



Course Syllabus: Orchestration and Arranging

Fain College of Fine Arts

MUSC 3662

Spring 2026

Classroom: FFA C117A

Contact Information

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Course Description

Prerequisite: MUSC 3603 with a minimum grade of C.

Techniques of scoring and part extraction for orchestra and other ensembles. Special consideration to aspects of school and church ensembles, with some attention given to vocal ensembles.

Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

Orchestration and Arranging has, at its core, one goal: to facilitate the growth and development of the student's understanding of orchestration techniques and its role in modern day music careers. In this course students will develop skills in orchestrating and arranging for various kinds of large and small ensembles.

The topic of orchestration is one that is taught differently in nearly every institution for higher learning in music. Different programs often focus on different aspects of orchestration as they relate to the individual needs of each class. In this course, we will focus on the applicability of orchestration skills to school ensembles (instrumental and vocal) and chamber ensembles. This means that a large portion of this class will be dedicated to improving student knowledge of instrument families. More specifically, this class will focus on the way composers and arrangers treat instrument families in various performance settings. Understanding common stylistic trends in orchestration will not only help practically by giving the student opportunities to explore their own

arranging skills but also theoretically as they will develop a better understanding of how composers want their music to be conveyed.

In addition to school concert band and choir, there will be some time spent focusing on professional and unique ensembles like the symphony orchestra and jazz ensemble. As understanding orchestral, vocal, and individual instrumental techniques helps to grow all aspects of a student's musicianship, students should expect a fair amount of importance placed on ensuring that they have both learned and mastered the topics covered in this course.

- Students will learn how composers and arrangers typically deal with classical instruments in various musical settings.
- Students will expand their knowledge of instrumental ranges, effects, techniques, transpositions, and common groupings.
- Students will develop the skills necessary to accurately and adequately create instrumental and vocal arrangements including using professional music notation software.
- Students will learn to tie together the common threads between composition (or, in this case, orchestration and arranging) and conducting so as to better equip themselves for leading their own ensembles and to develop individual performance skills.
- Students will come away from this class ready to maneuver through difficult but common situations in the daily life of a music educator or performer.

To meet these goals, this course will focus on instruction in four categories: instrument transpositions, music notation software fluency, instrument characteristics, and orchestration techniques.

See Appendices A and B 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 individuals to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the [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

The textbook required for this course is *The Technique of Orchestration*, 6th Edition by Kent Kennan and Donald Grantham.

Grading

Table 1: Percentages allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Percentage
Transposition Assignments	20%
Sibelius Projects	10%
Orchestration Projects	40%
Listening Journal	10%
Final Project	20%

Transposition Assignments – 20% of final grade

Understanding conventions of instrument transposition is essential for developing orchestration and arranging skills. In addition, teaching inside a school music program is nearly impossible without a working understanding of instrument transpositions. For this portion of the course, students will complete 10 worksheets with scaffolded concepts on transpositions. Worksheets will include exercises transposing passages from written to sounding pitch, from sounding to written pitch, and from instrument to instrument. Hard copies of worksheets will be distributed one to two classes before they are due. Worksheets are to be completed by hand and are due at the beginning of class on the due date listed in the schedule below (listed as "T#").

Sibelius Projects – 10% of final grade

Building skills in using professional notation software is helpful for a music educator. There is always a lot to do to prepare for a full day of teaching in the schools. One of my professors from my doctorate would always tell me, "Right now, you are the least busy you will be until you retire." I didn't believe him at the time, but I couldn't agree more with this statement now 10 years later. Anything you can do to prepare quicker will be helpful in maintaining a work-life balance and sustaining your career.

For this course students will work in the Sibelius notation software. This professional software has all the capabilities for publishing professional-level music and is one of the industry standards used world-wide. We will walk through everything from basic note entry to advanced concepts during the first few weeks of this course. The skills developed here will serve you as you work through the orchestration assignments and final project later in the course.

