

MUSC 220: Fundamentals of Music Theory + Ear-Training Lab

Spring 2025

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Hayden Hall, room 105
T: 12:30 - 1:45
W: 1:00 - 1:50 (lab)
F: 12:30 - 1:45

Welcome to Fundamentals of Theory! In this class we will learn about the basic materials that make up music. We'll learn about musical notation, rhythms, intervals, chords, scales, chord progressions and more. In our lab we'll focus on "sight-singing" (figuring out what a melody sounds like by looking at the notation) and "dictation" (understanding music by ear and writing it down.) These subjects can help you better understand, perform and compose music of all kinds.

Offered in the Fall: Music 110 – Intro to Music Reading and Notation

Our department also offers a more introductory theory class for students who don't have a lot of experience reading music. It goes at a relaxed pace and is fairly low stakes! If this class proves to be too intense for you, you might consider 110. Sound studies majors can use 110 + 220 to fulfill their theory class requirement.

Textbook + Daily Requirements

We will use my own free materials for class. I'll give you our theory textbook in a white binder at the beginning of the semester. You don't need to bring that one to class each day.

Students should bring a pencil with eraser to each lesson. Also, please have your soft binder with our "anthologies" (clef reading / melodies / rhythms) available each session, either in the physical copy or electronically. Music paper will be provided as needed, but it's a good idea to have your own supply.

Class Website

We will have a class blog on davesmey.com, where we will archive all of our documents, keep track of class activities, and keep up-to-the-minute grade information. All students should visit the site within the first week of classes and register a personal account.

Grade

Your overall grade in the class will be calculated with the following plan:

Four ear-training grades, 5% each (= 20%)

Homework 25%

Three theory quizzes, 10% each (= 30%)

Theory Final 25%

Homework Grading

Homework is graded on a “check plus” (= excellent, worth 100 points), “check” (= pretty good, 92 points) and “check minus” (60 points) system. The criteria for what constitutes a check plus varies from assignment to assignment and depends somewhat on how your work compares to that of your classmates. I accept late homework up to four weeks after the due date, but the best grade you can get on it is a check.

Attendance + Participation

In addition, an attendance-and-participation modifier will be added to your overall grade. This can give you a modest bonus or cost you a significant penalty. We’ll use the following table to calculate your score:

0-2 absences	3 point bonus
3 absences	2 point bonus
4 absences	1 point bonus
5-6 absences	no bonus, no penalty
7+ absences	3 point penalty for each absence over 6

Note that this is an “everything counts” policy that does not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences – all of the typical causes of absence (like illness, work conflicts, extracurricular activities etc.) count toward your attendance total. My hope is that all students can meet our attendance goals, regardless of what happens. However, if something truly extreme or traumatic does occur I will try to work with you to help you complete the class without a penalty.

In general this is a fairly liberal policy, since one can possibly miss a large number of sessions and still pass. However, I strongly recommend that you strive for that 3-point bonus, since being present for most of your classes is simply the best approach to college, and poor attendance usually correlates with poor test grades.

Being late to class may be counted as a quarter or half of an absence.

Failure to meet the expectations of positive in-class participation can also cause additional demerits to be added to your attendance tally. Rude, disruptive, or inattentive behavior can cause you to be marked absent for the day.

Finally, it is very important that you make it to our quizzes at their scheduled times. If something will prevent you from attending, you must contact me ASAP. I reserve the right to give you a zero if I don't think you have a legitimate reason for missing a test.

Masking in class

All students should feel free to wear a mask in class, for any reason. I would strongly encourage everyone to mask up and test if they have any cold, flu, or covid-like symptoms, and please stay home if you have a sore throat or fever.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1 (Jan 14, 15, and 17):

Simple rhythms in 4/4, clefs, sharps and flats, piano keyboard

Ear training: Intro to treble clef, solfege syllables, melodies in C

Week 2 (Jan 22 and 24):

Tuesday January 21 will follow a Monday schedule and we will not meet.

Whole steps and half steps, major scales, key signatures, circle of fifths

Week 3 (Jan 28, 29, and 31):

Dotted rhythms in 4/4, intro to 3/4

Ear training: Rhythms in 4/4

Week 4 (Feb 4, 5, and 7):

Theory Quiz 1. Intro to minor scales

Ear training: intro to rhythms in 6/8

Week 5 (Feb 11, 12, and 14):

Triads, Intervals

Ear training: **Singing Quiz 1**

Week 6 (Feb 18, 19, and 21):

Ear training: **First Dictation Grade**

Week 7 (Feb 25 and 28):

Wed Feb 26 is Manhattan University's Wellness Day, and we will not meet.

More intervals. **Theory Quiz 2.**

Week 8 (Mar 4, 5, and 7):

Diatonic triads

Ear-training: Identifying triads and intervals by ear

Week 9 (Mar 11, 12 and 14):

Inverted triads. Intro to counterpoint.

Ear-training: Rhythms with 16ths, intro to the V chord

Spring Break is the week of March 17-21.

Week 10 (Mar 25, 26, and 28):

Writing + playing I-V-I progressions, extended circle-of-fifths sequences

Week 11 (Apr 1, 2, and 4):

Writing + playing ii-V-I, IV-V-I

Ear-training: Minor keys

Week 12 (Apr 8, 9, and 11):

Writing + playing progressions-by-third. **Theory Quiz 3**

Week 13 (Apr 15 and 16):

April 17-18 is off for Easter.

Seventh chords

Ear-training: **Singing Quiz 2**

Week 14 (Apr 22, 23, and 25):

Intro to music analysis

Week 15 (Apr 29, 30 and May 2):

Ear-training: **Second Dictation Grade**

Final Exam (May 8):

The **Theory Final Exam** is currently scheduled for Thursday, May 8 at 11:00am.