

LONGY SCHOOL OF MUSIC OF BARD COLLEGE
TH 504A: AURAL THEORY BOOT CAMP
(single-semester GRADUATE THEORY REVIEW OF AURAL SKILLS)
COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 2017 (first semester)

Instructor: Dr. John H. Morrison

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Office Hours: by appointment

Credit Hours: 1

Meeting Times, Locations: Tuesday & Thursday, 9:30-10:25, in Room L-10

Course Website: <http://jhmedu.org/GTR-A/>

COURSE DESCRIPTION, RATIONALE, AND GOALS

Our common goal in theory classes at the Longy School of Music is to develop professional musicians. As you meet the demands of the curriculum, you will gain musical, physical, and intellectual tools that will last a lifetime, thereby preparing yourself to meet the demands of operating as a professional in the world. As you learn to navigate the complex language of music, you will begin to develop a deep and keen musical intelligence which gradually penetrates the mysterious, intuitive realm of the felt, emotional side of music. Being able to move between the technical and the mysterious and to articulate one's musical insights to others is highly valuable, especially when it rests on command of the fundamentals of music. The required courses are part of a time-tested tradition that leads to the highest standards of musical excellence. Coursework should be thought of as not only classroom activity, but also as small-scale, highly-focused versions of musical reality.

The practical goal of the class is to gain the proficiency in aural skills that allow one to pass the aural theory proficiency test. A number of skills will be developed in the class, using a variety of techniques and approaching the problem of skill development from a number of angles. Accuracy of hearing, identifying what is heard, and writing down the results are, generally speaking, the aim of the class. However, much of the work that will be expected both in and outside of class will incorporate execution of music and musical elements in ways that make the materials more familiar and therefore more immediately recognizable.

Developing the cognitive skills that unify the workings of the body, eye, brain, internal ear, and voice is a long and demanding process that requires consistent and devoted effort. Toward that end, many important pursuits are part of your training:

- Perception and accurate execution of all things pitch-related.

- Perception and accurate execution of all things rhythm-related.

- Our system brings rhythm to a physical level comparable to instrumental execution on an instrument, leading to a developed inner pulse in larger and smaller divisions.

- Sight-reading.

- Understanding music both vertically (harmony) and horizontally (melody) leads to heightened awareness of the subtleties of musical tension and relaxation, developing another layer of musical cognition.

- Developing a musical memory that aids and extends all the above components.

The convergence of these elements will significantly benefit both performance and discussion of music. Longy theory courses require a student to develop self-discipline in order to manage the rapid pace of preparation of challenging activities amid other demands on one's time.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Regular, punctual attendance is mandatory. Please arrive in time to be settled by the time class is to start. If that means catching an earlier bus than necessary and doing something to fill the time before class once

you arrive, then please do that. Each student should bring loose-leaf manuscript paper, loose-leaf blank paper, and a pencil to class. Keep notes from the class and a log of daily work done outside the class in a tabbed manila folder. A template for keeping track of your daily work is provided at the end of this syllabus.

The class will expose students to techniques of working on music fundamentals that can be used for a lifetime. One should think of the class not so much as a completion (of a requirement) as a beginning of a lifelong process of improving one's musical skills. Several important tools will be utilized, and learning how to be creative in the application of those tools, as well as to be on the lookout for acquiring more such tools in the years ahead, is an important part of the learning we hope is accomplished in the class.

Singing, performing rhythms by singing or tapping, improvising on patterns, and composing will all be used to varying degrees throughout the course. The willing participation in those activities in class is a fundamental requirement of the class.

Establishing regular work habits is another component of the course. Each student is required to work on a daily basis on basic skills, whether a specific assignment has been given or not. A log of one's daily work is to be maintained. A template for a log is provided as part of this syllabus. Please photocopy it as needed, keep track of your work on a daily basis as it prompts you to do. A minimum of 15 minutes per day (every day, without fail!) will yield significant results over the span of a semester or year. Working such sessions into one's practice time – as a way of taking a break from one's instrument, or as a way of warming up the voice in a theoretically-useful way – can reduce the sense of this work as a burden and increase its existence as an essential part of life as a musician. Please make use of the ear training lab in Room 11 for this daily work. It is available any time the building is open, just get a key from the information desk if no monitor is present.

In order to encourage your development of a solid daily work routine, up to two points will be added to your end-of-year score if you are able to demonstrate through regularly completed logs that you have missed no more than one of seven days per week. Logs will be turned in on the second class day per week, and records of your steadiness will be kept until the end of the semester. A semester of not missing more than one week in doing six out of seven days' work will add a point to your final exam score. The point will carry to the second semester, when it will potentially add to another point, raising one's score by two points.