There will be three Sibelius assignment due. Each will consist of engraving exactly what is on a written page. The three assignments are solo instrument with piano, a chamber work, and a large ensemble. Reference pages for each assignment will be distributed in class. Assignments are to be submitted both as .pdf and .sib files on the dates listed in the schedule below (listed as "S#"). Grading will be solely based on the accuracy of the submitted assignment when compared to the reference material.

Orchestration Projects – 40% of final grade

The bulk of your grade in this course will be determined by five orchestration assignments: strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion, and choir/pop ensemble. Each project will consist of taking a section of a piece and orchestrating it for a particular instrument group. Specifics of each assignment as well as source material will be distributed in class well before the due date.

Each assignment is worth 100 points combining for 40% of the final grade. Assignments are graded on:

- Accuracy and completeness
- Playability and instrument basics
- Notation clarity and details
- Decision-making
- Justification

Each assignment is to be completed in Sibelius and must be submitted as both a .pdf and a .sib file. In addition, each submission must be accompanied by written notes on why decisions were made. This could be a few paragraphs or a list of bullet points. I'm just looking to understand why specific notes or lines were placed where they were.

A grading rubric for these assignments is included below. I would strongly recommend consulting the rubric before working on the first assignment to gain a better understanding of the grading process.

Listening Journal – 10% of final grade

Listening to music is important for any human, but especially so for those who want a career in the music field. For this assignment, you are required to listen to and comment on any 10 pieces of classical music. If you are not sure if a piece you would like to listen to would be included in this category, please ask before submitting. All submissions will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor.

Try to find music you are not familiar with yet. I can assist with finding music if you don't know what to listen to. One strategy for this assignment would be to pick two pieces of music corresponding to each orchestration assignment (2 string quartets, 2 woodwind quintets, etc.), using them as reference for your own projects.

For each piece, listen and take stream-of-consciousness notes (either in prose or bullet points) while listening. Also include thoughts you have immediately after the piece concludes, noting the overall effect of the work. Handwritten notes are required. This may seem unnecessary, but I just want your first impressions and sequential thoughts. It is too easy and tempting to go back and edit the notes you took when working digitally. As you are listening, think specifically about the orchestration and what it does to the effect of the music. Note interesting things you notice including instrument groupings, size of ensemble, who has melody/accompaniment, how lines are traded between instruments, etc.

Each entry should be at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page, but if you have more thoughts, don't stop there! Keep taking notes until you run out of thoughts. This notebook is due on Monday, May 4th and serves as 10% of your grade.

Final Project – 20 % of final grade

The final project for this course is to arrange and orchestrate a chamber piece or piano solo for large ensemble. Examples of appropriate pieces will be distributed in class, but students are encouraged to bring a piece they would like to orchestrate for this assignment. All selections must be approved by the instructor.

The exact instrumentation for this assignment is flexible, depending on your conception of the chosen piece, but should represent a full large instrumental ensemble. Just as with the orchestration projects, the final project must be submitted as both a .pdf and a .sib file and accompanied by written notes on why decisions were made.

Grading will be based on completeness, accuracy, technique, decision-making, and the justification. These projects will be due on Monday, May 11th at 10:30am (the final time for this course). During this time, each student will present their project to the class, talking through their decision-making and playing the MIDI recording. A rubric for this assignment and the orchestration projects is below.

