

AP[®] Music Theory

Syllabus 3

Course Overview

AP[®] Music Theory is designed for students who need it for career study as well as those who desire it for enrichment. While the main emphasis is placed on music of the Common Practice period (1600–1900), music of other stylistic periods is also studied. [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.

Course Objectives

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- a. Notate pitch and rhythm in accordance with standard notation practices
- b. Read melodies in treble, bass, and movable C clefs
- c. Write, sing, and play major scales and all three forms of minor scales
- d. Recognize by ear and by sight all intervals within an octave
- e. Use the basic rules that govern music composition
- f. Harmonize a melody with appropriate chords using good voice leading
- g. Analyze the chords of a musical composition by number and letter name
- h. Transpose a composition from one key to another
- i. Express musical ideas by composing and arranging
- j. Understand and recognize basic musical forms: ternary, binary, rondo, etc.
- k. Write simple rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic dictation

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

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

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

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.

Textbooks

Brye, Joseph. *Basic Principles of Music Theory*. New York: Ronald Press, 1965.
Kostka, Stefan, and Dorothy Payne. *Tonal Harmony with an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000.
Ottman, Robert. *Elementary Harmony: Theory and Practice*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1998.

Throughout the Kostka–Payne textbook, basic music theory elements such as Roman numerals and functional harmonic progressions are addressed in the context of a variety of Western art music. These elements are addressed in classroom instruction in conjunction with the utilization of the textbook. Furthermore, elements of twentieth-century music are addressed in classroom instruction in conjunction with the utilization of Chapter 28 of the textbook. [C4, C5, C6, C7]

Course Planner

This schedule is only approximate, as classes may move slower or faster from one year to another. Written homework and reading assignments are given at each class meeting. [C13] Students are also assigned specific exercises on the Horvit–Koozin–Nelson CD (see Teacher Resources below) to drill ear training outside of class. In general, I try to devote about one third of each class meeting to ear training—sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on the amount of new material discussed during class. I have cross-referenced the schedule to three popular texts.

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

Weeks 1–2 (5 class meetings)

Written skills: notation, key signatures, time signatures, major and minor scales, and modes; [C1, C6, C11] Kostka–Payne, Chapters 1 and 2; Brye, Chapter 1; Ottman, Chapters 1 and 2.

Ear training: melodic dictation, 3-5 note patterns, sing scales.

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

Weeks 3–4 (5 class meetings)

Written skills: intervals including inversions, continue to drill scales and key signatures, pentatonic scales, whole-tone scales, review Kostka–Payne, Chapters 1 and 2; Brye, Chapter 2; Ottman, Chapter 2. [C2]

Ear training: write short stepwise melodies (7-12 notes), introduce intervals following Benward sequence (M-m 2 and M-m 3, then add P4 and P5), sing scales. [C14]

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

Weeks 5–6 (5 class meetings)

Written skills: triads and seventh chords.

Ear training: continue to drill scales and short stepwise melodies, add another set of intervals following the Benward book sequence, recognize triad quality and inversion; Kostka–Payne, Chapters 3 and 4; Brye, Chapter 3; Ottman, Chapter 2. [C14]

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

Weeks 7–9 (7–8 class meetings)

Written skills: triad and chord identification, introduction to part writing and harmonic progression [C2]; Kostka–Payne, Chapters 5 and 6; Brye, Chapter 4; Ottman, Chapters 4 and 5.

Ear training: continue to drill scales, triad quality, and intervals (add M-m 6), short stepwise melodies. [C11]

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.

End of first grading term

Weeks 10–13 (10 class meetings)

Written skills: writing short progressions with given soprano or bass, concentrating on primary triads in root position. [C2] Discuss writing good melodies. At this point I frequently include a couple of lessons on melody writing using simplified first-species counterpoint rules or soprano-bass counterpoint, as the Kostka–Payne text refers to it. [C6] Students learn to recognize harmonic intervals, parallel fifths and octaves, work some with modes, and, I hope, learn to write melodies that are mostly conjunct with good shape. Kostka–Payne, Chapters 6 and 7; Brye, Chapter 5; Ottman, Chapters 5 and 6

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

Ear training: test basic skills on triad and scale identification, identify all intervals, continue to drill short melodies and sing stepwise melodies. (If students are ready, I start to add melodies with small skips.)

