

## Music 111: Music Theory I

Class meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:40–11:10, Campus Hall, Room 104

Instructor: Prof. David Schulenberg (email: dschulen@wagner.edu)

Office hours: TBA

*Please note: this syllabus will be updated for spring 2020. Dates, times, and assignments are all subject to revision!* This is the first in a sequence of two courses that teach basic elements of the theory of western music. It focuses on what is called “tonal” or “common-practice” theory. This theory describes aspects of European “classical” music of the period 1600–1900, as well as most present-day popular and commercial music. The course is required of all Music majors and presupposes prior study of music equivalent to MU 101 (Fundamentals of Music Theory). Students unsure of which course is for them should take the music placement exercise, online here: [http://wagner.edu/music/files/2014/11/Music\\_theory\\_placement\\_exercise.pdf](http://wagner.edu/music/files/2014/11/Music_theory_placement_exercise.pdf). Students enrolled in MU 111 should also be enrolled in MU 111L (Lab for Music Theory I), which is a corequisite.

This semester begins with a review of the fundamentals of music notation and the elements of tonal music. The focus is on elements of pitch (notes, melodies, and chords), but we also investigate aspects of rhythm and meter. We will then proceed to a basic understanding of tonal harmony, continuing to the study of more advanced harmonic progressions and modulation in the second semester of the course sequence (MU 112).

**Course objectives.** At the completion of this course, you should be able to:

- understand fundamental principles and terminology of tonal music theory
- recognize and notate pitches, intervals, chord types, and simple harmonic functions
- be able to identify and analyze these elements of music in actual tonal compositions
- identify and understand a variety of meters, rhythms, and their notation.

The course promotes the following goals of the College’s general education program:

- critical thinking
- an appreciation of different modes of inquiry
- an appreciation of and sensitivity to the arts.

**Work for the course** consists primarily of reading plus daily or weekly assignments from the textbook (see below). All assignments are graded, and there are quizzes and a final examination as well.

**Course policies.** Attendance is required and all assignments must be submitted when due unless an acceptable written excuse from an appropriate medical or other professional is provided. You will be considered absent if you arrive to class late, leave early, or use a cellphone or text messaging in class, or if you leave the classroom and return multiple times during a single class meeting. Although this course does not involve papers or research, any work submitted that is not your own (and which does not cite a source for matter that is not your own) will be considered plagiarism and will receive a failing grade. **Please bring your copy of the textbook to every**

**class, or bring a laptop or other device on which you can access the online version of the textbook and the companion website.**

**Grades and attendance.** Final grades are based on the daily assignments (50%), quizzes (20%) and final exam (20%), and class attendance and participation (10%). Any combination of three unexcused absences or late submissions of work will result in your grade being reduced by one letter.

**Textbooks.** Both MU 111 and MU 112 will use the following textbook. Purchase of the textbook includes access to a companion website. Most of our daily assignments will be found on the website (or in the printed version of the workbook). Please do not plan to share a copy of the book with another class member. You will not be able to complete assignments or participate in class as required without your own access to both the book and the online materials.

L. Poundie Burstein and Joseph N. Straus, *Concise Introduction to Tonal Harmony* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016). [Click here](#) for purchase options. [Click here](#) to access the companion website.

The book comprises 39 chapters in five “parts.” Our goal this semester is to work through chapter 14 in part 2, but we will progress more quickly or more depending on how members of the class are able to master the material. Next semester (in MU 112) we will work through chapter 28 in part 3. Although we will not use the remainder of the book in the two required music theory courses, you are likely to use part 5 in the Senior Seminar (MU 491), which is required, and part 4 in the optional music theory courses 211 and 212, if offered.

### **Course Calendar**

**The course calendar** below lists topics and reading (by chapter number) for each week. Note that we will usually devote two class meetings to each topic, but initial reading and written assignments are due at the *first* meeting. *Reading* means not only reading the words of the textbook or the online “Ebook,” but also playing each music example at the keyboard (or listening to it online).

The **written assignment** for each topic will be a selection given in class from the exercises in the workbook. At the second meeting on each topic, you may be asked to sing or play examples from the book or from your completed assignment.

If you are using the online version of the workbook, please print out each page and fill it in manually (do not try to use the online “Noteflight” software).

The website includes “Know It” and “Show It” sections. The first of these contains videos that explain the material of each chapter in further detail. The second contains quiz questions. You should use both of these sections to supplement the reading and written assignments. You may be asked to answer questions from the “Show It” sections in the quizzes listed below.

- 1 Jan. 15 Introduction to the course; notation of pitch and rhythm (chapter 0)  
 2 Jan. 17
- 3 Jan. 22 Scales (chap. 1)  
 4 Jan. 24
- 5 Jan. 29 Intervals (chap. 2)  
 6 Jan. 31 QUIZ
- 7 Feb. 5 Triads and seventh chords (chap. 3)  
 8 Feb. 7
- 9 Feb. 12 Four-part harmony (chap. 4)  
 10 Feb. 14 QUIZ
- 11 Feb. 19 Voice leading (chap. 5)  
 12 Feb. 21
- 13 Feb. 26 Harmonic progression (chap. 6)  
 14 Feb. 28 QUIZ
- [Mar. 5, 7—no class: late-winter break]
- 15 Mar. 12 Figuration and embellishing tones (chap. 7)  
 16 Mar. 14
- 17 Mar. 19 I and V (chap. 9; we are skipping chap. 8)  
 18 Mar. 21 QUIZ
- 19 Mar. 26 The dominant seventh chord (chap. 10)  
 20 Mar. 28
- 21 Apr. 2 I<sup>6</sup> and V<sup>6</sup> (chap. 11)  
 22 Apr. 4 QUIZ
- 23 Apr. 9 Various forms of dominant-function chords (chaps. 12 and 13)  
 24 Apr. 11
- 25 Apr. 16 Approaching the dominant (chap. 14)  
 26 Apr. 26 QUIZ (preparation for final exam)
- TBA FINAL EXAM