

# MUSA 451, MUSA 661W - COMPOSITION SYLLABUS

## Composition Seminar

Wednesdays 5:30 PM at HFA 214 (Subject to change)

## Learning outcomes

The student will:

- Develop compositional tools and techniques that contribute to the composition of coherent and expressive music according to the level and experience of the student
- Compose a minimum of music under the supervision of your instructor (as specified in this syllabus under Minimum Requirements)
- Write short compositional exercises based on the repertoire analyzed, or in the materials studied during the lessons and seminars
- Expand the student's listening repertoire

NOTE: Compositional and analytical concepts and techniques from the Western art music tradition will inform the learning process of all composition students, independently of their professional interest (i.e. concert music, film scoring, commercial music, video game music, etc.)

## Grading Policy:

The final grade of all composition students, undergraduate and graduate, will take into account the following aspects:

- Quality and length of music composed during the semester: 60%\*
- Research and analysis work: 10%
- Attendance to composition seminar: 10%
- Participation in seminar activities: 10%
- Attendance to Nextet and other UNLV concerts: 10%

\*The quality and length of the music will be evaluated by the instructor (40%) and the juries (20%)

## Aspects of the Composition Program Subject to Grade:

- **Quality and length of music composed during the semester:** (see minimum requirements on following page)
- **Research and analysis work:** analysis of works that serve as a model for the current composition project in composition lessons
- **Attendance to composition seminar:** includes all regular seminars, lectures and masterclasses with guests artists, open rehearsals, orchestra, wind orchestra, and other ensemble readings.
- **Participation in seminar activities:** include active engagement in lectures and masterclasses, presentations about works in progress by students and analysis of 20th- and 21st-century repertoire
- **Nextet and other UNLV concerts:** All concerts featuring compositions by students, faculty, guests, and masterworks performed by Nextet, as well as other UNLV ensembles or guests artists, performed locally, that are important learning opportunities for composition students.

## Composition Seminar Expectations

Students are expected to:

- Attend all seminar sessions
- Be prepared to ask questions or to comment on what is being presented
- Prepare their own presentations: Select, in agreement with your instructor, any topics on: music analysis, aesthetics, technique, etc.
- Be prepared to report in the seminar about their progress in their composition. The use of MIDI performances, recordings, and scores is encouraged.

## Composition Lesson Expectations

- **Composition:** A minimum of compositional work is expected each week, including:
  - coherent sketches of musical ideas composed or developed during the previous week
  - a thorough exploration of developmental possibilities from the musical ideas
  - the adherence to a compositional plan for each piece or set of pieces
  - references to repertoire from the 20th and 21st Centuries
  - weekly progress towards the completion of their compositions for the semester.
- **Notation:** The students will notate their music proficiently and accurately by hand and to transcribe it to the computer with all performance and expression details using notation software (Sibelius, Finale, MuseScore). When the music is already transcribed in the notation software, the student should bring a printed hard copy of the score to each lesson.
- **Performance:** The students will play on an instrument, conduct, or sing gestures, motives, lines, textures or phrases from their weekly work. In addition, MIDI performances or recordings are useful to get an idea of the music composed as a whole.
- **Talk about the music:** The students will talk about the structure, the content, and the technical and expressive aspects of their music in an articulate manner.
- **Repertoire:** In agreement with their instructor, the students will establish a reference repertoire that will serve as a model for certain aspects of their composition. The students should be well acquainted with this repertoire both aurally and analytically.

### Minimum requirements for Freshman and Sophomores:

By the end of the 4th semester, the student must have mastered the following forms and have a portfolio of the following examples:

1. A short cycle of miniatures for piano, exploring simple forms (binary, ternary, dance forms, aria da capo, ritornello forms, etc).
2. Excerpts or exercises of 2 or 3-voice contrapuntal composition, along the lines of Bach's Inventions and Bartok's polyphonic pieces in Mikrokosmos.
3. At least one vocal piece (voice and piano or voice and a small group of instruments).
4. At least one example of theme and variations: for piano or small ensemble.

Note: All compositions should demonstrate appropriate use of different techniques of pitch, melodic, and rhythmic organization as well as good understanding of idiomatic writing.

### Minimum requirements for Juniors and Seniors:

1. Each semester the student must complete a minimum of 10-15 minutes of that has been approved by the teacher. Techniques and instrumentations should demonstrate an evolution with respect to the previous years of work.

2. In their 3rd year, composition students are required to present a junior recital that includes performance on their instrument and at least 15 minutes of their own music approved by their instructor.
3. In the senior year students are required to give a full recital of their compositions approved by their instructor.

### **Minimum requirements for Graduate Students (MUSA 661W):**

1. Each semester graduate students must complete a minimum of 20 minutes of music approved by their instructor.
2. These works should demonstrate understanding and high quality writing of different genres and ensemble combinations.
3. Each student must complete at least one work for orchestra or wind orchestra at some point during their degree.
4. The graduate recital must include a minimum of 60 minutes of music approved by their instructor.

