



Course Syllabus: Percussion Instruments

Fain College of Fine Arts

MUSC 3291

Spring 2026

Classroom: FA 105

Contact Information

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Course Description

The purpose of this course is to provide music education majors with basic information concerning teaching methods and performance techniques for musical instruments common to the percussion family. Students will follow a course of study that will enable them to teach new percussionists through a year of beginning band and gain the knowledge necessary to guide advanced level middle and high school students until they graduate with an accepted, organized approach to learning and developing percussion techniques and skills.

This course is designed to acquaint students with each major instrument found in the percussion family, while focusing primarily on the instruments that are most common to today's elementary, middle and high school band and orchestra literature. Topics for each instrument may include construction, acoustical properties, methods of sound production, idiosyncrasies of notation, pedagogy, playing techniques and resources for further study.

Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

Specific learning objectives for the course derive from the Texas SBEC Standards/Test Frameworks for [EC-12 Music](#) and the [Pedagogy and Professional Responsibilities Standards \(EC-Grade 12\)](#). This course provides music education students with a knowledge base of the environment in which they may teach. Satisfactory completion of the course will document that students have demonstrated the ability to:

1. Demonstrate on each of the major percussion instruments, either by written or performance tests, an accurate knowledge in the following areas of pedagogy: Instrument assembly and care, grips and hand positions, basic performance techniques, varieties of sticks and mallets, acoustical characteristics of each percussion instrument. (SBEC Pedagogy & Professional Responsibilities Standard I; SBEC Music Domain I Competency 001, 003, SBEC Music Domain IV Competency 008, 009)
2. Identify practical and acoustical ranges of the instruments. (SBEC Pedagogy & Professional Responsibilities Standard I; SBEC Music Domain IV Competency 008)
3. Identify, diagnose, and prescribe common solutions to performance problems encountered by students. (SBEC Pedagogy & Professional Responsibilities Standard III; SBEC Music Domain I Competency 003, SBEC Music Domain IV Competency 009)
4. Choose graded materials and literature that will account for a systematic growth in the musical and technical development of the school percussion student. (SBEC Pedagogy & Professional Responsibilities Standard III; SBEC Music Domain II Competency 004, 005, SBEC Music Domain IV Competency 010, SBEC Music Domain V Competency 011)
5. Become familiar with the various brands of percussion instruments to adequately advise themselves as well as students and parents in the selection of instruments that will fit their budget. (SBEC Pedagogy & Professional Responsibilities Standard II)
6. Understand and possess methods to successfully meet the challenges of percussion education in the public-school music curriculum. (SBEC Pedagogy & Professional Responsibilities Standard I, III; SBEC Music Domain IV Competency 008, 010, SBEC Music Domain V Competency 012)

See Appendix A for a complete list of standards/competencies.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

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](#)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and

multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Attendance

Attendance will be taken each class period. Students are allowed to be absent a total of two class periods without penalty. Each subsequent absence will lower the student's final grade by one letter. Tardiness of more than ten minutes will be considered an absence. If a student is absent for a school related function, documented illness, or other reasonable excuse, it is the student's responsibility to communicate with the instructor and make-up any missed work. All make-up work will be given at the discretion of the instructor.

Required Materials

1. *Methods for Teaching Percussion, 2nd Edition* by Corey Robinson
2. One pair of "general" drumsticks: Innovative Percussion IP-1 or similar 5B model
3. One snare drum practice pad for use in class and at home.
4. One pair of "general" keyboard mallets: Innovative Percussion IP240 or similar

Other Recommended Materials

1. Cook, Gary. *Teaching Percussion* (3rd Edition). Thomson Schirmer Publications, 2006.
2. Primitac, Stephen. *Percussion Methods*. Meredith Music Publications, 2015.

Grading

Table 1: Percentages allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Points
Participation	90
Exams	300
Note Sheets	160
Playing Exams	250
Performance Review	100
Teaching Demonstration	100

Participation – 90 points

Students will be expected to participate in class daily. This participation will include playing, teaching, discussion, and asking questions about the concepts taught in class. Playing many of these instruments will be new to many of you.

Please remember, I understand that you are not professional percussionists. I do not expect perfection, but I do expect participation with a good attitude and a willingness to try new things.

