



Course Syllabus: Music Theory I

College of Fine Arts
MUSC 1603 Section 01
Fall 2026 08/25/06 – 12/10/26

Contact Information

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Course Description

Identification of the basic elements of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic notation. Analysis of common chord progressions used in commercial music. 1-voice and 2-voice diatonic composition using standard music notation.

Corequisite: MUSC 1601 Musicianship I

Course Objectives

The curriculum for all four music theory courses are aligned with the Texas Examination of Educator Standards (TExES) State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) EC-12 music standards. See Appendix A for a complete list of standards covered in Music Theory I-IV.

- The student can read and write pitch and rhythmic elements in standard notation. (SBEC 004.B)
- The student can use music notation and digital audio workstation (DAW) software to compose simple 1- and 2- voice compositions. (SBEC 004.D, 005.A, 005.D)
- The student can recognize and describe the melody and texture of a work. (SBEC 004.C, 004.D)
- The student can recognize basic harmonic progressions. (SBEC 004.E)

Textbook & Instructional Materials

All materials will be provided through the MSU Desire-to-Learn (D2L) program. No textbook purchase is necessary for Music Theory I.

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

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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Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given).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.

Grading

This course will use an alternative competency-based grading model. This section will lay out the details of this system so that you know what you must achieve to earn the final letter grade you want.

The only letter grade you will receive is your final grade at the end of the semester. For all other assignments, you will receive a score of DNA, NI, DEV, PRO, or EXCEL. Table 1 explains what these scores mean and what your next steps should be.

Table 1: Grading Scale

Grade	Points	Next Steps
DNA	Did Not Attempt	Submit the assignment.
NI	Needs Improvement	Book a tutoring session and/or review feedback and reattempt. You've got this!
DEV	Developing	You're right where you need to be! Review feedback and reattempt if you want to reach PRO. You're right where you need to be!
PRO	Proficient	None required. Keep reattempting if you want to reach EXCEL.
EXCEL	Excellent	None required.

Table 2 explains what scores must be achieved on assignments to earn the letter grade you want. Appendix B provides a checklist format of Table 2 if you would like to track your progress.

Table 2: Requirements for final grade

Assignments	A	B	C	D
15 Fluency Quizzes (SBEC 004.B)	Proficient on all 15	Developing on all 15	Developing on 10	Needs Improvement on 10
5 Composition Projects (SBEC 005.A)	Proficient on all 5	Developing on 4	Developing on 3	
3 Analysis Unit Assessments (SBEC 004.D, SBEC 004.E)	Proficient on all 3	Developing on all 3	Developing on 2	

Fluency Quizzes

Fluency quizzes are designed to measure your comfort and speed with the identification (e.g. labeling a pitch's letter name) and construction (e.g. writing a pitch on the treble clef staff) of music fundamentals, as described in Student Learning Outcome SBEC 004.B. As you progress through your study of music theory, you should become more fluent with these fundamentals. To help you achieve this goal, fluency quizzes are offered in every music theory course, but the target scores increase in difficulty.

- These fluency quizzes will be taken on D2L and involve clicking on a notation or a label.
- You may request an oral fluency exam via Zoom or in person in lieu of any electronic timed quiz.
- You may take these quizzes as many times as you like throughout the semester to raise your grade.
- All quizzes are due **by the last day of classes at 11:59 p.m. CST**, but I will provide you with recommended due dates throughout the semester to help you manage your workload.
- **To pass the course with a D or higher, you must attempt 10 fluency quizzes.**
- Scores are assigned based on the number of correct answers you earn in the allotted time.
- **To score a PRO or EXCEL on a fluency quiz, the percentage score must be 70% or higher.** The purpose of these quizzes is not to check how fast you can click a screen. The purpose is to check how fast you can recall music fundamentals.

Table 3: Fluency Quiz Target Scores

The following table provides target scores for the Fluency Quizzes.