Scoring Rubric for Orchestration Projects and Final Project

Category	Exemplary: 20-16	Effective: 15-11	Limited: 10-6	Unsatisfactory: 5-0
Accuracy and Completeness	All pitches and rhythms are entered correctly, and all musical lines from the source material are accounted for.	Most pitches and rhythms are entered correctly, and all musical lines from the source material are accounted for.	Frequent harmonic or rhythmic mistakes are present. A portion of the source material is missing.	Harmonic or rhythmic mistakes are prominent throughout the assignment. A significant portion of the source material is missing.
Playability and Instrument Basics	All parts stay in safe ranges and use basic, appropriate techniques. Everything is clearly playable.	Lines are mostly playable with a few minor range or comfort issues.	There is some awkward or borderline writing, but the music is playable with minor adjustments.	There are frequent range, technique, or instrument-knowledge problems throughout the project.
Notation Clarity and Details	Work includes clear notation, correct transposition, and a clean layout. Details including dynamics, text, and articulations are present throughout.	Work includes minor notation mistakes that do not confuse the reader. Details are included for most instruments in most places.	There are several errors that slow reading. Dynamics, text, and articulations are frequently missing.	Major notation problems making parts unclear permeate the work. Nearly all dynamics, text and articulations are absent.
Decision-making	Instrument choices support the melody, harmony, and character of the music. Decisions about register, doubling, and texture are purposeful.	Most orchestration choices make sense and support the music. Some decisions could be stronger or clearer.	Some orchestration choices make sense and support the music, but many do not. Register, doubling or texture choices sometimes work against clarity.	Orchestration choices seem random or unconsidered. There is little connection between the music and instrument choices.
Justification	Justification of major decisions is clear and gives clarity to how the whole work developed.	Justification of decisions is clear in some areas and gives some insight into how the work developed.	Justification touches on some aspects of decision-making, but does not address many of the major decision made.	Justification is missing or does not include information about major decisions made throughout the orchestration process.

Important Dates in the Academic Calendar

- 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 the next class to tell me 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	Activities
Jan 21	Introduction, syllabus, transposition introduction
Jan 26 (lab)	Transpositions: Bb instruments Sibelius: basic note entry
Jan 28 (lab)	Transpositions: review, T1 due Sibelius: text, dynamics, articulations, S1 due
Feb 2 (lab)	Transpositions: C instruments, T2 due Sibelius: formatting
Feb 4 (lab)	Transpositions: F instruments, T3 due Sibelius: advanced concepts, parts and printing, S2 due
Feb 9 (lab)	Transpositions: T4 due Sibelius: work on projects
Feb 11	Transpositions: T5 due Orchestration: band instrumentation and score setup
Feb 16	Transpositions: instrument to instrument transposition Orchestration: orchestra instrumentation and advanced score concepts
Feb 18	Transpositions: instrument to instrument transposition, T6 due Instrument Concepts: strings, chapter 2 Sibelius: S3 due
Feb 23	Transpositions: T7 due Instrument Concepts: strings, chapters 3-4
Feb 25	Transpositions: hypothetical instruments Instrument Concepts: strings-other concepts
Mar 2	Transpositions: complete list of instrument transpositions Instrument Concepts: woodwinds, chapter 5 Orchestration: String Orchestration due

Date	Activities
Mar 4	Transpositions: T8 due Instrument Concepts: woodwinds, chapter 6
Mar 9-13	Spring break
Mar 16	Transpositions: W9 due Instrument Concepts: woodwinds-other concepts
Mar 18	Instrument Concepts: brass, chapters 7-8 Orchestration: Woodwind Orchestration due
Mar 23	Instrument Concepts: brass, chapter 9
Mar 25	Instrument Concepts: brass-other concepts
Mar 30	Transpositions: analyze chords from score Instrument Concepts: scoring chords, chapter 10 Orchestration: Brass Orchestration due
Apr 1	Transpositions: more chord analysis Instrument Concepts: scoring chords
Apr 6	Transpositions: W10 due Instrument Concepts: percussion, chapter 13
Apr 8	Instrument Concepts: percussion, chapter 14
Apr 13	Instrument Concepts: piano and harp, chapter 15
Apr 15	Instrument Concepts: voices Orchestration: Percussion Orchestration due
Apr 20	Instrument Concepts: jazz band, pop music
Apr 22	Instrument Concepts: jazz band, pop music
Apr 27	Orchestration: Choir/Pop Orchestration due Discussion of and work on final projects
Apr 29	Discussion of and work on final projects
May 4	Discussion of and work on final projects Listening Journal due

Date	Activities
May 6	Discussion of and work on final projects
May 11	Final Time: 10:30am-12:30pm Presentation of final projects

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 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.

