

Syllabus

MUS 4210 / 6210

COMPOSITION SEMINAR

FALL 2009

Meeting Times: Tues./Thurs. 1:10 – 2:00 PM, 316-ST

Instructor: Dr. Nickitas J. Demos

Office: 414-ST
Phone: 404.413.5936
Email: ndemos@gsu.edu
Office Hours: Posted on office door & By Appointment

Prerequisites: MUS 1440, MUS 1540

"To achieve great things, two things are needed; a plan, and not quite enough time."

- Leonard BERNSTEIN

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Composition Seminar is intended to be a forum for the exploration of topics outside the normal purview of individual lessons. It is also an environment for the creation of new music for those students interested in experimenting with composition as well as those students developing a portfolio for admission into the composition concentration. Additionally, the course provides a venue for visiting composers, performers and/or presenters of new music to interact with students.

The main topic for consideration this semester is **Music Notation**

COURSE GOALS:

- This semester, we will focus on a study of the proper rule of music notation with particular attention to the rules of engraving. We will develop skills in both hand calligraphy as well as computer music notation.
- Create new compositions
- Present relevant guest lecturers.
- Foster a sense of camaraderie and community between student composers.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Learn the basic rules of music notation and established conventions of music engraving as established by the Major Orchestra's Librarians Association (MOLA) including proper score and part preparation.
 - Develop skills in writing program notes for a general audience.
 - Students will become acquainted with the following composers and their music:
 - **Paul Richards**
 - **Dimitri Shostakovich**
 - **Angel Lam**
 - **Silk Road Project**
 - **Mark Bunce**
 - Interaction with members of the new music community outside GSU.
 - Creation of new music.
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COURSE MATERIALS

There is *no* required text for this semester. However, in lieu of a textbook, all students are **REQUIRED** to join the **Society of Composers, Inc. (SCI)** if not already members. The fee is \$23.50 (\$17.50 going to the national organization and \$5 remaining with the local student chapter).

NOTATION PROJECTS

There will be two notation projects due during the course of the semester. The first project will be a notated score (not to exceed three pages) created by hand. This project will be due at the mid-point of the semester. The second project will be a notated score and a set of parts created with computer notation software (*Finale* or *Sibelius*). Both score may be selected by the student and may be the student's own work.

COMPOSITIONS – NONMAJORS

This requirement is directed only towards students not currently admitted into the composition concentration. By the end of the semester, undergraduate students will either **complete** or have made **significant progress** toward completion of a musical composition as determined by the instructor. Additionally, students not already in the concentration must also attend the open composition jury at the end of the semester. Group composition lessons will be given during class. Additionally, there will be three group presentations during the course of the semester. The first will be an introductory session where undergraduates outline proposed composition projects; a mid-point presentation where progress of works will be demonstrated; and a "mini jury" at the end of the semester where undergraduates will present the final status of their semester's work.

COMPOSER REPORTS – UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS

This requirement is only directed towards students currently admitted into the composition concentration and currently studying private lessons at the APCP 4000 or APCP 8000 levels. Undergraduate students will write a brief report on a composer assigned by the instructor. An oral presentation of the report (complete with musical examples will be made on the day the report is due. All reports will be considered late if not presented at the beginning of the lesson on the week due. Projects that are late for ANY reason (other than a medical or personal emergency as determined by the instructor) will receive a lowered grade.

GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE COMPOSER REPORTS:

Undergraduate students will be required to work closely with graduate partners in their group. The report will take the form of an interview between student and instructor. The instructor will pose the following five questions:

- Give us an extensive biography of your composer.
- What career stage would you categorize this composer? (Accomplished and recognized? Up and coming with growing attention? Regional recognition? Not much visibility – still early in career?)
- What does this composer say about his or her works or compositional style and/or influences? What have others written about this composer? If living, did you contact the composer? Summarize your interview and give impressions.
- Name at least five compositions that you think are important in this composers output. Why do feel these pieces are important? Play ONE significant example of the composers work. **Choose these works on the basis of IMPORTANCE and not simply on convenience of materials.**
- What is your personal opinion of the composer and his/her music based upon your research? What is the most important thing you gained from studying this individual? Do you like the music? Why or why not?

Each question above will be worth 20 points. The instructor may ask additional questions to the ones listed above.

GUIDELINES FOR GRADUATE COMPOSITION PROJECTS

Graduate students will be required to work closely with undergraduate partners in their group. Using research from their partners, graduate members of the group will compose a piece in the style of the composer assigned to them. The piece may be any instrumentation with a duration no less than FIVE minutes and no more than TEN minutes. The piece will be performed in class after the undergraduate report. In the event that a piece cannot be performed due to unavailable instrumental performers, a MIDI realization will be accepted. There is a clear preference, however, for live performances in class. Following the performance of the piece, the student will discuss, if the composer, how choices in composition were made. What attributes of the composer's music were most salient to you? Why? What compositional choices were made to mimic the style of the composer?