Fluency Quizzes	EXCEL	PRO	DEV	NI
FQ 1 Keyboard Pitch ID	60+ (70%)	49-59 (70%)	35-48	1-34
FQ 2 Keyboard 2 nd ID	103+ (70%)	84-102 (70%)	60-83	1-59
FQ 3 Enharmonic Keyboard Pitch ID	36+ (70%)	30-35 (70%)	21-29	1-20
FQ 4 Treble Clef Pitch ID	40+ (70%)	33-39 (70%)	24-32	1-23
FQ 5 Bass Clef Pitch ID	40+ (70%)	33-39 (70%)	24-32	1-23
FQ 6 m2/M2 Treble Clef Interval Construction	21+ (70%)	17-20 (70%)	12-16	1-11
FQ 7 m2/M2 Bass Clef Interval Construction	21+ (70%)	17-20 (70%)	12-16	1-11
FQ 8 Major Scale Construction	11+ (70%)	9-10 (70%)	6-8	1-5
FQ 9 Major Key Signature ID	34+ (70%)	28-33 (70%)	20-27	1-19
FQ 10 Minor Key Signature ID	31+ (70%)	26-30 (70%)	18-25	1-17
FQ 11 Natural Minor Scale Construction	11+ (70%)	9-10 (70%)	6-8	1-5
FQ 12 Ascending Melodic Minor Scale Construction	9+ (70%)	7-8 (70%)	5-6	1-4
FQ 13 m3/M3 ID	26+ (70%)	21-25 (70%)	16-20	1-15
FQ 14 minor/Major Triad Keyboard ID	26+ (70%)	21-25 (70%)	16-20	1-15
FQ 15 minor/Major Triad ID	34+ (70%)	28-33 (70%)	20-27	1-19

Units

There will be five units in this course that cover Student Learning Objectives SBEC 004.D, 004.E, and 005.A.

- Unit 1: Piano Keyboard
- Unit 2: Pitch Notation in Sheet Music and DAWs
- Unit 3: Major Scales, Scale Degree Numbers, and Solfège Syllables
- Unit 4: Diatonic Chords in Major Keys and Harmonic Progressions
- Unit 5: Rhythm Notation in Sheet Music Sheet Music and DAWs

Composition Assessments

Each unit will have a composition project:

- Unit 1: Pentatonic Composition Video Recording
- Unit 2: Melodic Transposition between Treble Clef and Bass Clef
- Unit 3: Melodic Transposition Using Solfège Syllables
- Unit 4: Melodic Harmonization for Voice, Instrument, or DAW
- Unit 5: Making a Beat in a DAW

Composition projects will be submitted using an online discussion board. We will review these compositions in class and make suggestions for their improvement. You have the option of submitting your composition project anonymously.

First drafts of composition projects will not be accepted after the due date. If the first draft of the composition project earns a score of Did Not Attempt (DNA), Needs Improvement (NI), or Developing (DEV), the student may submit revisions to earn a higher score. Revisions will be accepted until **Friday, December 4th**.

Analysis Assessments

Some units will have an analysis assessment to help you read sheet music:

- Unit 2: Pitch Analysis
- Unit 4: Harmonic Analysis Using Roman Numerals
- Unit 5: Rhythmic Notation Analysis

Analysis is assessed in a more traditional way. A written pretest will be given in class for analysis assessments. Pretests allow you to demonstrate your prior knowledge and preview the format of the assessment. If you score a PRO or EXCEL on a pretest, you will not have to complete any homework or exams for that unit. No retakes are allowed of pretests, even for excused absences.

Homework will be assigned if you did not score a PRO or EXCEL on the pretest. If you score a PRO or higher on the homework, you will not have to complete the exam for that unit. Homework will not be accepted after the due date.

Retakes of analysis exams will be allowed for scores of Did Not Attempt (DNA), Needs Improvement (NI), or Developing (DEV). Students can either retake an exam during one of the designated classes on the calendar or book an appointment through Calendly to schedule an analysis exam retake.

Mid-Term Exam

There will be no mid-term exam for this course.

Final Exam

There will not be a comprehensive final exam. The Unit 5 Exam will be given during the final exam time for this class, Monday, December 7th 1-3 p.m.

Important Dates

- Last day for term schedule changes: Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)
- Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

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.

Recording Classes

The professor will provide an unlisted YouTube playlist of class recordings. Class recordings are for personal use only and may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published without the professor's prior consent. When it is feasible and appropriate, students may record classes to accommodate disabilities under the Americans With Disabilities Act, with prior approval of Disability Support Services. Such recordings may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all class meetings unless exempted by the instructor.

In case of absence, a student should:

- [Email the professor](#) to inform them of the absence. Do not expect a reply, especially if the email was received the same day as class.
- View the missed class on the unlisted YouTube video playlist for the course, and ask a classmate for their notes. Do not ask the professor what was covered in the class you missed.
- [Email the Office of Student Affairs](#) in the case of extended illness or family emergency that will result in 2 or more missed classes. Do not share private medical information with the professor. The Office of Student Affairs will email the professor if the student is to be excused for multiple class meetings.

