

Core Sequence Class II: Chromatic Harmony

CNSV 240

Tue/Thurs 2:00pm – 3:20pm

Blum Music Center, N217

Credits: 4

Instructor: Dr. Ryan McCullough

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Office hours: N211, Wednesdays 12-4, or by appt.

Course description

Where diatonic theory outlines the navigation of harmonies with specific relationships to a tonal center, chromatic theory represents the art of exchanging one tonal center for another, thereby altering the balance of those relationships. Such harmonic ‘sleight of hand’ forms the structural basis of common practice tonal music, gradually evolving into the ‘post-tonal’ harmonic techniques in the 20th century. Students will complete the sequence of species counterpoint, explore techniques of harmonic tonicization and modulation (both chromatic and diatonic), modal mixture, augmented 6th and Neapolitan-II harmonies, and other techniques of chromatic voice-leading. The course will culminate in a final composition project for voice and piano, written in the style of a mid-nineteenth century art song.

Course expectations and outcomes

Practically speaking, music theory is less knowledge base than practiced skill. What you learn in this course is pattern recognition, critical analysis skills, and that, especially with chromatic harmonic techniques, context is everything. By the end of this course, students will be able to...

- 1) ... demonstrate proficiency with diatonic syntax...
- 2) ... understand the voice-leading implications of chromatic alterations...
- 3) ... be able to modulate between closely and distantly related keys...
- 4) ... apply mechanisms of counterpoint and four-part harmony to “real-world” musical situations...
- 5) ... and integrate a sensitivity to phrase structure with harmonic rhythm.

Course requirements

Attendance—given that music theory is a progressive study, attendance is required. Absences can be approved for medical or musical reasons, but only with advance notice and with coordination with the conservatory office. Your final grade will be lowered by one value for every unexcused absence, or every two late arrivals (e.g., “A” becomes “A-”). If you do have to miss a class, you will still be responsible for any work that is due.

Please do not attend class in person if you feel ill, or know you may have been exposed to Covid-19. Health precautions will continue to be our priority as we navigate the pandemic. If you feel well but are not able to attend class in person due to a potential exposure, you may always attend class virtually. Please be in touch at least 45 minutes ahead of class so that accommodations can be made to include you! If you do not feel well enough to attend class and would like me to record it for you, please let me know.

Assignments—all assignments must be completed neatly and legibly when provided on handouts and are always due at the beginning of class to which they are assigned. Illegible or

incomplete assignments will not receive a grade. Some assignments will need to be completed on notation software.

Notation software—if students don't have access to notation software, MuseScore 4 is an excellent open-source music notation platform that is completely free. This software will be required to complete your final project. Please be in touch if there are any impediments to accessing a computer.

Late assignments—sometimes the semester gets incredibly busy, or there's a big concert coming up, or a crisis in someone's life/family. If these issues come up, please be in touch and we can try to work something out, but don't cite crises retroactively as an explanation for late submissions. Late submissions will lose 5% for every class period they are late, and after two class periods will receive no credit.

Assignment redos—any graded assignment may be resubmitted for a redo if a better grade is desired. Resubmissions will receive a maximum of 90%. **Late assignments may not be resubmitted.**

Textbook—there is no required textbook, and students will be provided with requisite handouts for each unit. However, course sequence and curriculum are taken from *Concise Introduction to Tonal Harmony* by L. Poundie Burstein and Joseph N. Straus (highly recommended) and the 4th edition of *Harmony and Voice-Leading* by Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter. Students may also find the *Open Music Theory* platform a useful reference (<https://viva.pressbooks.pub/openmusictheory/>).

Participation—music theory is a practiced skill, and as such it is essential that you come to class prepared to engage with the material and ask questions when clarification is needed. Taking handwritten notes is a time-tested technique for internalizing the concepts we'll be exploring in class, and handouts will often include 5-line staves for you to copy examples composed in class. The use of technology is permitted for notetaking, but any extra-curricular activity is not allowed and, in such cases, students may be asked to put away their devices.

Grading criteria

Assignments—40%; *Midterm*—20%; *Final project*—30%; *Participation*—10%

In accordance with Bard grading standards:

A, A-	100-90% ; Excellent work
B+, B, B-	89-80% ; Work that is more than satisfactory
C+, C	79-75% ; Competent work
C-, D	74-65% ; Performance that is poor, but deserving of credit
F	64% or less ; failure to reach the standard required for the course

Course Schedule [subject to change]

Week 1

January 31—Introduction; Diatonic harmony review, part I

A.&Sch. units 1, 2, 4, and 6;

February 2—Diatonic harmony review, part II

A.&Sch. units 7, 8, 9, and 10

Week 2

February 7—Diatonic harmony review, part III

A.&Sch. units 11, 12, 13, and 14

February 9—Diatonic harmony review, part IV

A.&Sch. unit 5

Week 3

February 14—Fifth species counterpoint, part I

A. & Sch. unit 5

February 16—Fifth species counterpoint, part II

A. & Sch. unit 5

Week 4

February 21—Applied Dominants of V, part I

February 23—Applied Dominants of V, part II

Week 5

February 28—Other Applied Chords, part I

March 2—Other Applied Chords, part II

Week 6

March 7—Modulation to the Dominant Key, part I

March 9—Modulation to the Dominant Key, part II

Week 7

March 14—Modulation to Closely Related Keys, part I

March 16—Modulation to Closely Related Keys, part II

Take-home midterm, due March 28

Week 8 (*Spring break, no class March 18-26*)

Week 9

March 28—Text setting and phrase construction

March 30—Piano and voice textures/figuration

Week 10

April 4—Modal Mixture, part I

April 6—Modal Mixture, part II

Week 11

April 11—bII⁶: The Neapolitan Sixth, part I

April 13—bII⁶: The Neapolitan Sixth, part II

Week 12

April 18—Augmented Sixth Chords, part I

April 20—Augmented Sixth Chords, part II

Week 13

April 25—Augmented Sixth Chords, part III

April 27—Other Chromatically Altered Chords

Week 14

May 2—Chromatic Modulation, part I

May 4—Chromatic Modulation, part II

Week 15

May 9—Chromatic Modulation, part III

May 11—Chromatic Modulation, part IV

Week 16

May 16—catch-up/review/workshop sessions

May 18—catch-up/review/workshop sessions

Week 17

May 21 (Sunday)—**Final projects due**

May 23—**Class time read-through of songs, featuring Prof. Fitz Gibbon**

May 25—**Class time read-through of songs, featuring Prof. Fitz Gibbon**

May 30—**Final revisions due**

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Land Acknowledgement and Intentional Learning Statement:

In the spirit of truth and equity, it is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are gathered on the sacred homelands of the Munsee and Muhheaconneok people, who are the original stewards of this land. Today, due to forced removal, the community resides in Northeast Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We honor and pay respect to their ancestors past and present, as well as to future generations and we recognize their continuing presence in their homelands. We understand that our acknowledgement requires those of us who are settlers to recognize our own place in and responsibilities towards addressing inequity, and that this ongoing and challenging work requires that we commit to real engagement with the Munsee and Mohican communities to build an inclusive and equitable space for all.

As practicing artists of historically Euro-centric classical music we have a responsibility to (re-) educate ourselves and engage in actions towards cultural justice and equity. Building awareness of unethical appropriation through diverse musical programming and inclusive practices within the studio and from the stage are but a few ways we can begin the intentional work of reconciliation.