

# AP<sup>®</sup> Music Theory

## Syllabus 1

### Course Overview

#### Primary Texts

One of my biggest challenges has been to select a text that includes all the skills delineated by the AP<sup>®</sup> Music Theory curriculum. *The Musician's Guide* books have managed to give me those materials with a theory and analysis textbook, an anthology with CDs, a student workbook with plenty of drills, and an aural skills text that includes dictation and sight-singing practice. [C15]

**C15**—The course includes, but is not limited to, study of a wide variety of vocal and instrumental music from the standard Western tonal repertoires.

Clendinning, Jane Piper, and Elizabeth West Marvin. 2005. *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis, with Workbook and Anthology*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Kostka, Stefan, and Dorothy Payne. 2004. *Tonal Harmony with an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music*, 5th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Ottman, Robert. 2004. *Music for Sight-Singing*, 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Palisca, Claude V., editor. 1988. *Norton Anthology of Western Music*, Vols. 1 and 2, 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton.

Phillips, Joel, Jane Piper Clendinning, and Elizabeth West Marvin. 2005. *The Musician's Guide to Aural Skills*, Vol. 1. New York: W. W. Norton.

### Course Planner

#### First Nine Weeks

##### Part I: Building a Musical Vocabulary

(Note: "Parts" in this syllabus refer to corresponding sections of the Musician's Guide and, in some instances, are presented out of order.)

##### Week 1 Overview of AP Music Theory Course Description book

Although students should be aware of the expectations for this class, a close perusal of the materials produced by the College Board has helped me to clarify the advanced content for the course with them. I administer the sample exam questions found in the AP Course Description during the second class session. We complete the sample free-response questions as a class, including the sight-singing exercises. I have compiled a checklist of the theory concepts required to answer each item, and we use it as we review our tests and make the appropriate corrections.

Chapters from *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis* (textbook, anthology); *Guide to Aural Skills* (workbook)

Week 1	Chapter 1	Pitch and Pitch Class [C1]
Week 2	Chapter 2	Beat, Meter, and Rhythm: Simple Meters [C1]
Weeks 3–4	Chapter 3	Pitch Collections, Scales, and Major Keys [C1]
Week 5	Chapter 4	Minor Keys and Diatonic Modes, Pentatonic Scales [C1]
	Chapter 5	Beat, Meter, and Rhythm: Compound Meters [C1]
Week 6	Chapter 6	Pitch Intervals [C1]
Weeks 7–8	Chapter 7	Triads and Seventh Chords [C1]
Week 9	<i>Part I Exam</i>	

**C1**—The course enables students to master the rudiments and terminology of music: notational skills, intervals, scales, keys, chords, meter, and rhythm.

### Sight-Singing:

Ottman, Robert. *Music for Sight-Singing*.

Week 1	Chapter 1	Introduction to Solfège/Simple Meter [C12]
Week 3	Chapter 2	Scale Line Melodies/Simple Meter
Week 5	Chapter 3	Intervals from the Tonic Triad, Major Keys/Simple Meter
Week 7	Chapter 4	Intervals from the Tonic Triad, Major Keys/Compound Meter

**C12**—Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: sight-singing.

## Second Nine Weeks

This nine-week period is riddled with partial weeks because of the state teachers convention (2 days), Thanksgiving break (3 days), December holiday break (10 days), and semester exams (Week 9). Students in this class are also advanced ensemble musicians and are frequently scheduled to perform during the school day. *Individualized pacing is a necessity to teach these theory concepts and to ensure the proficiency of all students.*

**C2**—The course progresses to include more sophisticated and creative tasks: writing a bass line for a given melody or harmonization of a given melody in four parts.

### Part II: Linking Musical Elements in Time

Chapters from *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis*: (textbook, anthology); *Guide to Aural Skills* (workbook)

Weeks 1–2	Chapter 8	Intervals in Action (Two-Voice Counterpoint Supplement with Chapter 8: Voice Leading in Two Voices (from Bruce Benward's <i>Music in Theory and Practice</i> ) [C2]
Week 3	Chapter 9	Melodic and Rhythmic Embellishment in Two-Voice Composition [C7]
Week 4	Chapter 10	Notation and Scoring [C1]
Weeks 4–5	Chapter 11	Voicing Chords in Multiple Parts: Instrumentation [C8] Instrumental arranging projects are assigned. Each piece must have at least two transposing instruments (not counting octave displacements). All work must be saved to disk. Finale or NotePad notation software must be used [C13]
Week 5	<i>Part II Exam</i>	

**C7**—The course covers the following concepts or procedures based in common-practice tonality: functional triadic harmony in traditional four-voice texture, including non-harmonic tones, seventh chords, and secondary dominants.