Emergency Aid Resources for Basic Needs

Unexpected life circumstances can affect anyone. If you are experiencing challenges meeting basic needs—such as housing, utilities, food, transportation, healthcare, technology, textbooks or other life necessities, resources may be available to help. Visit the [Student Emergency Support and Resources webpage](#) to learn more, and explore emergency support opportunities through MSU and how to access them. For additional information, please contact the Office of Student Affairs: Clark Student Center #108, (940) 397-7500, student.affairs@mstuexas.edu.

Online Computer Requirements

This class requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer or mobile device in this class. ****Assignments are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!*** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world which is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Hearing Loss and Health

As a musician, your hearing is one of your most valuable assets. Unfortunately, high exposure to sound-producing activities can lead to noise-induced hearing loss. While this can be temporary, it can lead to tinnitus (ringing in the ears), permanent loss of hearing (particularly in the higher frequencies), and deafness. In addition to affecting a student's enjoyment of music, it also may render them incapable of continuing as a professional musician or music educator.

Musicians are also susceptible to musculoskeletal and vocal injury, particularly overuse injury. Failure to take adequate precautions can greatly shorten a student's performing career.

Means to minimize risks associated with hearing loss and performance-related injuries will be discussed during applied lessons and/or masterclasses. Faculty members can only present information to students and offer resources and assistance in seeking professional medical help when needed. The student has the final responsibility to take proper precautions.

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 Midwestern 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

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.

Course Schedule:

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The complete course schedule will be available by September 1, 2026.

Week	Monday	Wednesday	Friday	Due Dates
Week 1 8/24 to 8/30	Introduction to Piano Keyboard	Theory Placement Exam	Syllabus; Accidentals (Flats, Naturals, Sharps)	
Week 2 8/31 to 9/6	Accidentals (Flats, Naturals, Sharps), Enharmonics, and Tendency Tones	Improvisation with the Pentatonic Scale Using only the Keyboard's Black Keys	Unit 2 Pretest	FQ 1, 2, 3 1st Attempt Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 3 9/7 to 9/13	Labor Day – No Class	Composition Project 1	Reading Pitch on the Treble & Bass Clef Staff	FQ 4, 5 1st Attempt Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 4 9/14 to 9/20	Melodic Transposition between Treble & Bass Clef	Composition Project 1	Unit 2 Exam	Composition Project 1 Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 5 9/21 to 9/27	Major Scales	Major Scales at the Keyboard	Major Scales, Scale Degree Numbers, and Solfège Syllables	FQ 6, 7 1st Attempt Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 6 9/28 to 10/4	Major Scales, Scale Degree Numbers, and Solfège Syllables	Composition Project 2	Melodic Transposition using Solfège Syllables	Composition Project 2 Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 7 10/5 to 10/11	Melodic Transposition using Solfège Syllables	Minor Scales at the Piano	Minor Scales & Key Signatures	FQ 8, 9 1st Attempt Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.

Week	Monday	Wednesday	Friday	Due Dates
Week 8 10/12 to 10/18	Scale and Key Signature Review	Composition Project 3	Unit 4 Pretest	FQ 10 1st Attempt Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m. Composition Project 3 Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 9 10/19- 10/25	Major/minor 3rds	Major/minor 3rds & Building Chords	Major/minor Triads	FQ 11, 12, 13 1st Attempt Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 10 10/26 to 11/1	Chord Symbols	Diatonic Major chords at the piano	Diatonic Major Chords & Roman Numerals	FQ 14 1st Attempt Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 11 11/2 to 11/8	Diatonic Major Chords & Roman Numerals	Composition Project 4	Chord Progressions	FQ 15 1st Attempt Due Sunday 11/15 by 11:59 p.m.
Week 12 11/9 to 11/15	Chord Review	Composition Project 4	Unit 4 Exam	Composition Project 4 Due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.
Week 13 11/16 to 11/22	Unit 5 Pretest	Beat Making in a DAW	Simple Rhythm Tree & Beaming by Beat	
Week 14 11/23 to 11/29	Catch Up Day!	Thanksgiving – No Class	Thanksgiving – No Class	
Week 15 11/30 to 12/6	Compound Rhythm Tree & Beaming by Beat	Composition Project 5	Composition Project 5 Due Friday by 11:59 p.m.	
Week 16 12/7 to 12/10	Unit 5 Exam (& any Exam Retakes) 1-3 p.m.		All Fluency Quiz Retakes Due Thursday by 11:59 p.m.	