Exams: 300 points (100 points each)

There will be three exams over the course of the semester. Each will cover specifics of pedagogy, techniques, instrument construction, concepts about each instrument. Expect many short answer questions and expect to discuss the pedagogical aspects of all instruments and concepts that are discussed.

Exam #1 (March 2) will concern the snare drum. Exam #2 (April 8) is on keyboard percussion, timpani, and accessory instruments. Exam #3 (May 13) includes topics dealing with drum set, Latin percussion, and marching band.

Note Sheets: 160 points

Much of the content in this course will be delivered through 32 prerecorded video lectures. An incomplete note sheet will accompany each video lecture. On the due dates detailed in the tentative schedule below, bring the completed note sheet(s) to class and they will be graded on completion. Each note sheet will be worth 5 points. Even though each individual assignment is only worth a few points, missing out on the information in the videos will prove costly. Class time will be devoted to practicing the techniques discussed in the videos, not rehashing the information.

Playing Exams: 250 points (50 points each)

Five playing exams will be submitted by video throughout the semester. These will primarily deal with the snare drum and will only require your sticks and practice pad. The requirements for each video will be explained and distributed in class throughout the semester. Each exam must be submitted as *unedited* video by posting a link to an unlisted YouTube video under each assignment on D2L. Please let me know as soon as possible if there are any issues with acquiring the technology to submit these assignments.

Scoring Rubric for Playing Exams

Category	Exemplary: 10-9	Effective: 8-6	Limited: 5-3	Unsatisfactory: 2-0
Grip	Demonstrates a solid understanding of the how the snare drum sticks should be held consistently throughout the entire performance.	Usually demonstrates an understanding of how the snare drum sticks should be held throughout the performance.	Rarely demonstrates an understanding of how the snare drum sticks should be held during the performance.	Clearly demonstrates no understanding of how the snare drum sticks should be held.
Stroke	Demonstrates a solid understanding of how the sticks should move consistently throughout the entire performance.	Usually demonstrates an understanding of how the snare drum sticks should move throughout the performance.	Rarely demonstrates an understanding of how the snare drum sticks should move throughout the performance.	Clearly demonstrates no understanding of how the snare drum sticks should move.

Category	Exemplary: 10-9	Effective: 8-6	Limited: 5-3	Unsatisfactory: 2-0
Rhythmic Accuracy	Consistently demonstrates a mastery of the presented rhythmic complexities throughout the performance while maintaining a consistent pulse.	Demonstrates an understanding of the presented rhythmic complexities for most of the performance. The pulse remains consistent through most of the performance.	Demonstrates limited understanding of the presented rhythmic complexities. The pulse varies significantly throughout the performance.	Demonstrates little or no understanding of presented rhythmic complexities. The pulse is rarely identifiable.
Clarity	Performs with a clear and consistent tone throughout the entirety of the performance demonstrating few to no issues of balance and evenness.	Performs with a clear and consistent tone throughout much of the performance demonstrating minimal issues of balance and evenness.	Performs rarely with a clear and consistent tone demonstrating substantial issues of balance and evenness.	Performs with no semblance of a consistent tone demonstrating unintelligible rhythms lacking all balance and evenness.
Musical Nuance	Demonstrates exceptional musical nuance throughout the performance. Aspects of musical nuance include tempo, dynamics, accents, ornaments, rolls, etc.	Demonstrates clear musical nuance throughout most the performance.	Demonstrates glimpses of musical nuance at some points throughout the performance.	Demonstrates no aspects of musical nuance throughout the performance.

Performance Review: 100 points

Watching high level performances on any instrument that you are attempting to learn is essential for a complete pedagogical understanding. For this class you are required to attend the MSU Texas Percussion Ensemble Concert (April 14th, 7:30pm in Akin Auditorium) and write a review. An alternate assignment will be provided for students who are participating in the Percussion Ensemble Concert or those who receive written approval from the instructor for an alternative assignment due to unavailability prior to that date. Half of this assignment is the review of the MSU Texas Percussion Ensemble concert and half will come from reviewing video performances of five pieces from the [Texas Prescribed Music List](#), Event Code 571) that you find on YouTube. Each piece you review must be for percussion ensemble (3 or more players).