**C8**—The course covers the following concepts or procedures based in common-practice tonality: Modulation to closely related keys.

**C13**—Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: written exercises.

## Part III: The Phrase Model

Chapters from *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis*: (textbook, anthology);  
*Guide to Aural Skills* (workbook)

Week 6	Chapter 12	The Basic Phrase Model: Tonic and Dominant Voice-Leading [C7]
Week 7	Chapter 13	Embellishing Tones
Week 8	Chapter 14	Chorale Harmonization and Figured Bass [C3]
Week 9	<i>Semester Exams—No Regularly Scheduled Classes</i>	

**C7**—The course covers the following concepts or procedures based in common-practice tonality: functional triadic harmony in traditional four-voice texture, including non-harmonic tones, seventh chords, and secondary dominants.

### Sight-Singing

Ottman, Robert. *Music for Sight-Singing*.

Week 1	Chapter 5	Minor Keys: Intervals from the Tonic Triad/ Simple and Compound Meters
Week 2	Chapter 6	Intervals from the Dominant Triad: Major and Minor Keys
Week 3	Chapter 8	Further Use of Diatonic Intervals
Week 4	Chapter 9	Intervals from the Dominant Seventh Chord [C12]

**C3**—The course progresses to include more sophisticated and creative tasks: realization of a figured bass.

**C12**—Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: sight-singing.

### Part II—Melody: Diatonic Intervals/Rhythm: Subdivision of the Beat

Week 5	Chapter 10	Rhythm Dictation Practice [C11]
Week 6	Chapter 11	Melody: Intervals from the Tonic and Dominant Triads
Week 7	Chapter 12	Further Use of Diatonic Intervals

**C11**—Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: listening (discrete intervals, scales, etc.; dictations; excerpts from literature).

## Third Nine Weeks

Chapters from *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis*: (textbook, anthology);  
*Guide to Aural Skills* (workbook)

Week 1	Chapter 14	Chorale Harmonization and Figured Bass [C3]
Week 2	Chapter 15	Expanding the Basic Phrase: Leading-Tone, Predominant, and 6/4 Chords [C7]
	Chapter 16	Further Expansions of the Basic Phrase: Tonic Expansions, Root Progressions, and the Mediant Triad [C4, C9]
Week 3	Chapter 17	The Interaction of Melody and Harmony: More on Cadence, Phrase, and Melody [C5]
Week 4	Chapter 18	Diatonic Sequences
Week 5	Chapter 19	Intensifying the Dominant: Secondary Dominants and Secondary Leading-Tone Chords; New Voice-Leading Chords [C7]
	Chapter 20	Phrase Rhythm and Motivic Analysis [C9]

**C4**—The course progresses to include more sophisticated and creative tasks: realization of a Roman numeral progression.

**C9**—The course also teaches: phrase structure.

**C5**—The course progresses to include more sophisticated and creative tasks: analysis of repertoire, including analysis of motivic treatment and harmonic analysis.

## Part V: Musical Form and Interpretation

Week 6	Part III Exam	
	Chapter 26	Popular Song and Art Song [C5]
Week 7	Chapter 27	Variation and Rondo [C10]
	Chapter 23	Binary and Ternary Forms (from Part IV) [C10]
Week 8	Chapter 28	Sonata-Form Movements
	Chapter 29	Chromaticism, Whole-tone Scales; Introduction to 20th century composing techniques [C6]
Week 9	Part V Exam	

**C5**—The course progresses to include more sophisticated and creative tasks: analysis of repertoire, including analysis of motivic treatment and harmonic analysis.

**C10**—The course also teaches: small forms (e.g., rounded binary, simple ternary, theme and variation, strophic).

**C6**—The course includes the following scales: major, minor, modal, pentatonic, and whole tone.

### Sight-Singing

- 8-measure excerpts from choral literature
- Teacher-composed 8-measure phrases
- Student-composed 8-measure phrases

## Fourth Nine Weeks

### Part IV: Further Expansion of the Harmonic Vocabulary

Chapters from *The Musician's Guide to Theory and Analysis*: (textbook, anthology); *Guide to Aural Skills* (workbook)

