

Course Objectives and Syllabus for Song Writing

Lecture: MUTH 3217 – Mon / Wed 2 – 2:50, Rm. 2105 –2 hour credit

Lab: MUTH 3117 – Thurs 7 – 9:50, Rm. 2050 – 2-hour credit

To enroll in Song Writing, students must sign up for both the Lecture and Lab. upon successful completion of the Lecture/Lab combination, the Lab may be repeated.

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Course Rational

An enduring form of human creativity is found in the writing of song. In the environment of the liberal arts university, which combines environments of learning and creative endeavor, students will be motivated to learn about the craft of song writing and will want to apply what they have learned directly. This course of study will be inclusive, open to students who are not music majors. This course will also be available to those who wish to focus on writing lyrics.

Course Aims and Learning Outcomes: General

With the successful completion of this course, the student will accomplish the following:

- Understand multiple approaches to starting and finishing a song.
- Understand the essential components of a song
- Know basic song forms
- Gain insight on the basics of recording
- Understand certain aspects of music law, particularly copyright

Course Aims and Learning Outcomes: Specific

- Compose songs
 - As directed by certain exercises
 - As stimulated by the course environment
- Perform songs
 - With or without the assistance of other class members or instructor
 - Within and outside of the classroom
- Transcribe songs
 - Via recording
 - Via notation

Grading

Assignments and Quizzes = 80%

Expect assignments every lecture day and one quiz a week.

Attendance and Participation = 20%

Attendance and participation policy

3 unexcused absences will result in you being dropped from this course.

Participation includes active discussion and inquiry in every lecture and the sharing of assigned material in every lab. Whenever appropriate, you may also be asked to support your classmates music as a vocalist or instrumentalist.

Texts

A text is not required.

Students will be required to bring 2 journals

- For the Journal of Influence (discussed below)
- For songwriting ideas

Students must be prepared to take extensive notes. Part of quality participation as mentioned above is to seek clarification of ideas presented in the class.

Instruments

Students are encouraged to bring their own instruments provided that they are reasonably portable. Electric guitarists/keyboardists are responsible for bringing amplification and cables.

While I will bring a few amplifiers, I would only be able to accommodate a small number of students.

Academic Honesty and Misconduct

You are bound by the Honor Code and the SMU Student Code of Conduct.

For complete details, see: http://www.smu.edu/studentlife/PCL_01_ToC.asp

Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) at 214-768-1470 or www.smu.edu/alec/dass.asp to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. They should then schedule an appointment with the professor to make appropriate arrangements. (See University Policy No. 2.4; an attachment describes the DASS procedures and relocated office.)

Religious Observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities: Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

Syllabus

In the event of a guest artist appearance (such as Michael Martin Murphy, mentioned in the application) or instructor absence due to weekend touring obligations, the syllabus is subject to change, primarily in the form of compressing the topics listed below.

Week 1 – June 3 – 7

June 3

The Journal of Influence

The study of Influence – setting up a Journal of Influence: songs and songwriters

Assignment: After organizing the Journal of Influence, the student will list 5 songs and 5 composers they consider to be influential.

June 4

Song Form I – The chorus, the verse and their interaction

Pre-chorus and the symbiotic relationship between chorus and verse

Assignment: Starting a song from a chorus or verse.

June 5

Lab – The assignment from the previous day will be reviewed, each student receiving personal attention on crafting his or her work.

June 6

Journal of Influence, continued

Musical styles

Location and Culture

Miscellaneous, including literature, history, etc.

Similar to the June 3 assignment, students will list influences related to the day's discussion.

Additionally, another assignment is begun where students develop their understanding of the song and songwriter influences by reviewing relevant backgrounds for each listed song and each listed songwriter.

June 7

Song Form II - Bridge / Middle 8

Prologue, Intro / Coda (Outro) / solos / breakdowns / discussion comparing the essential song form and arrangement

Quiz: Chorus, Pre-chorus and Verse

Week 2 – June 10 – 14

June 10

Lab

Song ideas begun from the June 5 lab will be developed.

June 11

Lyrics I – The nature of the song, points of view, types of lyrics

June 12

Observing your life and environment, particularly Taos.

Referring to Sean Nos, students will begin research on Taos, including its history, developing a song idea specifically from Taos.

Assignment: Derive a song idea through research of the Taos environment

June 13

Lab

Ideas from June 12 will be workshopped, synthesized with concepts from previous lectures.

June 14

Lyrics 2 Does it have to rhyme?

Real Rhymes

False Rhymes

2-rhyme/double rhyme

3 rhyme/triple

Internal rhymes

Assignment: You are provided with a line of lyrics. Finish a second line with the following:

Real rhyme
False rhyme
Double rhyme

Quiz: Drawn from the topics discussed June 11 and 12

Week 3 – June 17 – 21

June 17

Analyzing Influences

Going beyond collecting data about the listed influences, the students should be prepared by all of the previous lectures to breaking down an influence, getting a perspective on the nature of it's influence on them and drawing inspiration for song composition from the study of influences.

A sub-discussion will focus on synthesis, where seemingly different influences are incorporated in a song.

Assignment: The students will start 2 song ideas:

1. A song tied directly to a song, songwriter, musical style or other influence.
2. A song that arises from a synthesis of influences

June 18

Lab

Continued work on all projects.

June 19

Common Forms

Parsing Song Form

Assignment: A song will be provided to parse.

June 20

Exercise in Style – 12 Bar Blues

Assignment: Write a song that is either a 12 bar blues or refers to the blues style.

June 21

Lab

Continued work on all projects

Quiz: Parsing the provided song(s)

Week 4 – June 24 – 28

June 24

Collaboration

Assignment: Teams (song writing ranging from 2 to 3 people) will be formed to work on an original song.

June 25
Transcribing a Song
Making a Lead Sheet

June 26
Lab

June 27
Flow Charts, which is a visual way of imagining a song writing plan of action whether the first idea for a song comes in the following form:

- Chorus idea
- Music only
- Melody only
- Chorus section
- A phrase of text
- A title

June 28
Recording
Quiz: write a flow chart from various provided starting points.

Week 5 - July 1 - July 3

July 1
Lab
Field Trip: Open mic at the Adobe Bar, Taos Inn, 7 to 10.
(If possible, given the ages of the students)

July 2
Arranging

July 3
Copyright
Assignment: any complete songs generated through collaboration must have co-ownership properly worked out and signed off.

There is no detailed reading list for this course.