

Music Theory II: Fundamentals of Harmony and Counterpoint (HUMA3104)

School of Humanities, HKUST

Fall 2021

Instructor:	Ilari Kaila (kaila@ust.hk)
Office hours:	Tue 1:30–3:30 PM, and by appointment
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Lectures:	Thu 1:30–3:20 PM
Room:	CYT Building, LTL
Tutorials:	Tue 6:00–6:50 PM; Thu 3:30–4:20 PM; Thu 6:00–6:50 PM
Room:	CYT Building, LTL

Course description

Music Theory II is a rigorous introduction to the core technical and analytical tools of western classical music. In this hands-on class, students will learn to write music adhering to traditional melodic and harmonic rules, with weekly homework assignments, including note-against-note contrapuntal writing, harmonizing melodies and bass lines, supplemented with exercises on the keyboard. By the end of the semester, students will have learned to produce and analyze homophonic four-part texture adhering to the principles of traditional voice leading, harmonic syntax, and dissonance treatment.

The technical and analytical tools assimilated in Music Theory II will expand the students' understanding of centuries of core western repertoire, develop their ear, musicianship, and compositional prowess, in addition to giving them a perspective that helps them relate to various other musical traditions, idioms, and styles. These foundational skills are essential to anyone wishing to continue into advanced studies in music.

We will mostly concentrate on *functional tonality*, which forms the basic grammar of European art music roughly from the late 17th to the late 19th century. In tandem, and as a foundation for understanding functional harmony, the first few weeks of the class will be spent mostly learning the principles of earlier *Renaissance counterpoint* (vocal polyphony of the 16th century).

Prerequisites—please read carefully before enrolling!

While there are no prerequisites, you need to have a solid grasp of rudimentary music theory, as introduced in HUMA2104: Music Theory I. Having completed HUMA2104 is not a guarantee of adequate background knowledge for taking HUMA3104. Hence, all prospective Music Theory II students are required to take a placement exam. All students are strongly advised to consult their score and the instructor's recommendation before deciding whether they are equipped to take the class.

Homework

Studying harmony and counterpoint is like learning an instrument. It is not enough to understand the material conceptually: you are engaged in learning a craft, which is only possible through regular exercises and feedback. Each assignment will receive personalized comments, feedback, and corrections from the instructor.

Your homework constitutes a “learning portfolio”, making up 30% of your final grade. In

addition to calculating your cumulative homework grade, we will look at the skill demonstrated in some key assignments, which you will be given the chance to rework over the course of the semester.

Attendance and participation are crucial for assimilating and honing your contrapuntal and harmonic writing skills. *If you cannot commit to attending every session, you should not take this course.* We will be taking attendance at the beginning of each class; arriving late twice will be considered equivalent of being absent once.

Textbooks

Students are not required to purchase any materials for this class. Our main reference text will be *Harmony and Voice Leading* (Fourth Edition) by Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, available as an e-book through the HKUST library. This is an invaluable resource that students are encouraged to review regularly, and to consult on any questions. Music Theory II will cover about one quarter of the textbook, up to simple modulations.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hkust-ebooks/reader.action?docID=5719728>

For the Renaissance vocal polyphony element (“Palestrina style”), students can consult *Counterpoint* by Knud Jeppesen, also available at the library, though it is not required reading. You will receive handouts that cover all the information needed to complete the species counterpoint exercises assigned during the first weeks of the class.

Examinations

Both the midterm and final exam will require you to harmonize music with pencil and paper, without the help of a keyboard.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

On successful completion of the course, you will

- have learned to produce and analyze four-part choral-style writing adhering to the rules of traditional tonality;
- have assimilated the basics of harmony and counterpoint through regular harmony and counterpoint writing assignments;
- developed a deeper understanding of western art music repertory and creativity through an exploration of the principles of music theory;
- understand the concept of *modulation* in functional tonal music;
- developed collaborative working skills through jointly executed musicianship exercises.

Grading

Midterm	20%
Final exam	35%
Homework	30%
Attendance/participation	15%