STUDENT SUBMISSION REQUIREMENT

Undergraduate and Graduate students in the concentration will be required to show evidence of submitting a work (or works) to a composition opportunity such as (but not limited to) composition contest, conference, score call, festival and/or summer workshop. Graduates must submit to a minimum of four distinct opportunities and undergraduates a minimum of two distinct opportunities between August 17 and December 11, 2009. Students will turn in a single page at the Composition Juries outlining the contests entered and the dates that respective works were submitted. Photocopies of receipts from the Post Office or some similar type of verification must accompany the report. (Please redact all credit card and/or other personal information from the receipts.) Reports without verification of submission will not be accepted.

CONCERT ATTENDANCE REPORTS

ALL students are required to attend no fewer than **6** concerts featuring contemporary works or significant 20th / 21st Century compositions. Of the six, you are required to attend the two **neoPhonia** new music ensemble concerts. It is especially important to attend SCI Student Chapter concerts and recitals featuring fellow GSU students' works. **MARK YOUR CALENDARS WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE CONCERTS.**

Concert reports will be in **two** formats:

1. Four reports will be brief one page summaries. A concert report summary sheet will be used for these reports (this sheet may be downloaded from the SCI Student chapter website: www2.gsu.edu/~wwwsci/).
2. Two reports will be in long essay format. These reports should take on more of the character of a formal review of the concert. Undergraduate essays will be a minimum of two pages. Graduate reports will be a minimum of five pages.

While attending concerts, listen very carefully and take mental and/or written notes. It is a good idea to jot thoughts on the program and return later to flesh out your thoughts. **You must remain present for the entire program.** All pieces must be commented upon. The respective programs for all six reports must be attached. All summary and essay reports with the respective programs will be turned in at the end of the semester at the Composition Jury. Essay reports must be typed, double spaced and turned in as hard copies along with the accompanying program. E-Mail attachments and hand written reports will **not** be accepted. Reports that are late for ANY reason (other than a medical or personal emergency as determined by the instructor) will not be accepted.

GUIDELINES FOR CONCERT ATTENDANCE ESSAY REPORTS:

For each concert, answer the following questions in a *narrative* form. A program from the concert must be attached to the report. The reports must be typed and double spaced. Hand written reports or reports sent via email will not be accepted.

- What concert did you attend? (Name of ensemble; date, time and location of concert).
- For each piece performed, describe your emotional and intellectual reactions. Did these two reactions differ? Why or why not? Try to deal with the music itself and do not critique the performance of the musicians/conductor.

- For each piece performed, describe the general style. How would you categorize this music (i.e., minimalist, serial, freely atonal, neo-romantic, etc.)?
 - Were there program notes? If so, were these notes helpful in the listening process?
 - What was your favorite piece? Why? Which piece did you dislike the most? Why?
 - Would any of the music you heard on the concert compel you to purchase a CD or download an MP3 file of a piece heard on the concert? Any other music by a composer programmed on the concert? Do you think you will try to study a score of the music presented or other music by composers on the program? Why or why not?
 - During the course of the concert did you hear any music that you think may influence your writing? This question is applicable for those pieces you liked as well as, and perhaps especially, those you disliked. The question is also appropriate for those programmed pieces that were not written in the 21st or 20th Centuries.
 - How would you describe the over-all performance of the ensemble, individual musicians and the conductor (if applicable)?
 - **FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY:** Your essays must be of greater length and depth as compared to the undergraduate essays. In addition to all the requirements outlined above for undergraduates, place the works by individual composers in context. You will need to research the composer and discuss where the works fall in their overall output (i.e., Was this an early work? A later composition? Is this composer part of a "school" of compositional methodology or aesthetic outlook?). Also discuss how the piece being reviewed relates not only to the other works in the composer's catalog but to other contemporaries of the composer.
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ATTENDANCE POLICY:

A great deal of material is presented in this class and all topics rely on class lectures and classroom demonstrations. Students are therefore expected to attend class in a punctual manner. Chronic absences and tardiness will have a negative impact upon the final grade. Class lectures will not be repeated. **It is the responsibility of the student to catch up on any work missed due to absence (regardless of the circumstance).**

INCOMPLETE / WITHDRAWAL POLICIES:

The grade of *I* will be given only to students who have completed the **majority** of composition work and only **for non-academic reasons**. Prior to the midpoint of the semester, a student may withdraw (or be withdrawn by the instructor) and receive the grade of *W*. Following this midpoint, any withdrawals will result in a grade of *WF*.