The primary purpose of this assignment is to give you an avenue to begin to think about how the concepts we are talking about in the course could apply to your current and future teaching. This should be the primary focus of your writing. To serve and enhance this pedagogical lens, other observations will be necessary including:

- Techniques used in the performance
- Types of sticks/mallets used
- Instrumentation
- Physical setup used and why
- General characteristics of the music
- Challenges for percussion students (rhythmic, technical, conceptual, independence, endurance, etc.)

- How you might address these challenges when teaching

The performance review should total about four pages in length: two pages for the Percussion Ensemble Concert Review and two pages for the video reviews. Use standard formatting for the entire review (1" margins, 12-point font, double spaced, etc.).

Scoring Rubric for Performance Review

Category	Exemplary: 20-16	Effective: 15-11	Limited: 10-6	Unsatisfactory: 5-0
Length of response	Response is at least four full pages in length.	Response is almost four full pages in length.	Response is less than four pages in length.	Response is two pages in length or shorter.
Thoroughness of Response	Addresses all parts of the assignment thoroughly.	Addresses all parts of the assignment but lacks depth in parts of the topic response.	Addresses only some parts of the assignment. Lacks depth in response to the topic proposed.	Addresses very little or none of the assignment. Most of the response is off topic.
Knowledge of Course Content	Consistently demonstrates exemplary understanding of the content learned in the course and uses specific references from the course to support own ideas.	Usually demonstrates understanding of the content learned in the course and uses specific references from the course to support own ideas.	Sometimes demonstrates understanding of the content learned in the course and vaguely references topics from the course to support own ideas.	Rarely demonstrates understanding of the content learned in the course and does not references topics from the course to support ideas.
Application toward Future Teaching Career	Consistently demonstrates clear vision on how the stated observations contribute to a more thorough understanding of teaching future percussion students.	Sometimes demonstrates vision on how the stated observations contribute to a more thorough understanding of teaching future percussion students.	Rarely demonstrates vision on how the stated observations contribute to a more thorough understanding of teaching future percussion students.	Shows no effort to link current observations to the understanding of teaching future percussion students.
Style and Mechanics	Grammar usage is always correct regarding subject/verb agreement; verb tense and usage; pronoun usage; adjective/adverb usage, etc. Sentence structure is exemplary. Capitalization and spelling are always correct.	Grammar usage is consistently correct. Sentence structure is effective. Capitalization and spelling are mostly correct. Better proofreading and editing would take responses to exemplary level.	Grammar usage is mostly correct. One or two capitalization or spelling errors exist. Sentence structure is limited in its effectiveness. Better proofreading and editing could have occurred.	Grammar usage is rarely correct. Too many capitalization and/or spelling errors. Sentence structure is weak. Work is unsatisfactory. It is obvious very little proofreading or editing occurred.

Teaching Demonstration: 100 points

This assignment will give you an opportunity to practice your teaching craft. The submission for this assignment will be a 10-minute video of you teaching someone a lesson in percussion. This is a live, in-person lesson, not an instructional video. The person you choose to teach should be someone who has

not taken this course and is not a trained percussionist. The lesson you choose to teach is up to you. I would recommend a "first day" lesson on any percussion instrument so that no prior experience is needed. Before you film your lesson, a lesson plan must be approved by the instructor of this course. Samples of lesson plans will be distributed during class. The lesson plan must contain a clear goal and methodology. You will be graded using the rubric below.

