

## **HUMA 2103: Introduction to Music Composition**

DHSS, Division of Humanities, HKUST – Spring 2023

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Office:	CYT G004
Lectures:	Wednesday 9:00–10:50 AM
Location:	CYT LTL
Tutorials:	Thursday 9:30–10:20 AM, 10:30–11:20 AM, 12:00–12:50 AM
Location:	CYT LTL

### **Course description**

Studying the elements of classical composition is akin to learning an instrument: while understanding theoretical concepts is important, the crucial task is to practice their application, hands-on and systematically.

*This class is extremely labor-intensive.* The students will explore ways to mold their own musical language and ideas through composition exercises, analysis of repertoire, study of music theory, and improvisation. Learning correct notation, production of performance materials, and working with performers will also be important aspects of the course.

There is no final examination for this course. As the final project, the students' chamber music compositions will be performed in a public concert by a hired ensemble of professional musicians, supplemented in some cases by student performers. A preliminary composition exercise is also due in lieu of a midterm examination, and will be performed in class.

### **Intended learning outcomes**

On successful completion of the course, you will have

- developed your overall creative thinking;
- gained the ability to express yourself through writing music;
- a deeper appreciation and understanding of music, regardless of style;
- stronger musicianship skills; and
- a wider and practical understanding of music theory.

### **Prerequisites**

While you do not need to have extensive musical background to sign up for the course, you should have basic music reading skills (such as acquired in HUMA 2104/CORE 2632) and the ability to play an instrument.

### **Course requirements**

1. Most of what you learn will be assimilated in class—attendance, therefore, is crucial. In tutorials, we go through students' work collectively, discussing and critiquing it; these sessions are as important as the lectures. Occasionally, tutorials will be replaced with one-on-one composition lessons, increasingly towards the end of the semester. *You are expected to participate in every class session and tutorial.* Be on time: twice late will count as once

absent.

2. You must also participate in the final concert and be in charge of the rehearsals of your own work. The concert (tentative date, subject to change by first week of class) will be on the evening of Tuesday, May 9, at the Shaw Auditorium, preceded by dress rehearsals. You need to reserve the entire day from noon onwards. *If you are unable to commit to the dates, you cannot enroll in this course!*

3. Midterm project: composition of a duet or solo work, with a duration of at least one minute. Depending on the nature of your project, this can also be the first draft of your final composition project (this will be decided on a case-by-case basis).

4. Final project: a work for two or more players, duration at least two minutes.

5. We will hire professional performers for the final concert. However, if you need additional players, your plan and the player(s) need to be pre-approved. Take this into consideration when deciding what instruments to write for. If you are an experienced performer yourself, you are encouraged (but not obligated) to play in your own work.

6. For the midterm composition, we will not have a hired ensemble. We will help you find players by providing names and contact information of musicians who have volunteered to participate in the past—ultimately, making sure you have the players for your piece and scheduling rehearsals *will be your responsibility*.

### **Term paper and concert**

HKUST's flagship arts initiative, the Cosmopolis Festival, is curated to add value to our music courses, including HUMA 2103. While the festival typically takes place in the fall semester, we are lucky to have an off-season Cosmopolis event on Tuesday, February 21 at 7:30 PM: Prof. Patrick Yim (United States), internationally noted violin virtuoso and pedagogue, will be giving a recital in which he performs and discusses contemporary solo repertoire. *The event is mandatory. If you are not able to attend, you should not enroll in this class.* More information and registration here:

<https://cosmopolisfestival.hkust.edu.hk/news/modern-monologues-violinist-patrick-yim>

Your term paper will be a “concert report”, an analytic writing assignment, based on music you hear at the event. The length is a minimum 650 words, which works out to about two pages in Times New Roman 12-point font, double spaced. More details will be given in class.

### **Grading**

Attendance and participation	15%
Portfolio of exercises/homework	15%
Term paper	15%
End-of-semester quiz	10%
Midterm project	20%
Final project	25%

## **HUMA 2103: Class schedule and topics**

### **Week 1:** February 8

- Introduction to class
- Thinking and listening like a composer: interaction of parameters; musical form

### **Week 2:** February 15

- More on musical form: large-scale vs. small scale form
- Basics of melodic: crafting a line; melodic procedures

### **Week 3:** February 22

- More on melodic writing: motivic work
- Contrapuntal thinking: combining two melodies
- Preparation for concert report: guidelines, writing good prose; concert etiquette

### **Week 4:** March 1

- More on counterpoint: harmonic (vertical) vs. melodic (horizontal) dimensions
- Instrument demos begin; exact dates TBD based on performers' availability

### **Week 5:** March 8

- Harmonic thinking; non-tonal harmonies
- Acoustics, human physiology, time: overtone series; consonance vs. dissonance
- Orchestration: overview; writing for string instruments
- Instrument demonstrations begin (subject to availability of players)

### **Week 6:** March 15

- *Everyone presents their initial plan for midterm composition project*
- More on harmonic work and non-tonal counterpoint
- Producing scores and parts

### **Week 7:** March 22

- Modal and artificial scales (non-major/minor scales)
- Pitch collections as both melodic and harmonic material
- More on instrumentation: woodwind instruments

### **Week 8:** March 29

***MIDTERM IN-CLASS CONCERT: PERFORMANCE OF STUDENT COMPOSITIONS!***

Audience welcome to attend!

### **April 5 – Mid-term break, no class**

### **Week 9:** April 12

- Rhythmic techniques: momentum; form; polyrhythms and tuplets
- More in-class instrument demonstrations
- *Everyone presents their initial plan for a final project composition*

### **Week 10:** April 19

- *Full first drafts of final project due and presented in class!*
- No tutorials: One-on-one sessions and rehearsals, with me and

Galison Lau (IA).

**Week 11:** April 26

- End of semester quiz: terminology, analytical listening
- Scores and performance materials must be finished
- Rehearsals and one-on-one-sessions begin

**Week 12:** May 3

- **Rehearsals most of the week, from April 26 onwards.**

**Dress rehearsal and FINAL CONCERT: Tuesday, May 9, 7:00 PM.** Please note: reserve the whole day for the concert. *If you cannot commit to this date, you cannot take this course.*