



**SEATTLE  
CONSERVATORY  
of MUSIC**

## **COMPOSITION - SYLLABUS 2022 - 2023**

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Adam Haws  
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September 24th - May 20th  
Time 2:15 - 3:15pm

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Composition is very personal. Even for musicians who don't intend to become "real composers," some experience composing will give you insight into the art of music. I hope to introduce you to some interesting concepts, works, composers, and techniques. There will be works or composers that may not appeal immediately to you, but I hope you can be open-minded in exploring them. Assignments will focus on techniques that may get you out of your comfort zone. At the same time, I hope everyone also explores the kinds of music you want to write and that we can share with the class. You are primarily evaluated based on your personal compositions, your regular assignments, your short presentation (trimester 2), and your contributions to class discussion.

### **COURSE GOALS**

The main focus of each class each week will be on music that students bring in. I hope that everyone will get in the practice of composing regularly. It isn't expected that everyone shares something every week, but it is preferable to share something at least every few weeks. You may choose to share the results from your assignments (which will be given every week or two), or you may want to share a work-in-progress.

On the latter point, you will be expected to complete AT LEAST one finished work for 1-3 (or more) instruments and/or voices by the end of the year. And it is greatly preferred that you complete a work each trimester. You will create a work that can be performed by a fellow classmate or classmates, to be performed during SCM Closing day on May 20th. (If we have a student that has a composition ready by early Spring, there will be a possibility for this piece to be included in the Chamber Music Spring recital). Should you write a piece for an instrument or voice that is not available from amongst your classmates, you will be responsible for recruiting a performer (perhaps from the larger SCM/SYSO community).

## **PREREQUISITES**

One year of musicianship or equivalent preferred. (While it is understood that students will enter study of composition at different stages in their musical growth, some familiarity with basic theory and notation is useful.)

## **MATERIALS REQUIRED**

No textbook is required. Please bring manuscript paper and writing utensils to each session. A software notation program should also be acquired. Freeware like Musescore will be adequate for most students. More advanced students might consider a professional software program like Sibelius, Finale, or Dorico (most of which can be purchased at a special educational rate).

## **IMPORTANT DATES**

### **TRIMESTERS**

- September 24th - SCM FIRST DAY Trimester 1
- December 3rd - Trimester 2
- February 25th - Trimester 3
- May 20th (9:00 - 12:00pm) - SCM CLOSING DAY (Mandatory attendance)

### **HOLIDAYS (NO REHEARSAL)**

- November 26th
- December 24th
- December 31st

### **ADDITIONAL (NO REHEARSAL)**

- November 19th - No SCM for YSO & SO students
- December 10th - No SCM for DSO & JSO students
- February 18th - (WMEA)
- March 4th - No SCM for YSO & PSO students
- March 11th - No SCM for SO & DSO & JSO students
- May 13th - No SCM for all AYOP students

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## PERSONALIZED CALENDAR FOR EACH TRIMESTER

Since there are students who take this course more than once, I tend to keep the itinerary of topics fairly flexible. Early on, I will poll students for topics they are interested in in addition to those listed below, at which point a more comprehensive weekly syllabus will be available. As stated above, each week we will first look at students' work. With any available remaining time, I will cover topics relating to composition/new music/composers/pieces. We will have regular composition assignments throughout the year, and those will be shared with the whole class.

### **TRIMESTER 1** (September 24th - November 12th)

Topics will include:

- Reviewing theory and notation basics.
- Discussion of creating good melodies.
- Writing strong chord progressions in a tonal idiom (including concepts like circle-of-fifth progressions and secondary dominants).
- Basic counterpoint and fugue.
- Overcoming composers' block and developing good working habits.
- Complete a short piece that can be shared with the class.

### **TRIMESTER 2** (December 3rd - February 11th)

Topics will include:

- Overview of orchestration, and idiomatic techniques for various instrumental groups.
- Basic analysis and overview of non-tonal music.
- Short presentations by students on topics they are interested in. Those will be the last few weeks of the trimester.
- By the end of the trimester, have an idea of instrumentation and form for your final composition.

### **TRIMESTER 3** (February 25th - May 20th)

Topics will include:

- Electronic music
- Nonwestern music.
- Contemporary music trends
- Have score and parts and recruitment for your final composition completed NO LATER than May 6th.
- Coordinate rehearsals for your final piece.
- Final composition to be performed during SCM Closing day on May 20th.