Scoring Rubric for Teaching Demonstration

Category	Exemplary: 20-16	Effective: 15-11	Limited: 10-6	Unsatisfactory: 5-0
Length of Demonstration	Demonstration is at least ten minutes in length.	Demonstration is between 8 and 10 minutes in length.	Demonstration is between 6 and 8 minutes in length.	Demonstration is less than 6 minutes in length.
Lesson Plan	Lesson plan correctly details each step of the teaching process and is generally followed throughout the demonstration.	Lesson plan correctly details most of the steps of the teaching process and is somewhat followed throughout the demonstration.	Lesson plan correctly details only some of the steps of the teaching process and is rarely followed throughout the demonstration.	Lesson plan is missing or incorrectly details many steps of the teaching process.
Clarity of Teaching	Communication between the teacher and student is always clear with simple and specific instructions given throughout the entirety of the demonstration.	Communication between the teacher and student is usually clear with simple and specific instructions given throughout some of the demonstration.	Communication between the teacher and student is sometimes clear with simple and specific instructions frequently missing throughout the demonstration.	Communication between the teacher and student is lacking any sense of clarity with simple and specific instructions rarely given throughout the demonstration.
Responsiveness to Student	The teacher quickly and effectively responds to the complications that arise throughout the demonstration.	The teacher sometimes responds to the complications that arise throughout the demonstration.	The teacher rarely responds to the complications that arise throughout the demonstration.	The teacher ignores all complications that arise throughout the demonstration.
Content Knowledge	The technical and musical content communicated by the teacher is always pedagogically accurate.	The technical and musical content communicated by the teacher is usually pedagogically accurate.	The technical and musical content communicated by the teacher is sometimes incorrect or incomplete.	The technical and musical content communicated by the teacher is frequently incorrect or incomplete.

Important Dates

- Last day for term schedule changes: January 23, 2026
- Deadline to file for graduation: February 16, 2026
- Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" April 29, 2026
- Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Communication

I am typically very quick at responding to questions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me by email (corey.robinson@msutexas.edu) at any time. Do not wait until your next lesson to tell me that you did not understand an assignment

or could not retrieve the required materials. If you let me know ahead of time, I will be more likely to be able to help resolve the situation. If I contact you, a response is expected within 24 hours.

Tentative Course Schedule

Date	Monday	Wednesday
Week 1: Jan 21	No Class	Introduction, Syllabus, Rhythm
Week 2: Jan 26, 28	Introduction to the Snare Drum Introduction, Lesson 1 Due	Grip and Stroke Lesson 2 Due
Week 3: Feb 2, 4	Sticking Systems Lesson 3 Due	Dynamics, upstrokes and downstrokes Lesson 4, Playing Exam #1 Due
Week 4: Feb 9, 11	The Double Stroke Roll Lesson 5 Due	Review Day
Week 5: Feb 16, 18	The Multiple Bounce Roll Lesson 6 Due	Ornamentation Lesson 7, Playing Exam #2 Due
Week 6: Feb 23, 25	The Roll Base Lesson 8 Due	Review for Exam #1
Week 7: Mar 2, 4	Exam #1: The Snare Drum	Intro to Keyboard Percussion Lessons 9-10, Playing Exam #3 Due
Week 8: Mar 16, 18	Scales, Arpeggios and Reading Music Lessons 11-12 Due	Rolls and 4-Mallet Playing Lessons 13-14 Due
Week 9: Mar 23, 25	Timpani Construction, Tuning, Stroke Lessons 15-17 Due	Timpani Performance Techniques Lesson 18 Due
Week 10: Mar 30, Apr 1	Orchestral Accessories Lessons 19-23 Due	Ensemble Performance Lesson 24 Due Playing Exam #4 due
Week 11: Apr 6, 8	Review for Exam #2 Teaching Demo Lesson Plan Due	Exam #2: Keyboards, Timpani and Orchestral Accessories
Week 12: Apr 13, 15	Percussion in the Marching Band Lesson 25 Due	Playing Techniques for Marching Band Lessons 26-27 Due
Week 13: Apr 20, 22	Playing Techniques for Marching Band	Hand Drums and the Conga Lesson 28 Due

Date	Monday	Wednesday
Week 14: Apr 27, 29	Bongos, Djembe and Cajon Lesson 29, Playing Exam #5 Due	Drum Set Set-up Lesson 30, Teaching Demo Due
Week 15: May 4, 6	Drum Set: Pedagogy, Rock Drumming Lesson 31 Due	Jazz Drumming, Review for Exam #3 Lesson 32, Concert Reviews Due

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) exists 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 Student Wellness Center, (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 WATC. 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 Northwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits 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 has 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

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Northwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

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

Campus Closure Policy

If Northwestern State University authorizes campus closing procedures, classes for this course will be canceled with no expectation of meeting synchronously online.

All assignments will remain due at the time listed in the syllabus unless otherwise altered by the instructor.