

MUS 402A: GREAT COMPOSERS & MUSIC MASTERPIECES NONCREDIT FOR OLDER ADULTS

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Fall 2026
Units:	0
Hours:	4 lecture, 3 laboratory per week (84 total per quarter)
Degree & Credit Status:	Non-Degree-Applicable Non-Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Non-GE
Transferable:	None
Grade Type:	Non-Credit Course (Receives no Grade)
Repeatability:	Unlimited Repeatability
Formerly:	NCAL 410B

Student Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate detailed knowledge of Western music as a reflection of its societal and historical context.
- Demonstrate self-managed learning.
- Discuss, with insight and understanding, the social and personal implications of the ways music can be a powerful tool for communicating our common humanity across history and within the context of diverse cultures.
- Distinguish between musical styles from these historical periods based on structural characteristics related to melody, harmony, rhythm, instrumentation, and form, as well as think critically as you analyze, compare, and contrast this repertoire.

Description

This noncredit course is targeted towards older adults. An introduction to the great composers and music masterpieces of Western culture, including composer biographies with emphasis on how composers synthesize or transform the aesthetic ideals of their time. Examines how composers' music reflects their own lives as well as mirrors contemporary social, political, and religious events. Historical periods include the ancient world and the Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque eras. Composers include Josquin, Lassus, Palestrina, Monteverdi, Purcell, Vivaldi, Handel, and Bach.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate detailed knowledge of the historical development of musical style in Western culture in relation to the political, economic, social, and religious developments of the time.
2. Apply knowledge of musical style, historical periods, and genres from Western culture to representative examples of music.

3. Compare and contrast repertoire of concert music through familiarity with a broad sampling of works, composers, styles, and genres.
4. Critique good performance from bad, from the perspectives of artistic quality and appropriate historical performance practice.
5. Discuss, with insight and understanding, the social and personal implications of the development of musical style in Western culture.
6. Demonstrate self-managed learning in a comprehensive journal, in which they reflect upon, evaluate, and describe their own learning process.

Course Content

1. Music fundamentals: melody, rhythm, harmony, texture, instrumentation, form
2. Style, characteristics, and function of music in the ancient world through the Baroque period. Compare and contrast to music of other world cultures
3. Study of specific musical works:
 - a. Sacred vocal music (plainchant, early polyphony, masses, motets, oratorios, passions, and cantatas)
 - b. Secular vocal music (troubadour songs, Italian and English madrigals, opera)
 - c. Instrumental music (preludes, fugues, toccatas, passacaglia, fantasias, dance suites, sonata da chiesa, and sonata da camera)
 - d. Composer biographies (Josquin, Lassus, members of the Florentine Camerata, Palestrina, Monteverdi, Purcell, Vivaldi, Handel, and Bach)
4. Identification of major themes of the culture at each period in history (divine authority, redemption, freedom, artistic creativity and originality, political, social, religious ideologies, gender roles), their definition in other periods in Western culture, and their parallels in other world cultures

Lab Content

Laboratory activities are provided for students to practice and apply their theoretical knowledge regarding each topic area's structural characteristics (rhythm, melody, form, instrumentation, and harmony), style, genre, and important composers. Activities consist of online laboratory worksheets correlated with listening examples. Examples for Antiquity and Medieval music illustrate the quantity and quality of music examples provided.

Representative listening examples for Medieval music:

1. Plainchant Mass
2. Plainchant Antiphon (Laus Deo Patri) and Psalm 112 (Laudate Pueri), from Vespers on Trinity Sunday
3. Plainchant Hymn: Pange lingua gloriosi orporis mysterium (late 13th century)
4. Ordo virtutum (excerpt, ca. 1150), Hildegard von Bingen
5. A chanter (early 13th century), Beatriz de Dia
6. Cantigas de Santa Maria
7. Melismatic organum, Kyrie Cunctipotens genitor deus (Codex Calixtinus, ca. 1120-1230)
8. Organum Haec dies (mid-to-late 12th century)
9. Motet A Paris/On parole/Frese nouvele (late 13th century)
10. Messe de Notre Dame: Kyrie (ca. 1360), Guillaume de Machaut
11. Ma fin est mon commencement (ca. 135-1360)

12. Sumer is icumen in (ca. 1250), Anonymous
13. La quinte estampie real (second half of 13th century), Anonymous

Representative listening examples for Renaissance:

