

Course Syllabus

MU-016-01 Contemporary Writing and Arranging

Offered every odd fall term

Eben Drost

Required Texts:

Feist, Jonathan. *Berklee Contemporary Music Notation*. Boston: Berklee Press, 2017.

Keys, Scarlet. *The Craft of Songwriting: Music, Meaning, & Emotion*. Boston: Berklee Press, 2018.

Course Overview:

An introduction to the principles and techniques of songwriting and arranging for modern band. Topics include writing lyrics, using and harmonizing chords effectively, contemporary forms of music notation (chord charts, rhythm charts, lead sheets, Nashville numbering system, etc.), and understanding each instrument and its possibilities in a modern band. Special emphasis will be placed on music used in the worshipping church.

General Education:

This course fulfills the category of *Working Artistically of the Common Inquiries* of the General Education curriculum.

Description of this category as found in the Westmont College Catalogue: Students will expand their understanding of the fine arts and performing arts, including music, visual arts, or theatre. Students will develop and expand perceptual faculties, develop physical practices integral to the art form, and explore the critical principles which guide artists in the area.

Course Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will learn to write compelling songs, utilizing principles of melody, harmony, rhythm, and instrumentation
2. Students will gain tools to evaluate songwriting critically
3. Students will be able to effectively notate music in a variety of ways
4. Students will have familiarity with the modern band instruments and modern vocal arranging
5. Students will be exposed to best practices and professional standards in the field
6. Students will improve in their dictation skills/notating and learning by ear.

Commented [MOU1]: First Certification Criterion from *Combined Document*.

Commented [MOU2]: Second Certification Criterion from *Combined Document*.

Commented [MOU3]: Both Certification Criteria from *Combined Document*.

Course Format:

The sessions will include discussion of assigned reading, lectures, working with Finale notation software in the music lab, playing music together, listening to recordings, and studying scores/charts.

Commented [MOU4]: During the process of studying and making music, students will gain an interpretive understanding in an artistic production.

Course Requirements and Policies:

According to Westmont's Attendance Policies, you may be asked to withdraw from the course if you have more than four (4) unexcused absences

Completion of assigned readings/Reading Reflections. You are required to read the assigned pages before the class period for which they are assigned. Reading reflections will be assigned on Canvas.

Completion of Writing and Arranging Assignments. You are required to complete writing and arranging assignments, which will be the bulk of the class work and what you will be graded on.

Commented [MOU5]: Writing (composing) and arranging assignments are the most central aspect of this course.

Grading:

Weekly Writing/Arranging Assignments:	40%
Reading Reflections:	20%
Final Arranging Project:	20%
Final Songwriting Project:	20%

Commented [MOU6]: The bulk of the grade is based on writing music.

Course Schedule:

Week 1:

Read: Keys, Chapters 1-5 (answer reflection question on Canvas)

Lecture: Understanding lyrics and the flow of speech in music

Assignment: Set new lyrics to a familiar tune

Week 2:

Read: Keys, Chapters 6-10 (answer reflection question on Canvas)

Lecture: Understanding effective melodies

Assignment: Students will be given a recorded harmonic progression, and asked to write melodies (a melodic hook, verse, chorus and bridge) that fits the harmonies.

Week 3:

Read: Keys, Chapters 11-14 (answer reflection question on Canvas)

Lecture: Melodic Rhythm

Assignment: Rework previous melodic assignment to improve, based on feedback.

Week 4:

Read: Keys, Chapters 15-20 (answer reflection question on Canvas)

Lecture: Chord theory part one

Assignment: Students will be given a melody, and required to write a two different harmonic progressions to support it.

Week 5:

Read: Keys, Chapters 20-25 (answer reflection question on Canvas)

Lecture: Chord theory part two / Nashville Numbering System

Assignment: Students will be given a melody, and required to write a two different harmonic progressions to support it, using seventh and diminished chords.

Week 6:

Read: Keys, Chapters 26-29 (answer reflection question on Canvas)

Lecture: Chord theory part two

Assignment: Students will be given a melody, and required to write a two different harmonic progressions to support it, utilizing seventh and diminished chords.

Week 7:

Read: Keys, Chapters 30-33 (answer reflection question on Canvas)

Lecture: Song Forms

Assignment: Students will analyze the form of five different songs.

Week 8:

Songwriting Project 1 Due

Assignment: Present original song to class

Week 9:

Read: Feist, Parts 1-2 (answer reflection question on Canvas)

Lecture: Chord Charts

Assignment: Students will make a basic chord chart of a worship song

Week 10:

Read: Feist, Parts 3-4 (answer reflection question on Canvas)

Lecture: Lead Sheets

Assignment: Students will make a lead sheet of a section of a worship song using Finale notational software

Week 11:

Read: Feist, Parts 5-6 (answer reflection question on Canvas)

Lecture: Chord Charts

Assignment: Students will make another lead sheet of a section of a more complex song using Finale notational software

Week 12:

Read: Feist, Parts 7-8 (answer reflection question on Canvas)

Lecture: Instrumentation

Assignment: Students will create a more complex leadsheet for guitar, piano, drums, and bass, including a section of a rhythm chart.

Week 13:

Read: Feist, Parts 9-10 (answer reflection question on Canvas)

Lecture: Professional Standards in Arranging

Assignment: Students will create a leadsheet up to professional aesthetic / practical standards.

Examples of professional quality leadsheets will be provided.

Week 14:

Assignment: Students will present their final arranging project

Week 15:

Assignment: Students will present their second songwriting project

Final: The Final will be a paper formally analyzing an approved song, commenting on aspects of melody, harmony, rhythm, lyrics, and arrangement.

Writers' Corner:

Writers' Corner, Westmont's writing center, is a creative space where student writers can find friendly "test readers" as they develop projects for professors, employers, and others. Tutors support peers as they mature into more skillful and confident writers. Tutorials are free of charge, and you may meet with us online or in Voskuyl Library 215. Make an appointment using WConline at <https://westmont.mywconline.com/>

Accommodations:

Students who have been diagnosed with a condition that meets the criteria of a disability are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by ODS. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your full participation and the successful completion of this course.

Please contact the website for more information

<http://www.westmont.edu/offices/disability/>

Honor and Respect in the Classroom:

Westmont's Community Life Statement calls us to treat each other according to two commands from Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you," and "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Further, our Diversity Matters document indicates that as we abide by these commandments, we learn to honor and respect one another. In this class, we will embody these commitments as we interact with one another and with the class material. If you experience or witness something that does not honor these commitments, please talk with the instructor as soon as possible. You may also find it helpful to access the College's policy on Bias, Harassment, and Discrimination.

Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

Westmont's [academic integrity policy](#) prohibits us from "present[ing] another's work as our own." Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT attempt to do the work of writing and other creation for their users. Therefore, students should NOT substitute AI-generated content or ideas for original academic work. Westmont faculty members design assignments for students' incremental and active learning through methods such as reading, summarizing, discussion, and an authentic generative process in which a student does the work of critical thinking and message construction.

It is possible for original academic work (e.g., a student-authored essay) that has been grammar-checked or proofread by AI editing tools (including ChatGPT and Grammarly) to be flagged by AI detection tools on [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com), etc. Our [academic integrity policy](#) does not prohibit students from using AI editing tools unless the extent of usage meets the threshold for plagiarism. However, a student should seek permission from an instructor PRIOR to an assignment submission if considering using an AI tool for editing or another assignment-related task. Failing to do so may result in that student's work being flagged for disciplinary action.