MUS 102A–2, Theory and Musicianship Lab I

Instructor: Eric Elder (ericelder@brandeis.edu)
Office hours: by appointment
Course schedule: Mondays and Thursdays, 8:00–8:50 AM, SLOS 215


Course Description: Our goal in the aural skills lab is to bridge the gap between music theory and real-life musical experience. In other words, we will develop the ability to think in music. We will strive for instant aural recognition of rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic patterns commonly found in seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Western art music. Our work will be largely performative, involving independent and group singing, as well as written exercises.

Learning Objectives: We seek to develop four specific areas: 1) fluent aural understanding of scale-step functions, 2) musical memory, 3) recognition and visualization of common musical patterns from performed music, and 4) analytical reading of music notation in performance. As this suggests, our work will be done in two directions: from musical notation to sound, and from sound to notation. Through this, we strive to become better, more intelligent listeners.

Class activities and grading: Three activities will make up much of your semester grade: 1) individual singing, 2) written exercises, and 3) exams, which will combine the first two.

Individual singing: This portion of the grade will be largely comprised of in-class singing. In each class, I will ask a few of you to sing one of four prepared examples for the week. You will receive one of three grades: A (100%), B (89%), or 0. An “A” performance will be virtually flawless. A “B” performance may have two or three very minor errors, depending on the length of the example. It’s good, but not perfect… Anything else will garner a 0. You may improve B or 0 grades by scheduling a time to meet with me individually before the end of the following week. In most cases, we diagnose and work on the aspects of the material that pose a challenge. For the (presumably) improved grade, I may ask you to sing any one of the week’s four prepared examples. In the case of singing assignments that are to be turned in, I will use the same grading format, but you will not have the opportunity to improve the grade. All submissions are final.

Written exercises: This portion of the grade will come from dictation, error detection, and guided listening activities. Some of these will be done in class, others will be assigned work. I will grade error detection and guided listening activities like turned-in singing assignments. Dictations will be evaluated differently. In all dictations, each pitch will be worth one point. Short dictations (phrase fragments) will be given an additional four points for rhythm, while phrase-length dictations will have eight points for rhythm. In addition, there will be up to two “global points” for notational issues, e.g., key signatures, stem placement and direction, beaming, etc. These will be awarded on an “all or nothing” basis, without exception. From these parameters, I will compute a percentage score for each dictation exercise.
**Exams:** The midterm and final exams will have singing and written components. For the midterm, these will be completed over two normal class periods. Exams will be graded like other work but singing will be at sight only and without the opportunity to improve the grade.

**Note:** Should you miss any in-class graded activity due to absence, you will not have an opportunity to make it up, but it also won’t count against you.

**Grade weighting:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual singing</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written exercises</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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**Preparation:** DAILY PRACTICE is the key factor for achieving success in the aural skills lab. According to Brandeis policy, “Success in this 2 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 4.5 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).” 4.5 hours per week equates to just over 30 minutes of practice each day, and a disciplined approach to meeting this goal will carry you a long way toward achieving our learning objectives.

**Attendance:** Like daily practice, attendance is necessary for success in this course. Accordingly, after three unexcused absences, each subsequent unexcused absence will result in the automatic lowering of your final semester grade by three percentage points. Appropriate documentation is necessary for any consideration of excusing absence.

**Required materials:** You must have blank staff paper, pencils, an eraser, and the required text at every class.

**Readiness:** Class will begin and end on time, and you are expected to be at your desk and ready to begin before class starts. The aural skills lab requires active concentration, and we will move at a quick pace; disruptions caused by tardiness or lack of preparation not only waste time, they also impede your fellow students’ learning. Additionally, the use of any electronic device (cell phones, laptops, etc.) during class is not permitted. Any two instances of lateness, unpreparedness, or the use of electronic devices during class will equal one unexcused absence.

**Brandeis Policy Statements:**

*Students with disabilities:* “If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.”

*Academic integrity:* “You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS – Library guides.”