CLASS ETIQUETTE:

The use of cell phones is strictly prohibited. Cell phones that ring during a lesson are extremely disruptive. **These devices MUST BE TURNED OFF before class begins.** Food and drink (except for bottled water) is **prohibited in class.** Students bringing food and drink will be asked to leave the classroom.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

Students are urged to read the College of Arts and Science policy on academic honesty. This policy is found in both the Undergraduate and Graduate Bulletins. The policy covers plagiarism, cheating, unauthorized collaboration, falsification and multiple submission of work. The policy will be strictly enforced by the instructor.

GRADING POLICY:

The final grade for the class will be based on the examination, concert attendance reports and completion of or significant progress towards the completion of a piece (as determined by the instructor) *OR* the composer reports. The final grade will be calculated upon the following percentages:

GRADUATE STUDENTS:

Notation Project 1 _____	15%
Notation Project 2 _____	15%
Concert Attendance Reports _____	30%
Composer Report _____	30%
Submissions _____	10%

UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS

Notation Project 1 _____	15%
Notation Project 2 _____	15%
Concert Attendance Reports _____	30%
Composer Report _____	30%
Submissions _____	10%

UNDERGRADUATE NON-MAJORS

Notation Project 1 _____	15%
Notation Project 2 _____	15%
Concert Attendance Reports _____	30%
Composition _____	30%
Attendance at Open Composition Jury _____	10%

A+ = 100 - 98 • A = 97 - 93 • A- = 92 - 90 • B+ = 89 - 87 • B = 86 - 83 • B- = 82 - 80 C+ = 79 - 77 • C = 76 - 73 • C- = 72 - 70 • D = 69 - 60 • F = 59 and below
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- GRADE OF A+ _____** Superior work in every respect. Class participation demonstrates evidence of thoughtful and steady work. A piece is completed or nearly completed by the end of the semester. Finished compositions are carefully prepared and neatly presented. Notation projects are carefully prepared and neatly presented, conforming to all guidelines discussed in class. Reports are well organized, grammatically correct and carefully conform to given guidelines. Attendance is regular and prompt.
- GRADE OF A _____** Excellent work throughout the semester. Class participation demonstrates evidence of thoughtful and steady work. A piece is completed or nearly completed by the end of the semester. Finished compositions are carefully prepared and neatly presented. Notation projects are carefully prepared and neatly presented, generally conforming to guidelines discussed in class. Reports are well organized, grammatically correct and generally conform to given guidelines. Attendance is regular and prompt.
- GRADE OF A - _____** Very good work. Class participation demonstrates evidence of steady work. A piece is completed or nearly completed by the end of the semester. Finished compositions are neatly presented. Notation projects are neatly presented, generally conforming to guidelines discussed in class. Reports are well organized, grammatically correct and generally conform to given guidelines. Attendance is regular and prompt.
- GRADE OF B + _____** Evidence of preparation, thoughtfulness and attention to detail. A piece is completed or nearly completed by the end of the semester. Finished compositions are prepared and presented in an acceptable manner. Notation projects are fairly neat, generally conforming to guidelines discussed in class. Reports are clearly written and conform to given guidelines. Attendance is regular and prompt.
- GRADE OF B _____** Evidence of preparation and attention to detail. A piece is completed or nearly completed by the end of the semester. Finished compositions are prepared and presented in an acceptable manner. Reports conform to given guidelines. Notation projects generally conform to guidelines discussed in class. Attendance is regular.
- GRADE OF B - _____** Preparation for class is inconsistent. A piece is completed or nearly completed by the end of the semester. Finished compositions are not prepared and presented in a clear manner. Notation projects conform to guidelines discussed in class. Reports conform to given guidelines. Attendance is regular.
- GRADE OF C + _____** Preparation for class is inconsistent. Class participation may not show evidence thoroughness or attention to detail. A piece is nearly completed by the end of the semester. Reports and notation projects may fail to adhere to academic standards and not clearly conform to given guidelines. Attendance and/or promptness may be inconsistent.
- GRADE OF C _____** Preparation for class is inconsistent. There is very little class participation or attention to detail. Little progress is made on a single piece. Reports and notation projects fail to adhere to academic standards and do not clearly conform to given guidelines. Attendance is inconsistent.

GRADE OF C - _____ Barely acceptable for college level work. There is very little class participation or attention to detail. Very little progress is made on a single piece. Reports and notation projects fail to adhere to academic standards and do not conform to given guidelines. Attendance is poor.

GRADE OF D _____ Failure to adhere to guidelines indicated for grades A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-. Attendance is poor.

GRADE OF F _____ Poor preparation for class. Failure to complete projects or these projects completed in a totally unsatisfactory manner. Attendance is very poor.