Week 1	Chapter 21	Tonicizing Scale Degrees Other Than V [C7]
	Chapter 22	Modulation to Closely Related Keys [C8]
Week 2	Chapter 24	Color and Drama in Composition
Weeks 1–6	Required exams from the Musician's Guide Web site	
Weeks 1–6	Dictation exercises—melodic and harmonic [C11]	
Weeks 1–6	Free-response question exercises	
Weeks 1–6	Recorded sight-singing exercises	
Weeks 1–6	In-depth aural analysis of literature—classwork/discussion [C11]	
Weeks 1–6:	Students complete teacher-designed exams based on AP Released Exam materials.	
Weeks 3 and 5:	Complete AP Music Theory Released Exams All students are administered two recorded sight-singing tests comparable to those used on the AP Exam.	
Weeks 7–9	Student arranging assignments	

**C7**—The course covers the following concepts or procedures based in common-practice tonality: functional triadic harmony in traditional four-voice texture, including non-harmonic tones, seventh chords, and secondary dominants.

**C8**—The course covers the following concepts or procedures based in common-practice tonality: Modulation to closely related keys.

**C11**—Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: listening (discrete intervals, scales, etc.; dictations; excerpts from literature).

Overview of each chapter summary from Stefan Koska and Dorothy Payne's *Tonal Harmony*:

- Part I —Fundamentals
- Part II—Diatonic Triads
- Part III —Diatonic Seventh Chords
- Part IV—Chromaticism

After-school study sessions are offered to students who desire extra practice sessions.

## Teaching Strategies/Student Activities

The following is my favorite set of lessons for my AP Music Theory students. It requires that they take a great deal of responsibility for the success or failure of the outcome. If students don't complete the assignments on time, it is virtually impossible to receive credit for late work.

### Session I: Introduction to the Chord Classification System

The tonic class includes only the I chord. It is the most stable and, therefore, can be approached from any class in the system. The first-class chords include the V (or V7) and the viio. The strength of the root movement of a 5th is immediately apparent, and the class can readily discuss the inclusion of the viio within the V7. Second-class chords include the IV and the ii. The vi is a third-class chord and the system is completed with the iii chord as a fourth-class chord. Care is given to set up the system as follows:

4th class	3rd class	2nd class	1st class	Tonic class
iii	IV vi	V ii	viio	I

Moving up in class within the system forms a chord progression. An elision is formed when a class is skipped within a progression, i.e., vi-V-I. I then perform several progressions using the system, followed immediately by several progressions of randomly selected chords that don't follow the system. Because the students feel I have "set them up" with my introduction, I challenge them to write a class composition with chords selected using the system.

We begin with the first student and progress through the class with each student "picking a chord." Students are upset when they follow a student who has selected the V chord, but they readily thank the students who move from the tonic class to a third-class chord and give them numerous choices. When the composition is complete, I perform the piece in block chords. We discuss the strength of the deceptive cadence (I introduce cadences earlier in their syllabus) and some of the reasons for the deception after exploring this system.

We analyze several pieces from our anthology from a variety of stylistic periods to reinforce the dominant use of this system. I frequently perform pieces by Brian McKnight, Chicago, and Kirk Franklin, and provide a chord analysis to add credibility to the system. The class is then given the following assignment:

1. Compose a 16-bar chord progression using the chord classification system in a major key (we will repeat both sessions with minor chords later in the year). [C14]

**C14**—Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: creative exercises.

2. Write and label a cadence (authentic, half, plagal, or deceptive) at the eighth and sixteenth measures. [C13]
3. Be prepared to perform your piece in block chords at the next class session. You may save it to disk from Finale or Notepad in general midi and use the synthesizer for your performance. [C14]

**C13**—Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: written exercises.

**C14**—Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: creative exercises.

## Session II: Using Progression to Write Chord-Tone Melodies and Adding Embellishing Tones

The next class session begins with each student either performing his piece and/or playing the disk in the classroom synthesizer keyboard. My students begin to get a little bored after the first eight or nine demonstrations and start socializing. At that point I provide a sheet for them to try to write the progressions they hear, with no repetitions. Immediately the behavior is improved and replaced by requests to hear pieces more than once, which I always “reluctantly” provide. [C13]

Session II is an expansion on the previous assignment. They must now write chord-tone melodies based on their personal chord progressions. I demonstrate on the overhead projector where I have taken the class composition and already completed the first four measures. We again utilize the class composition procedure, and each student selects a pitch from the chord to be used until the piece is complete. One student performs the piece in block chords as I perform the new class composition at my keyboard.

Now the class discussion is loaded with comments regarding the boring nature of our piece, which has too many skips in the melodic line. I carefully find places to add each of the following embellishing tones to the class composition, noting the appropriate placement, proper approach, and proper resolution of each.

