

HUMA 3104: Music Theory II — Fundamentals of Harmony and Counterpoint

Division of Humanities, School of Humanities and Social Science (SHSS)
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST)
Fall 2026

Course Information

- **Instructor:** Dr. Leung Hin Yan Austin (hmaustintl@ust.hk)
- **Instructional Assistant:** Galison LAU (galisonlau@ust.hk)
- **Lectures (L1):** Monday | 10:00 AM – 11:50 AM | Shaw Auditorium, Rm. 103 (SA103)
- **Tutorials:** Monday | Shaw Auditorium, Rm. 103 (SA103)
 - **T3 (2944):** 12:00 PM – 12:50 PM
 - **T1 (2941):** 01:00 PM – 01:50 PM
 - **T2 (2943):** 02:00 PM – 02:50 PM

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 through 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 broaden 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 early 20th 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 formal course prerequisites, you need to have a solid grasp of rudimentary music theory, as introduced in **HUMA 2104: Music Theory I**. However, having completed HUMA 2104 is not a guarantee of adequate background knowledge for taking HUMA 3104. Hence, all prospective Music Theory II students are required to take an advisory placement exam at the start of the semester.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

On successful completion of the course, you will:

1. Have learned to produce and analyze four-part choral-style writing adhering to the rules of traditional tonality;
2. Have assimilated the basics of harmony and counterpoint through regular harmony and counterpoint writing assignments;
3. Developed a deeper understanding of Western art music repertoire and creativity through an exploration of the principles of music theory;
4. Understand the concept of modulation in functional tonal music; and
5. Developed collaborative working skills through jointly executed musicianship exercises.

Course Policies & Textbooks

- **Homework & Learning Portfolio (30%):** Studying harmony and counterpoint is like learning an instrument. It requires regular exercise and feedback. Each assignment receives personalized comments and corrections. Your homework constitutes a "learning portfolio". Key assignments may be reworked over the semester.
- **Attendance & Participation (15%):** Crucial for assimilating writing skills. Attendance is taken at the beginning of each session; arriving late twice equals one absence.
- **Textbooks:** No purchase required. Main reference text: *Harmony and Voice Leading* (4th Edition) by Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, available as an e-book via HKUST Library. For Renaissance polyphony, *Counterpoint* by Knud Jeppesen is available at the library for reference. Handouts covering species counterpoint will be provided on Canvas.
- **Examinations:** Both the Midterm (20%) and Final Exam (35%) require harmonizing music with pencil and paper, without keyboard assistance.
- **Cosmopolis Festival Component:** As part of your homework portfolio, students are required to attend a Cosmopolis Festival concert at Shaw Auditorium (e.g., Tigran Hamasyan Quartet on Oct 16, 2026 or Music of Palestine with Nai Barghouti on Oct 25, 2026) and submit a short analytical

description of a piece heard in concert.

Grading Scheme

Assessment Component	Weight
Final Examination	35%
Homework Portfolio	30%
Midterm Examination	20%
Attendance & Class Participation	15%

Course Schedule — Fall 2026

Week	Date	Lecture & Tutorial Topic
Week 1	Mon, Sep 7	Lec 1: Advisory placement exam. Introduction to class. Principles of melodies. Cantus firmus writing.
Week 2	Mon, Sep 14	Lec 2: More on cantus firmus writing. Tonal music: Combining I and V7. <i>Harmony & Voice Leading:</i> Chapter 6 (Procedures of Four-Part Writing) & Chapter 7 (I, V, and V7).
Week 3	Mon, Sep 21	Lec 3: Counterpoint in the first species (note-against-note) and second species (half note against whole note).
Week 4	Mon, Sep 28	Lec 4: Counterpoint in the third species (quarter note against whole note) and fourth species (syncopation). <i>Harmony & Voice Leading:</i> Chapter 8 (I6, V6, vii°6).

Week	Date	Lecture & Tutorial Topic
Week 5	Mon, Oct 5	Lec 5: Counterpoint in the fifth species (florid counterpoint). <i>Harmony & Voice Leading:</i> Chapter 9 (Inversions of V7).
Week 6	Mon, Oct 12	Lec 6: Free two-part counterpoint. <i>Harmony & Voice Leading:</i> Chapter 10 (Leading to V, IV, ii, and ii6).
Week 7	Mon, Oct 19	NO CLASS — Public Holiday (Day following Chung Yeung Festival)
Week 8	Mon, Oct 26	Lec 7: <i>Harmony & Voice Leading:</i> Chapter 11 (The Cadential 6/4). Midterm review and practice exercises.
Week 9	Mon, Nov 2	Lec 8: MIDTERM EXAMINATION
Week 10	Mon, Nov 9	Lec 9: <i>Harmony & Voice Leading:</i> Chapter 12 (vi and IV6). Post-midterm review.
Week 11	Mon, Nov 16	Lec 10: <i>Harmony & Voice Leading:</i> Chapter 13 (Supertonic and Subdominant Seventh Chords).
Week 12	Mon, Nov 23	Lec 11: <i>Harmony & Voice Leading:</i> Chapter 14 (Other Uses of IV, IV6, and vi).
Week 13	Mon, Nov 30	Lec 12: <i>Harmony & Voice Leading:</i> Chapter 15 (V as a Key Area & Introduction to Modulation). Wrapping up & final exam review.