Appendix A

TEXES SBEC Competencies

The curriculum for all four music theory courses are aligned with the Texas Examination of Educator Standards (TEXES) State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) EC-12 music standards. Following is a list of the SBEC competencies addressed in this course.

SBEC Competency 004: I can read, write, and interpret standard music notation.

SBEC 004.A

I can:

- Identify standard music terminology,
- Identify and interpret music symbols and terms from notation, such as:
 - Dynamics,
 - Embellishments,
 - Articulation markings, and
 - Tempo markings.

SBEC 004.B

I can:

- Recognize [pitched on all] clefs, such as:
 - Treble
 - Bass
- Recognize [major and minor] keys
- Recognize meters, such as:
 - Simple, compound
 - Duple, triple, quadruple, quintuple, sextuple, etc.
- Recognize [major and minor] scales
- Recognize pitch collections, such as:
 - Pentatonic scales
- Identify specific melodic and harmonic intervals, such as:
 - Major vs. minor 2nds
 - Major vs. minor 3rds
 - Compound intervals
- Identify different rhythms, such as:
 - Common simple meter rhythms, such as:
 - Ta-ti, 1-and, or 1-te,
 - Ta-ka-ti-ki, 1-e-and-a, or 1-ti-te-ta.
 - Ta—ti-ki, 1—and-a, or 1—te-ta,
 - Ta-ka-ti—, 1-e-and—, or 1-ti-te—
 - Ta-ka—ki, 1-e—a, or 1—te-ta,
 - Ta—ki, 1—a, or 1—ta

- Common compound meter rhythms, such as:
 - Ta-tu-te or 1-la-li
 - Ta—te or 1—li
 - Ta-ka-tu-ku-te-ke or 1-t-la-t-li-t

SBEC 004.C

I can:

- Read melodies in various modes and tonalities, such as:
 - Major
 - Natural minor (or Aeolian)
 - Melodic minor
- Interpret rhythmic and melodic phrases from notation
- Read music that incorporates complex rhythmic patterns in simple and compound meters.

SBEC 004.D

I can:

- Recognize and describe the [characteristics of a] melody in a musical work, such as:
 - Range
 - Contour
 - Phrase structure, such as:
 - Parallel period
 - Contrasting period
 - Sentence
- Recognize and describe harmony of a musical work, such as:
 - Diatonic
 - Common Chord Progressions in Commercial Music
- Recognize and describe texture of a musical work, such as:
 - Monophonic
 - Homophonic

SBEC 004.E

I can:

- Analyze chordal structures, such as:
 - Major, minor, and diminished triads
 - Major (MM7), dominant (Mm7 or V7), and minor (mm7) seventh chords
 - Tonic (I, i)
 - Dominant (V)
 - Predominant or subdominant (IV, iv, ii, ii °)
 - Submediant (vi, VI)
- Analyze harmonic progressions, such as:
 - Singer-songwriter progressions

- Hopscotch progressions
- Doo-wap progressions
- Analyze harmonic textures, such as
 - Polyphonic,
 - Homophonic, and
 - Monophonic.

SBEC Competency 005: I understand methods and techniques of musical composition and improvisation, and I know how to arrange music for specific purposes and settings.

SBEC 005.A

I can:

- Compose simple vocal and instrumental music for specific purposes and settings

SBEC 005.B

I can:

- Analyze compositional devices, such as:
 - Repetition/contrast
 - Delayed resolution

SBEC 005.D

I can:

- Evaluate specific musical works and styles using appropriate music terminology
- Offer constructive suggestions for the improvement of a musical composition

Appendix B

Table 5: Grading Checklist

Grade	Composition Projects	Analysis Units	Fluency Quizzes
D			Needs Improvement on 10 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
C	Developing ☐ ____ ☐ ____ ☐ ____	Developing ☐ ____ ☐ ____	Developing on 10 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
B	Developing ☐ ____ ☐ ____ ☐ ____ ☐ ____	Developing ☐ ____ ☐ ____ ☐ ____	Developing on 15 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11 ☐ 12 ☐ 13 ☐ 14 ☐ 15
A	Proficient ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	Proficient ☐ 2 ☐ 4 ☐ 5	Proficient on 15 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 ☐ 11 ☐ 12 ☐ 13 ☐ 14 ☐ 15