Weeks 14–15 (5 class meetings)

Written skills: extend length of progressions, add first inversion triads. (While I still concentrate on primary triads, some secondary triads begin to creep into homework.) Kostka–Payne, Chapter 8; Brye, Chapter 6; Ottman, Chapter 9.

Ear training: by this point (late November or early December), I give a short test on triad, scale, and interval identification nearly every class meeting—mostly to keep skills sharp—while we begin to concentrate on more challenging melodies and harmonic progressions using I and V. Sight-singing is still simple, mostly stepwise melodies. [C12]

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

Weeks 16–18 (7–8 class meetings)

Written skills: introduce second inversion triads; Kostka–Payne, Chapter 9; Brye, Chapter 7; Ottman, Chapter 9.

Ear training: basic skills tests continue. Harmonic progressions add the IV triad. Melodic dictation and sight-singing stay within the same parameters.

End of second grading term

Weeks 19–21 (7–8 class meetings)

Written skills: introduce V^7 and inversions. [C7] Homework assignments are simplified somewhat so students can concentrate on V^7 and correct resolution. Kostka–Payne, Chapter 13; Brye, Chapter 8; Ottman, Chapter 13.

Ear training: basic skills tests continue. Harmonic dictation continues to concentrate on primary triads and V^7 , but inversions are added. Melodic dictation and sight-singing begin to include melodies with small skips.

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.

Weeks 22–23 (5 class meetings)

Written skills: introduce secondary triads and their inversions. Homework exercises become longer. I may give students an 8- or 12-measure hymn melody to harmonize. Kostka–Payne review chapter 7; Brye, Chapter 9; Ottman, Chapters 10 and 14. [C2]

Ear training: harmonic dictation adds the ii triad. Melodic dictation and sight-singing remain the same.

Special project: short composition assigned. There should be enough harmonic vocabulary and creativity to write a composition by now. [C13, C14] I establish parameters only. The composition will be due at the end of the term.

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.

Week 24 (2–3 class meetings)

Written skills: introduce nonharmonic tones. Homework includes figured-bass exercises with limited nonharmonic tones. [C7] Kostka–Payne, Chapters 11 and 12; Ottman, Chapters 11 and 12.

Ear training: introduce identification of nonharmonic tones. Other dictation continues with the same skills.

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.

Weeks 25–26 (5 class meetings)

Written skills: homework includes all triads and nonharmonic tones and may be given melodies, bass lines with figured bass, fragments of soprano and bass mixed, or drill part-writing skills. Kostka–Payne review, Chapters 7–13; Brye review, Chapters 5–9; Ottman, review, Chapters 9–14. [C3]

Ear training: harmonic dictation starts to add other triads. Other dictation continues with the same skills.

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

Week 27 (2–3 class meetings)

I administer the first practice AP Exam.

Composition projects are due and performed in class.

End of third grading term

Weeks 28–29 (5 class meetings)

Written skills: introduce secondary functions (secondary dominant and secondary leading tone chords), motives, phrases, and periods; Kostka–Payne, Chapters 10 and 17; [C5] Brye, Chapters 11 and 12; Ottman, Chapter 18.

Ear training: harmonic dictation includes all triads. Melodic dictation and sight-singing become more complex. Start to add phrase structure and small form identification in the manner of the Benward text (see Teacher Resources below). [C9, C10]

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

Week 30 (2–3 class meetings)

Written skills: introduce modulation to closely related keys, introduce contrapuntal devices, and review melody writing. [C8] Homework is longer and more complex. Add a Bach chorale analysis project. [C7] Kostka–Payne, Chapter 18; Brye, Chapter 10; Ottman, Chapter 18.

Ear training: more of the same; play melodies on different instruments to expose students to something other than piano sounds.

C9—The course also teaches: phrase structure.

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

Week 31 (2–3 class meetings)

I administer the second practice AP Exam.