Appendix A – Standards and Competencies

Texas State Board for Educator Certification Music Standards (2020)

Standard II. The music teacher sings and plays a musical instrument.

- 2.1s sing and play an instrument, demonstrating accurate intonation and rhythm;
- 2.2s demonstrate advanced techniques on a principal instrument or voice using literature at all levels of difficulty;
- 2.3s demonstrate, through performance, knowledge of musical styles using appropriate literature;
- 2.4s perform a varied repertoire of music representing styles from diverse cultures, including music of the United States; 2.5s perform music expressively from memory and notation; and
- 2.6s demonstrate basic performance skills on a range of instruments, including voice

Standard IV. The music teacher creates and arranges music.

- 4.1s transpose music;
- 4.2s improvise melodically, rhythmically, and harmonically;
- 4.3s compose and arrange simple vocal and instrumental music;
- 4.4s utilize compositional devices (e.g., repetition/contrast, delayed resolution, augmentation/diminution); and
- 4.5s arrange vocal and instrumental music for specific purposes and settings.

Standard VI. The music teacher applies a comprehensive knowledge of music to evaluate musical compositions, performances, and experiences.

- 6.1s apply basic criteria for evaluating musical compositions, performances, and experiences;
- 6.2s evaluate specific musical works and styles using appropriate music terminology;
- 6.3s apply evaluative criteria appropriate for the style of given musical works;
- 6.4s recognize accurate pitch, intonation, rhythm, and characteristic tone quality;
- 6.5s diagnose performance problems and detect errors accurately;
- 6.6s offer meaningful prescriptions for correcting performance problems and errors;
- 6.7s offer constructive suggestions for the improvement of a musical composition; and
- 6.8s apply knowledge of music forms.

Standard VII. The music teacher understands how to plan and implement effective music instruction and provides students with learning experiences that enhance their musical knowledge, skills, and appreciation.

- 7.1s use the TEKS to develop appropriate instructional goals and objectives for student learning and performance, and provide students with multiple opportunities to develop music skills specified in the TEKS;
- 7.2s provide students with developmentally appropriate music instruction that is sequenced and delivered in ways that encourage active engagement in learning and make instructional content meaningful;
- 7.3s adapt instructional methods to provide appropriate learning experiences for students with varied needs, learning modalities, and levels of development and musical experience;
- 7.4s provide instruction that promotes students' understanding and application of fundamental principles of music;
- 7.5s provide each student with varied opportunities to make music using instruments and voice, to respond to a wide range of musical styles and genres, and to evaluate music of various types;
- 7.6s use varied materials, resources, and technology to promote students' creativity, learning, and performance;
- 7.7s teach students to apply skills for forming and communicating critical judgments about music and musical performance using appropriate terminology;
- 7.8s provide each student with frequent opportunities to use critical-thinking and problem-solving skills in analyzing, creating, and responding to music;
- 7.9s provide each student with opportunities to contribute to the music class by drawing from their personal experiences;
- 7.10s teach students concert etiquette;
- 7.11s help students develop an understanding and appreciation of various cultures through instruction related to music history and discussion of current events related to music;
- 7.12s incorporate a diverse musical repertoire into instruction, including music from both Western and non-Western traditions;
- 7.13s integrate music instruction with other subject areas;
- 7.14s promote music as an integral element in students' lives, whether as a vocation or as an avocation;
- 7.15s encourage students to pursue musical knowledge independently;
- 7.16s teach students proper health techniques for use during rehearsals and performances;
- 7.17s use a variety of instructional strategies to ensure all students' reading comprehension of content-related texts, including helping students link the content of texts to their lives and connect related ideas across different texts;
- 7.18s teach students how to locate, retrieve, and retain content-related information from a range of texts and technologies; and

- 7.19s teach students how to locate the meanings and pronunciations of unfamiliar content-related words using appropriate sources, such as dictionaries, thesauruses, and glossaries.