Embellishing tones	Location	Approached	Resolved
Passing tones	Notes 3rd apart	By step toward 2nd pitch	By step toward 2nd pitch
Chromatic Passing tones	Notes at least a major 2nd apart	By ½ step toward 2nd pitch	By ½ step toward 2nd pitch
Upper Neighboring tones	Repeated pitches	By step up from 1st pitch	By step down to 2nd pitch
Lower Neighboring tones	Repeated pitches	By step down from 1st pitch	By step up to 2nd pitch
Escape tones (or Echappe)	Notes at least a 3rd apart	By step away from 2nd pitch	By leap toward 2nd pitch
Appoggiatura	Notes at least a 3rd apart	By leap a 2nd past the 2nd pitch	By step back to the 2nd pitch

Because I teach in a piano lab, students are then given time to explore possible chord-tone melodies they can write from their progressions. I take this time to check the accuracy of each student’s use of the chord classification system and encourage editing, if needed. The most frequent errors are in the use of the

cadences and the overabundance of iii chords. The stronger students usually have more cadences than requested, frequently at measures 4 and 12.

The class is then given the following assignment:

1. Compose a chord-tone melody using your chord classification system chord progression (with corrections, if needed).
2. Add a minimum of the following embellishing tones to your piece and label each one. Do not use a computer program for this assignment! [C14]
  - 8 passing tones—any type (P.T. or C.P.T.)
  - 4 neighboring tones—any type (U.N.T. or L.N.T.)
  - 2 escape tones (E.T.)
  - 2 appoggiaturas (APP.)
3. Be prepared to play your block chords as I perform your melody at the next class session.

**C14**—Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: creative exercises.

### Session III: Performing Compositions and Introducing Suspensions, Retardations, and Anticipations

This session begins with the performance of the new compositions with three “performance sessions” within the lesson presentation. Suspensions, retardations, and anticipations can be difficult to fully explore, and I have found that students’ enthusiasm about their peers’ compositions can help to maintain their focus on my teaching.

Once again, I use the original class composition to demonstrate the use of the suspension. I add each type of suspension to the piece (9–8, 7–6, 4–3, and 2–3) at measures 4, 8, 12, and 16. I also have each voice perform the suspension to ensure students’ understanding of “reducing intervals” for the analysis. Each suspension is played during the analysis and immediately followed by a second piece with retardations in the same location. [C5]

**C5**—The course progresses to include more sophisticated and creative tasks: analysis of repertoire, including analysis of motivic treatment and harmonic analysis.

A short performance of the assignments is inserted here to change the pace and to encourage more student participation. The final concept, anticipation, is briefly discussed and shown in a third piece. The anticipations are also completed at measures 4, 8, 12, and 16.

After the last performance of assignments, the class is given a listening pop quiz on suspensions, retardations, and anticipations. This is a challenging dictation exam, but students always seem to perform well. I do not assign another expansion of the chord progression at this juncture. I divide the class into cooperative learning groups to complete the following assignment (Important: I have tried allowing the students to pick their own group members and it was a disaster!):

You have two class sessions to complete this project (This is four calendar days at my school.)

1. Compose a 32-bar progression using the chord classification system.
2. Be sure to provide a cadence at least every eight bars and label each.
3. Demonstrate the use of embellishing tones (and label) with the following minimums: **[C14]**
  - a. Passing tones 16
  - b. Neighboring tones 8
  - c. Escape tones 4
  - d. Appoggiaturas 4
  - e. Suspensions 2
  - f. Retardations 1
  - g. Anticipations 1
4. Use Finale NotePad to write each piece. Label your composition after printing. Include a CD or floppy disk with your completed project.
5. Perform the piece on the major instruments (or voices) of your group members.

**C14**—Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: creative exercises.

## Post AP Exam Activities:

Seniors enrolled in AP Music Theory complete their class work after they take the AP Exam. All students who have earned a C or higher in the AP Music Theory course and have taken the AP Exam are exempt from the regular semester exam. There are usually a few juniors who have three additional weeks of class after the AP Exam. We volunteer to complete arranging assignments for the ensemble teachers to help them prepare for their band/choir/orchestra performance at commencement. For instance, in the spring of 2005, we notated the Arkansas instrumental music All-Region music sets using Finale music software.

## Student Evaluation

I use a computerized system called *GradeQuick* for my AP Music Theory IV class. This lets me post all class grades, syllabi, and special announcements to a Web site called Edline where parents and students can access the information. Grades are weighted to ensure the appropriate value is placed on each of the class concepts presented.