### **Piano Proficiency for all Composition Majors in upper division**

In order to register as an upper division composition major (MUSA 451), all students should be able to play, as a minimum:

1. Play all major or minor scales in 2 octaves
2. Sight-read a Bach chorale and pieces from Books 1 & 2 of Bartok's Mikrokosmos.
3. Perform works on the level of Mozart's and Clementi's Sonatinas, Beethoven's Sonata Op. 49, Schoenberg's Op. 19, Schumann's Scenes from Childhood, etc.
4. Realize figured bass exercises on the piano to show practical knowledge of keyboard harmony.  
Recommended textbook: R.O. Morris, Figured Harmony at the Keyboard, Part 1, Oxford University Press

### **Composition Juries and Recital Hearings**

#### **Composition Juries**

All composition students enrolled in MUSA 451 or MUSA 661W will have their work evaluated at the end of every semester by a jury composed by faculty members. Composition juries will take place during the week of final exams. Two hard copies of all scores composed during the semester and their recordings (MIDI acceptable) should be submitted for evaluation at least one week before the day of the jury. Scores should be engraved using any professional music notation software. Recordings can be submitted as sound files in a memory stick, via email, or in a CD.

Composition juries as well as junior, senior, and master recitals will evaluate the following aspects in each composition:

- Formal organization
- Melodic construction
- Pitch organization
- Rhythmic organization
- Texture and instrumental writing
- Unity, character, and expression
- Notation

#### **Junior, Senior, and Master Recitals Preliminary Hearing**

Prior to the scheduled Junior, Senior, and Master Recital, students are required to schedule a hearing of their recital repertoire with the composition faculty. The date of this hearing will be scheduled based on everyone's availability 1 month prior to the recital. At the hearing, 75% of the music should be ready to share with the faculty, upon which the student will receive feedback.

## **Opportunities for Composition Students:**

### **Band, Orchestra, and Chamber Ensembles Readings**

There will be reading/recording sessions of selected students compositions by the Wind Orchestra, the Orchestra and a professional chamber ensembles. In order to participate in these readings, students must:

- Sign up for the readings at the beginning of the semester
- Submit a composition proposal to their instructor, following the Orchestra and Wind Symphony reading guidelines
- Regularly show work progress to their instructor and make the necessary revisions
- Have their compositions scores and parts ready 3 weeks before the readings, following the Orchestra and Wind Symphony reading guidelines

### **Nextet Concerts and Visiting Composers**

The concerts will consist of classics of the 20th and 21st-century, recent compositions by international composers, works by visiting composers and student compositions. Students will be required to submit works after approval by their teacher at least 6 weeks prior to any Nextet concert.

### **Nextet concert dates:**

All concerts will be at **Doc Rando Recital Hall at 7:30 PM.**

### **Tentative schedule of work (applicable to all levels):**

Week 1	Layout plan of work for the semester: number of pieces to be composed, instrumentation, duration, performance possibilities. Determine reference repertoire.
Week 2 and 3	Analyze the compositional aspects of the reference repertoire corresponding to the level in the composition program and to the semester work. Sketch style exercises as well as ideas to be used and developed during the composition period
Week 4 and 5	Define formal, harmonic, melodic, rhythmic, and general technical, expressive, and aesthetic aspects of the pieces to be composed. Sketch all of these aspects in manuscript paper and submit to discussion with your instructor.
Week 6 to 12	Compose the pieces planned in the previous weeks. Submit sketches and drafts for weekly discussion with your instructor. Be prepared to play, conduct, sing, or perform in an expressive and rhythmically accurate manner your sketches in front of your instructor.
Weeks 8 to 12	During any of the weekly composition seminars, present a report on the work in progress to all

	students in the composition studio.
Week 13 to 14	Transcribe drafts into a professional notation software (Finale, Sibelius, MuseScore) and complete composition of the pieces. Discuss notation decisions, tempos, dynamics, articulations, and balance with your instructor and performance students and faculty. Report on this work to your instructor.
Week 15 to 16	Revise final notation of the project, elaborate parts for individual performers. Have ready score and parts for final juries and for performance during the following semester.

UNLV Policies, next page

**Academic Misconduct**—Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution.

An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <https://www.unlv.edu/studentconduct/student-conduct>.

**Copyright**—The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves with and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

**Disability Resource Center (DRC)**—The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

**Religious Holidays Policy**—Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor **within** the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or **within** the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

**Transparency in Learning and Teaching**—The University encourages application of the transparency method of constructing assignments for student success. Please see these two links for further information:

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>

**Incomplete Grades**—The grade of I—Incomplete—can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student's control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving "I" grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

### Library Resources

Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the subject librarian is

[https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians\\_by\\_subject](https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject). UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students' access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu/>.

**Tutoring and Coaching**—The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

**UNLV Writing Center**—One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.

**Rebelmail**—By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always [@unlv.nevada.edu](mailto:@unlv.nevada.edu). **Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.**

**Final Examinations**—The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

**Any other class specific information**—(e.g., absences, make-up exams, status reporting, extra credit policies, plagiarism/cheating consequences, policy on electronic devices, specialized department or college tutoring programs, bringing children to class, policy on recording classroom lectures, etc.)