1. Quam pulchra es (ca. 1410-1430), John Dunstable
2. Flos florum (ca. 1425-1430), Guillaume Du Fay
3. Ave Maria...virgo serena (ca. 1475-1485), Josquin des Prez
4. Se la face ay pale (ca. 1435), Guillaume Du Fay
5. Missa Se la face ay pale: Gloria (ca. 1450), Guillaume Du Fay
6. Missa prolationum: Kyrie (last quarter of 15th century), Johannes Ockeghem
7. El grillo (ca. 1500-1505), Josquin des Prez
8. De le belle contrade d'oriente (1566), Cipriano de Rore
9. Solo e pensoso (ca. 1595-1599), Luca Marenzio
10. Matona mia cara (ca. 1575-1581), Orlande de Lassus
11. Now is the Month of Maying (ca. 1595), Thomas Morley
12. Missa Papae Marcelli: Credo (ca. 1565-1567), Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
13. Ricercar (ca. 1507), Francesco Spinacino

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

1. Classroom with piano, computer, and audio/video equipment.
2. Access to comprehensive digital music library for representative listening examples.
3. When taught via Foothill Global Access: ongoing access to computer with email software and capabilities, email address.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

The student will demonstrate detailed knowledge of the historical development of musical style in Western culture in relation to the political, economic, social, religious developments, and values of the time in module/chapter-level quizzes and a comprehensive examination. The student will demonstrate ability to apply knowledge of musical style, historical periods, and genres from Western culture to representative examples of music in module/chapter laboratory worksheets and quizzes.

The student will demonstrate ability to compare and contrast repertoire of concert music in module/chapter-level quizzes and a comprehensive examination.

The student will demonstrate ability to critique good performance from bad, from the perspectives of artistic quality and appropriate historical performance practice through participation in on-campus and/or online discussions.

The student will demonstrate ability to discuss, with insight and understanding, the social and personal implications of the development of musical style in Western culture through participation in on-campus and/or online discussions and in brief essays posted in a comprehensive journal (see below).

The student will demonstrate self-managed learning in a comprehensive journal, in which they reflect upon, evaluate, and describe their own learning process by writing two reflections on each module/chapter-level topic area: a pre-reflection that includes what the student already knows about the topic and a post-reflection in which students summarize what they learned and want to remember, clarify, or pursue in more depth.

For the face-to-face class, students will also demonstrate the above through a portfolio of lecture notes and summaries of discussion in conjunction with in-class quizzes.

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

The student will listen to (on-campus) or read (online) lecture information. The student will listen to representative examples of music that illustrate concepts related to the historical/social context, stylistic categories, structural characteristics, and important composers for the varied topic areas.

The student will participate in discussion (on-campus and/or online).

The student will complete laboratory worksheets that provide additional information, as well as ask application questions correlated with listening examples.

The student will learn from feedback on quizzes, examinations, discussion postings, and comprehensive journal writing delivered via email or Canvas.

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Barkley, E., and R. Hartwell. [Great Composers and Music Masterpieces of Western Civilization](#). 2023.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

1. Reading assignments: Textbook chapters.
2. Writing assignments: Comprehensive journal, in which students first reflect upon what they already know about the topic, and then after they have completed all the learning activities associated with that topic, summarize what they have learned, what they need to clarify, and what they wish to pursue in more depth.
3. Participation in formal threaded discussion, that includes written responses to prompts for each topic.
 - a. Example, for Medieval sacred music: What are the characteristics of chant that made it almost universally used for spiritual purposes? Today "spiritual" or "religious" music comes in all kinds of genres. What kind of music do you think would be most effective putting you in a "spiritual" state?
 - b. Example, for transition from Renaissance to Baroque: Eras of musical style tend to go back and forth between being extravagant, lush, personal, individual, emotional, subjective (e.g., Baroque, Romantic) and sparse, "simple," clean, clear, direct, cosmopolitan, universal (Renaissance, Classical). This same tendency can be seen in many social and cultural contexts, for example, fashion, food, architecture, and so forth. Which of these basic trends do you feel most reflects your personality and cite some examples to illustrate.
 - c. Discussion postings are assessed on the following criteria:
 - i. Appropriateness: Did the student "answer" the question and address all components of the question?
 - ii. Thoughtfulness and accuracy: Does the posting include correct information and demonstrate that the student is thinking about and understanding the material?

- iii. Overall organization: Does the student's posting form a coherent paragraph with main statements, support statements, conclusion, and so forth?
- iv. "ESWE" (edited standard written English): Does the student's posting contain correct grammar and spelling?

Discipline(s)

Music