Weeks 32–33 (5 class meetings)

During the weeks of AP Exams, because I have students who take several exams, class meetings typically consist of AP style free-response problems, vocabulary review, or something similar.

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

Weeks 34–36 (5–8 class meetings, depending on school calendar)

Students work on their final compositional projects.

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.

Teaching Strategies

I believe in teaching to mastery. Up to one third of each class may be spent in drill work on a white board. We work on problems together; I might write what students suggest; students may write solutions on the board individually or in groups. Students are encouraged to drill key signatures, intervals, and triad construction until it becomes automatic for them. Timed quizzes are given periodically to help them reach this level. For example, I might ask students to build 10 triads with accidentals in three minutes or identify 20 key signatures in two minutes. I gradually increase the amount of work and decrease the amount of time.

I find aural skills challenging to teach as well as challenging for students to develop and master. Students may possess a good sense of relative pitch for their instrument or voice but be unable to relate it to written work or transfer it to piano dictation. Since I try to make ensemble rehearsal an extension of Music Theory class for those students in both, I will stop rehearsal for a short time and point out problems or concepts we have discussed in Music Theory. To help transfer and aid cohesion during theory class and during ensemble rehearsal, I teach sight-singing using numbers rather than solfège. [C12] I use Stephen Melillo's *Function Chorales* as warm-up material in my instrumental ensemble classes. The *Function Chorales* are simple progressions written by number charts rather than standard notation. Melillo's idea is that any chorale can be played in any key. Ideally, students in an ensemble are learning to tune triads and chords, to hear that the third of the major triad needs to be lowered slightly to be in tune, that scale degrees have different characteristics, and that they need to listen to balance the ensemble. When those students come into AP Music Theory class, they have a basic understanding that 1, 3, and 5 of the scale is the tonic triad, and so on. When we sight-sing using numbers, they begin to see a larger picture and put things together. In the years since I began taking this approach, my ensembles have performed with better intonation as student musicians develop the aural skills that relate to performance. These students realize that developing aural skills helps them become better performers.

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

With the recent implementation of a piano lab in our school, we are developing a keyboard component for the AP Music Theory course. Students will utilize the keyboards for a variety of exercises, including developing the skills necessary to play some homework assignments, harmonic progressions, and melodies.

In preparation for the AP Exam, we take two AP Released Exams in their entirety. During several days in April (depending upon vacations), timed quizzes given in class use individual free-response questions from released exams or problems I have developed based on AP Exam-type questions. We also discuss the psychology of test taking and the importance of reading carefully to understand what a multiple-choice question is really asking.

Technology is becoming increasingly important to musicians. I encourage students to download Finale NotePad for personal use. Composition assignments are completed using computer-generated notation. I have had students email homework to me after they complete it in NotePad. Sometimes I offer work that can be completed for extra credit, and this work must be completed on the computer. I encourage students to use the website www.musictheory.net for drill and review. In addition, this year I am assigning sections of the Horvit-Koozin-Nelson *Music for Ear Training* CD-ROM.

Student Evaluation

I rarely give tests. Instead, I rely on daily homework assignments. I offer students the opportunity to correct mistakes for partial credit on early assignments (intervals, triads). During the second and third grading terms, I grade an in-class ear training quiz once per week. The goal is to have students master the material. Special projects, such as short compositions, may be added during the third and/or fourth term(s). Written assignments count for 80 percent of the final grade and ear training assignments, 20 percent. [C13]

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

Teacher Resources

Benward, Bruce, and J. Timothy Kolosick. *Ear Training: A Technique for Listening*. 6th ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000.

Berkowitz, Sol, Gabriel Fontrier, and Leo Kraft. *A New Approach to Sight Singing*. 3rd ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986.

Curry, Vicki. Forthcoming. *Introduction to Music Theory*. CD-ROM. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Copley Custom Textbooks.

Horvit, Michael, Timothy Koozin, and Robert Nelson. *Music for Ear Training with CD-ROM and Workbook*. 2nd ed. Boston, Wadsworth, 1995.

Melillo, Stephen. n.d. *Function Chorales*. CD-ROM. Smithfield, Va.: Stormworks.

Ottman, Robert. *Music for Sight Singing*. 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1986.