Standard VIII. The music teacher understands and applies appropriate management and discipline strategies for the music class.

- 8.1s manage time, instructional resources, and physical space effectively for the music class;
- 8.2s establish clear behavior guidelines for students and apply appropriate discipline strategies for the music class in various settings; and
- 8.3s manage and document the use and condition of musical instruments and other materials in the music program.

Standard IX. The music teacher understands student assessment and uses assessment results to design instruction and promote student progress.

- 9.1s use multiple forms of assessment and knowledge of the TEKS to help determine students' progress in developing music skills and understanding;
- 9.2s use ongoing assessment results to help develop instructional plans;
- 9.3s use standard terminology in communicating about students' musical skills and performances; and
- 9.4s offer meaningful prescriptions to correct problems or errors in musical performances.

Standard X. The music teacher understands professional responsibilities and interactions relevant to music instruction and the school music program.

- 10.1s comply with copyright laws to make appropriate and ethical decisions about the use of music in an educational setting;
- 10.2s comply with federal, state, and local policies and regulations concerning the use or performance of music;
- 10.3s establish and maintain effective communication with other music educators;
- 10.4s collaborate professionally with other music educators to strengthen and promote music education;
- 10.5s maintain ongoing communication with students, parents/caregivers, school personnel, and the community about the music program and its benefits;
- 10.6s serve as an advocate on behalf of the music program; and
- 10.7s serve as an active member of professional music education organizations

Texas Examinations of Educators Standards Music EC-12

- Competency 004: The teacher knows how to read, write and interpret standard music notation.
- Competency 005: The teacher understands methods and techniques of musical composition and improvisation and knows how to arrange music for specific purposes and settings.

- Competency 008: The teacher demonstrates knowledge of methods and techniques for singing.
- Competency 009: The teacher demonstrates knowledge of methods and techniques for playing musical instruments.
- Competency 010: The teacher knows how to conduct vocal and instrumental performances.
- Competency 011: The teacher knows how to plan and implement effective music instruction.
- Competency 012: The teacher knows how to provide students with learning experiences that enhance their musical knowledge, skills and appreciation.

Appendix B: TExES Domains and Competencies

The Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) for Wind Ensemble link to the following TExES domains and competencies necessary to become a music educator in the state of Texas.

Domain II- Music Theory and Composition

Competency	Details
Competency 004- The teacher knows how to read, write and interpret standard music notation.	<p>D. Recognizes and describes melody, harmony and texture of a musical work (e.g., modal, tonal, atonal, ostinato, doublings, melody and counter melody).</p> <p>E. Analyzes chordal structures (e.g., major, minor, dominant seventh, diminished seventh), harmonic progressions, cadences (e.g., authentic, half, deceptive, plagal) and harmonic textures (e.g., polyphonic, homophonic, monophonic)</p>

Domain IV- Music Classroom Performance

Competency	Details
Competency 009- The teacher demonstrates knowledge of methods and techniques for playing musical instruments.	<p>A. Understands performance skills and appropriate playing techniques (e.g., bowing, fingering, embouchure, rudiments) for a range of instruments (e.g., band, orchestral, classroom).</p> <p>B. Understands proper health techniques to use during instrumental rehearsals and performances (e.g., posture, hand position, instrument maintenance).</p> <p>C. Selects appropriate instrumental literature to enhance technical skills and provide musical</p>

Domain V- Music Education

Competency	Details
Competency 012- The teacher knows how to provide students with learning experiences that enhance their musical knowledge, skills and appreciation.	<p>A. Demonstrates awareness of the importance of helping students develop music skills that are relevant to their own lives and of providing students with a level of musical self-sufficiency that encourages lifelong enjoyment of music.</p> <p>C. Demonstrates knowledge of various music and music-related career options and knows how to promote music as an integral element in students' lives, whether as a vocation or as an avocation. E. Knows how to integrate music instruction with other subject areas and analyzes relationships among the content, concepts and processes of music, the other fine arts and other subjects.</p>