



Course Syllabus – String Instruments Class
Prof. Jose Saavedra Diaz
College of Fine Arts
Midwestern State University, Fain Fine Arts Center
AMUS 3181 Section 1
Fall 2025
M. 2:00pm to 3:20pm FM105

Contact information:

Jose Saavedra Diaz | 940-231-2607 | jose.saavedradiaz@msutexas.edu

Office Hours **in person and online**, by appointment

Sing up through Calendly follow this link:

<https://calendly.com/jsaavedradiaz-twu/msu-office-hours>

ZOOM link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6112273585>

Meeting ID: **611 227 3585**

Textbook & Instructional Materials

- Michael Allen, Pamela Tellejohn Hayes, and Robert Gillespie. Essential Elements for Strings, Book 1: A Comprehensive String Method. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2002.
- Norman Lamb, & Susan Lamb Cook. Guide to Teaching Strings, seventh edition. McGraw-Hill, 2002

Course Description

The focus of this course is to prepare students with the fundamentals of technique, tone production, methods, pedagogical technique, and materials pertaining to teaching violin, viola, cello and string bass in the public schools.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes/Course Competencies

1. To provide each student with a firm foundation in the planning and instruction of a strings program.
2. To acquire appropriate knowledge, concepts, and diagnostic skills that facilitate the student's ability to successfully teach a beginning strings class in a public-school setting.
3. To gain an understanding and working knowledge of how to play one stringed instrument.
4. Emphasis will be placed on each student's diagnostic pedagogical ability of instruction.
5. Emphasis will be placed on each student's ability to demonstrate beginning level techniques of a string instrument.

Topics of Discussion

- Instrument/Bow Anatomy
- Instrument Care
- Instrument Sizing
- Proper Poster/Instrument Set up
- Bow Hold / Upper and Lower Strings
- Tone Production
- Left Hand Technique / Fingerboard geography
- Tuning
- String Pedagogy
- String Terminology
- Overview of string technique

Assignment Policy

Assignments:

- **Are expected to be on time.**
- Class activities will not be made up due to absences. (Playing tests, quizzes, exams, and peer teaching).
- There will be no extra credit assignments.
- **The only exception to missed assignments and tests is a written “excused” absence by the “Provost” of the university.**

Reading Assignments and Quizzes

There will be four Reading Review Quizzes. All quizzes must be completed by hand and submitted in handwritten form. Students will have one week to complete each quiz.

Midterm Exam

The midterm will cover material discussed in class through Week 5. The exam must be handwritten. Students should bring ruled paper.

Final Written Project (10%) and Teaching Video (10%)

For the final project, create a packet of teaching materials modeled on pages 13–31 of the *Essential Elements* book. This packet should demonstrate how you would prepare for your first position as an orchestra teacher. You may include spreadsheets, slides, or other digital resources that would support the success of your string class. Include a full semester lesson plan. This portion of the project must be submitted digitally. In addition, record yourself teaching a lesson to a friend or colleague. The quality of the video will count toward your grade. Upload the video to YouTube as an unlisted link and submit the link along with your written project.

Grading/Assessment

Table 1 Percentages allocated to each assignment type

Assignment Type	Percentage
Participation	60%
Reading Review Quizzes	10%
Midterm	10%

Assignment Type	Percentage
Final Written Project – Teaching Video	20%
Final Grade	100%

Table 2: Grading scale

Grade	Percentage
A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	Below 60%

The quantity of practice is not nearly as important as the **quality** of your practice sessions.

A - 100-90%

B - 89-80%

C - 79-70%

D - 69-60%

F - 59-0%

Attendance

- Attendance is expected for each class as noted in this syllabus.
- Students are allowed 2 absences (sick or skipping).
- 5% points will be deducted for each unexcused absence beyond the 2 allowable absences.
- **Chronic Tardiness is unacceptable and disruptive to class.** Students arriving more than 20 minutes late will be considered absent.
- A student with more than 2 excused or unexcused absences, will be warned by faculty. If truancy continues, a referral will be made to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibility. Students may be dropped from the course for excessive absences (more than 4 for this class) per University Policy.
- Rescheduling of the lessons available within 24h of notice.

Instructor Class Policies

- If you are having difficulties with any aspect of this course, please see the instructor as soon as possible.
- Professional, adult behavior is expected at all times.
- Be on time, prepared, and ready for work with all materials for class.
- No eating, texting, or any other distracting behaviors during class.
- You should be unpacked, ready to play, chair and stand in place, and music out before class begins.

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: Check date on Academic Calendar.

Deadline to file for graduation: Check date on Academic Calendar.

Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:” Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Notice

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Lesson Attendance Policies

There is a “no-cut” policy for applied instrumental lessons. Students enrolled in applied lessons are expected to attend all lessons. If a student wishes to cancel a lesson, the teacher may make up the lesson at his/her discretion. Students wishing to cancel a lesson should notify the teacher at least 24 hours in advance (with exceptions of death in the family or serious illness). Students will be dropped and given a WF after three unexcused absences.

To avoid missing a lesson, students are allowed and encouraged to trade times with a colleague, with the instructor's approval. In the event that the instructor needs to cancel, or the student needs a reschedule due to a conflict with an ensemble of the university, an **online** make-up lesson will be scheduled.

Students are expected to show up prepared and warmed up for the lesson and should bring all appropriate music, instruments, and materials. Please knock at your time lesson on the dot.

Conduct

The instructor expects students to behave professionally and to devote class time to class work. Instances of disruption and inattention may result in a reduction of the in-class work component of the student's grade or being asked to leave. Removal from the classroom will count as an unexcused absence.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook-2021-22](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the [Schedule of Classes](#) each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by MSU TEXAS. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibit the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information,

visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “*Run. Hide. Fight.*” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

Notice

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Reference

Bradetich, Jeff. Double bass: the ultimate challenge. Music For All to Hear Inc., 2009.

Michael Allen, Pamela Tellejohn Hayes, and Robert Gillespie. Essential Elements for Strings, Book 1: A Comprehensive String Method. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2002.

Lamb, N., & Lamb Cook, S. Guide to Teaching Strings, seventh edition. McGraw-Hill, 2002

Course Schedule

Week	Activities/Assignments/Exams
Week 1 08/25	Syllabus reading, introduction of the orchestral string instruments, discussion of the course expectations
Week 2 09/01	Labor Day no classes
Week 3 09/08	Instrument/Bow Anatomy, Instrument Care, Instrument Sizing, Proper Poster/Instrument Set up, and Bow Hold / Upper and Lower Strings, and Tone production, all topics discussed in violin, viola, cello, and double bass Reading Assignment – Chapters 1, 2, 3
Week 4 09/15	Left Hand Technique / Fingerboard geography, Tuning, String Pedagogy Lesson Structure, Lesson Plan Reading Assignment – Chapter 6, 7, 8 Reading Review Quiz #1 Submission – In class discussion
Week 5 09/22	Upper Strings: Violin and Viola Sample Lesson Reading Assignment – Chapter 9, and 10 Reading Review Quiz #2 Submission – In class discussion

Week	Activities/Assignments/Exams
Week 6 09/29	Lower Strings: Cello and Double Bass Sample Lesson In class discussion Midterm Written Exam – Chapters 1 - 10
Week 7 10/06	Upper Strings: Violin and Viola Sample Lesson Reading Assignment - Chapter 11
Week 8 10/13	Lower Strings: Cello and Double Bass Sample Lesson Reading Assignment - Chapter 14 Reading Review Quiz #3 Submission – In class discussion
Week 9 10/20	Lesson Demonstration Reading Review Quiz #4 Submission – In class discussion
Week 10 10/27	No class on Monday. Class will be on 10/29, 6:00 – 8:00pm, Gail Key Academy Presentation – Dr. Amanda Hamilton, Gina Menden
Week 11 11/03	No class on Monday. Class will be on 10/30 – 6:00 – 8:00pm, Gail Key Academy Presentation – Dr. Amanda Hamilton, Gina Menden
Week 12 11/10	No class on Monday. Class will be on 11/13 – 6:00 – 8:00pm Room TBA Ensemble Rehearsal
Week 13 11/17	Final Playing Test
Week 14 12/5	Final Written Project – Teaching Video Submission
Final Exam	Jury Week – No class

Appendix 1

TExES Domains and Competencies

Texas Examinations of Educator Standards (TExES)

The Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for **String Instruments Class** link to the following TExES domains and competencies necessary to become a music educator in the state of Texas:

Domain 4: Music Classroom Performance

Competency 009: The teacher demonstrates knowledge of methods and techniques for playing musical instruments.

The beginning teacher:

- A. Understands performance skills and appropriate playing techniques (e.g. bowing, fingering, embouchure, rudiments) for a range of instruments (e.g. band, orchestral, classroom).
- B. Understands proper health techniques to use during instrumental rehearsals and performances (e.g. posture, hand position, instrument maintenance).
- C. Selects appropriate instrumental literature to enhance technical skills and provide musical challenges.
- D. Understands standard terminology used in communicating about students' musical skills and performances.
- E. Knows how to offer meaningful prescriptions for correcting performance problems and errors (e.g. intonation, vibrato, articulation, tone production) and understands the constructive use of criticism when evaluating musical skills or performances.

These competencies are referenced in this document as SBEC 009:A-E.