENT AND EXPLANATION: The final Project is to compose a 4-movement symphony that synthesized all that has been learned throughout the class.
  - For the fourth movement, create a work of any style, incorporating concepts from all three of the units we've studied this semester
  - Due Monday of Week 20

## Week 17: Serialism

### *Educational Goals:*

- Explore music and background of the Second Viennese School (Schoenberg, Berg, Webern)
- Create a 12-tone matrix
- Identify 12-tone rows in a matrix
- Review motivic ideas such as retrograde and inversion and how these techniques are used in serialist compositions

### *Assignments/Activities:*

- Looking at Berg and Schoenberg's use of serialism in their compositions-show the progression of serialism throughout the 20th century
- UNIT 3 ASSIGNMENT: Composition project using 20th century techniques that is at least a minute and a half long. This counts as the 3rd movement of the Final Symphony Project. Students may choose one of three different assignments:
  - 1: Create a composition for piano using serialist techniques for at least 2 of the following: notes, dynamics, articulations, rhythms. Students will need to also hand in tone row sheet and an explanation of how serialist techniques and non-serialist techniques were used throughout composition.
  - 2: Create a chance composition for an instrument. Students will need to use random chance to look for a library source and incorporate this library source for random composition. A rationale of how chance was used must be included.
  - 3: Create a piece using irregular meters and rhythms in thematic development. A rationale is required for explaining the form of the composition and why irregular meters and rhythms were used.
  - Due Monday of Week 19



## **Week 18: Minimalism and Chance**

*Educational Goals:*

- Explore music and background of Cage and Riley
- Redefine music and sound after looking at Cage's music

*Assignments/Activities:*

- Prepare a piano as a class, create an instruction guide so it can be recreated
- Looking up videos of Cage and his performances with chance music
- Play or sing Riley's In C
- Video and discussion of Penderecki's Threnody-For the Victims of Hiroshima

## **Week 19: 20th Century Compositions**

*Educational Goals:*

- Listen to and critique class compositions

## **Final Week**

## **Week 20: Final Projects!**

*Educational Goals:*

- Listen to and critique class compositions for final projects

Description of each member's contribution to project

Ryan: Discussed and Formulated organization of class and class goals; wrote philosophy and classroom setting for class; helped come up with ideas for unit content such as composer works and compositional techniques; Planned out Unit composition assignments, and helped plan weekly activities and assignments; reviewed weekly goals, activities and assignments

Justin: Discussed and Formulated organization of class and class goals; reviewed/revised philosophy and classroom setting for class; ideas for unit content such as composers, topics for different eras; Planned weekly units and helped plan weekly activities and assignments; reviewed weekly goals, activities and assignments