

MC 110

Introduction to Composition

California Institute of the Arts

Syllabus
Spring 2011

Instructor: Andrew Tholl atholl@calarts.edu
Class Time: Thursdays 12:10pm – 1:00pm, Room B311
Office Hours: by appointment
Course Weighting: 1.0 unit

Course Description

This course is geared towards undergraduate music majors who are not majoring in composition. Students should have completed MT101A before taking this course.

This class is not designed to teach you how to compose, but is rather a class *about composing*. We will investigate ideas and concepts that may be used to help with the compositional process. The topics considered and the range of assignments given, are such that any student should benefit from the course. Those without prior compositional experience will acquire a deeper appreciation of the composer's art and its relation to their own work. Those with a desire to try their hand at composing will be encouraged to do just that, and will gain a well-considered orientation to the field. Students already composing, even those with considerable experience, will be challenged to push their ideas further, try new techniques, and flex different intellectual and intuitive muscles.

Topics Covered

Please see the lecture schedule (separate handout)

Course Materials

Any required texts or scores will be handed out in class, placed on reserve, or can be found online. You'll probably need some staff paper too.

Assignments

There will be 12 assignments given over the course of the semester, but you only need to complete 9 of them to pass. Some of these assignments are mandatory and some will allow you to pick and choose which ones you complete. These assignments will relate to the topic discussed in each class.

The first four assignments must be completed by everyone.

Out of assignments five and six, one must be completed, although you may choose to complete both to contribute to your final assignment count.

You may pick and choose from the remaining 6 assignments. This means if you must complete either three or four more (depending on if you completed both assignments five and six, or only chose to do one of them).

To summarize: Assignments 1-4: mandatory. Assignments 5-6: must complete one, can do both. Assignments 7-12: pick and choose so that your total number of turned in assignments equals nine.

Assignments are due no later than two weeks after they are assigned, with the exception of the last assignment which is due no later than the last class meeting.

In an effort to reduce paper, assignments will be emailed; no hard copies will be handed out. Each assignment will also be discussed in the class to which it pertains.

Final Assignment

Each student is also responsible for a “final assignment” which is a complete composition that you should be working on over the course of the semester. Specifics of this assignment will be detailed later on.

Grading

The evaluation of a composition (and really any sort of academic work) is admittedly, a subjective task. The grading of assignments will primarily be based their completion and how well you followed the assignment. Your overall grade for the course will be based on attendance/participation, assignments, and your final assignment.

You must complete all 9 assignments as well as the final project to pass this class.

All work in this class must be legible. I have no opposition to hand notation, computer notation or in some instances recordings, but whatever you do, I must be able to realize your intent. If I have to struggle to read your music (or your name) you will not receive credit for the assignment.

Attendance Policy:

You should be in class. Attendance will be taken every class. Absences will be excused on a case by case basis for legitimate reasons. If you are unable to attend a class, let me know with as much advance notice as possible. Too many absences will result in a failing grade for the class.

Other Course Policies:

Punctuality – I get extremely irritated when students are late to class. Class will start at 10 minutes after 12:00, although frequently music listening and discussion may begin at the top of the hour

The following are not permitted during lectures, unless explicitly solicited by the instructor:

- the use of laptops, cell phones, or mp3 players
- talking with classmates
- reading
- doing homework

If you are found doing any of these things you may be asked to leave for the remainder of the lecture.

I have no problem with food or drink in class as long as they don't become distracting to the rest of the class. (No loud foods or things with strong smells please)

The information in this syllabus is subject to change as I see fit for the needs of the class.