### First Semester Grade Weighting:

Textbook material	Lecture demonstration	20 percent
Workbook material	Homework and workbook	20 percent
Aural skills material		10 percent
Pop Quizzes		5 percent
Open-book review quizzes		15 percent
Exams		30 percent

## Second Semester Grade Weighting:

These percentages are altered for the second semester to reflect the increased analysis work, contextual listening, sight-singing, and dictation exams.

Textbook material	Lecture demonstration	15 percent
Workbook material	Homework and workbook	15 percent
Aural skills material		15 percent
Pop quizzes (including sight-singing)		5 percent
Open book review quizzes		15 percent
Exams		35 percent

## Textbook Material:

Textbook materials are presented through a lecture/demonstration format:

- Students are given guided notes designed to make them active participants in the lesson presentation.
- All notes are collected at the end of each lecture and graded for lecture/demonstration points (25).
- Students who miss class are required to complete their guided-note sheets with a classmate in order to receive 20 out of the 25 points. Since the students who were present have sheets that are already graded, this is the only fair way to assess this portion of the makeup work. Students who fail to complete this requirement are given 0 points for each lecture/demo lesson missed.

## Workbook Material:

This material is used for homework assignments. The first few sheets in each section are completed together to ensure that students understand the required work. Worksheets are checked for completeness daily (10 points/homework). They are collected and checked for accuracy every three weeks (100 points/workbook).

## Aural Skills Material:

This is completed as classwork. Pop quizzes are given at least once a week (25–40 points). Most of these are taken from the “Try It” exercises in the *Musician’s Guide to Aural Skills* text. Each student’s lowest pop-quiz grade is dropped at the end of the nine weeks. Students who miss pop quizzes are given the “Self-Tests” from the Kostka–Payne text to restore their points. All sight-singing pop quizzes must be completed.

Short “announced” quizzes (worth 50–75 points) are given prior to major exams. They are always open-book/notebook quizzes. Quizzes and exams are formatted the same to help students learn the directions for the exams. Quizzes are returned at the next class session so that students can use them for study sheets.

Exams are given at the end of each chapter in the textbook. They are twice the value of the open-book quiz that precedes them (100–150 points).

This testing policy was developed after many years of working on a fair way to assess students while preparing them for the challenging AP Music Theory Exam. Students who fail the open-book quizzes are offered remediation through online tutoring sites that review key signatures, intervals, and ear training.

### **Test Formats:**

Most of my pop quizzes are given as open-response questions. Announced quizzes and exams are also presented in that format for the first nine weeks. After students have mastered the first part of the course (Building a Musical Vocabulary), I design quizzes and exams in the multiple-choice/open response/dictation format to prepare them for the AP Exam. Sight-singing exams are recorded in a private setting.

### **Teacher Resources**

Benward, Bruce, and Marilyn Saker. 2003. *Music in Theory and Practice*, 7th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Clough, John, Joyce Conley, and Claire Boge. 1999. *Scales, Intervals, Keys, Triads, Rhythm and Meter: A Programmed Course in Elementary Music Theory, with an Introduction to Partwriting*, 3rd ed. New York: W. W. Norton.

Gauldin, Robert. 1997. *Harmonic Practice in Tonal Music*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Harder, Paul O., and Greg A. Steinke. 2003. *Basic Materials in Music Theory: A Programmed Course*. 10th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Kraft, Leo. 1999. *A New Approach to Ear Training: A Programmed Course in Melodic and Harmonic Dictation*, 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton.

Kraft, Leo. 1987. *Gradus I: An Integrated Approach to Harmony, Counterpoint, and Analysis*, 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton.

Ottman, Robert W. 1998. *Elementary Harmony: Theory and Practice*, 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Roig-Francoli, Miguel A. 2003. *Harmony in Context*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Zorn, Jay, with June August. 2003. *Listening to Music*, 4th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

### **Technology Aids**

- Web site for *Musician's Guide* texts at [www.wwnorton.com](http://www.wwnorton.com) (each textbook has a log-in code)
- *SmartMusic* subscriptions available for all AP Music Theory students from [www.makemusic.com](http://www.makemusic.com)
- Free download of *Finale NotePad* software at [www.makemusic.com](http://www.makemusic.com)
- Ricci Adams's interactive tutorials: [www.musictheory.net](http://www.musictheory.net)
- *GradeQuick* software and Edline Web site: [www.gradequick.com](http://www.gradequick.com)