Making up entries to appear as though one is working steadily is considered cheating: it harms the student first and foremost. Keep track of what you actually do when you do it, and report that honestly.

Increasing the depth of one's experience with the materials of music will naturally decrease the stress of having to call upon them when the time comes to use them in pressurized situations. An essential part of making the fullest use of the skills one has is the ability to quiet the mind and reduce the interference that self-doubt and worry produce. Therefore, we will regularly incorporate into the class techniques which help quiet the mind and increase the ability to stay fully present and in the steady forward flow that constitutes musical unfolding. Utilizing the same techniques on one's own will extend their efficacy. In hopes of supporting this development in your routine, a point will be added to your final score in a semester when you accomplish a week's worth (6 out of 7 days) of contemplative practices on your own (at least 15 minutes per day) in 12 out of 13 weeks. The score will not carry to the second semester, it is one point per semester only.

We will regularly do work in class which helps one learn to utilize one's skills in test situations. Those include taking dictation, mini-tests which resemble sections of the proficiency test, and performing rhythms or melodies for the class which one has composed.

For success in this course, a student must:

- 1) come to class on time every day.
- 2) be in one's seat, settled, and ready to work at the appointed start time.
- 3) participate willingly in class activities.
- 4) devote steady, daily effort outside of class to develop the skills which are the focus of the class.
- 5) learn to relax the mind and control the focus of one's attention.

One will note that items 1 and 2 involve being on time. It is possible to be on time, even given variability of public transport. One might need to leave one bus or train earlier and arrive to school earlier than just before class, for instance. Please do what it takes to be on time.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

At the end of the semester, provided one exerts sufficient effort both outside and inside class, one will be able to:

pass the aural proficiency test, which will reflect improved ability in several (and probably all) of the categories of aural skills below:

- interval identification
- scale and mode identification
- melodic dictation
- two-part dictation
- chord identification
- hearing and notation of harmonic progressions
- rhythmic dictation

EVALUATION

Since the class is given for no credit, but rather as a way of meeting the proficiency requirement, the resulting grade will be pass or fail. So that one may be cognizant of progress toward that goal, we will regularly complete work that is corrected in class, but ultimately the pass or fail will come from the final exam, which will come in two parts at the end of the semester. One half of the proficiency test will occur on the first class day of exam-jury period, and the second on the second class day. A mid-term exam will occur on Thursday, October 20, providing the opportunity to practice dealing with the stress of such a test, but not actually determining any part of one's grade. Neither the mid-term nor the final may be missed nor made up.

As mentioned above, up to 2 points will potentially be added to one's final exam score (a point per semester, meaning one in fall, up to two in spring) if one misses no more than once per week in the daily work recorded in one's log. One's own honesty and integrity are on the line in maintaining accurate records. It does no one any good to make up a work log simply to get a couple of points at the end of the year. In fact, if one is steady in working and recording the work, the additional points will not even be needed.

ATTENDANCE

A maximum of three absences are allowed for the semester. Three late arrivals is equivalent to an absence in one's record. Rather than penalize for absences, the class will reward for lack of absences. If one is not absent once, nor late more than twice during the semester, a point will be added to one's final exam score. (Points gained do not carry to the next semester.)

COURSE OUTLINE

It is impossible to provide an outline of topics to be included on a daily basis for this sort of class. The only two known and predictable items are the mid-term and final exams, whose dates are listed below. All times for exams are during regularly scheduled class times.

Mid-term exam Thursday, October 19

Final exam, day one Tuesday, December 12

Final exam, day two Thursday, December 14

ASSIGNMENTS

In lieu of a list of daily assignments, a template for recording daily work is supplied on the following page. Copy it, fill in the date and work completed, turn in the week's record. A copy may be found at the class website, <http://jhmedu.org/GTR-A/>, in case you need another copy.

The template provides seven days, with the accompanying suggestion that one keep track by week, and actually leave a space when a day is missed.

Note the space at the bottom of the page to be used in recording a week during which you practiced a contemplative method six of the seven preceding days.

week:

day, date: activities:

time span: _____ to

time spent:

day, date: activities:

time span: _____ to

time spent:

day, date: activities:

time span: _____ to

time spent:

day, date: activities:

time span: _____ to

time spent:

day, date: activities:

time span: _____ to

time spent:

day, date: activities:

time span: _____ to

time spent:

day, date: activities:

time span: _____ to

time spent:

Sign the blank below if a week's worth of daily practice of contemplative exercises has been accomplished:

Graduate Theory Review of Aural Skills
John Morrison
Syllabus summary

no grade for the course: pass-fail only

proficiency test at end determines pass-fail

class work is not enough

daily work is expected and required: 15 minutes or more per day

- class work provides models of activities one can do on one's own
 - turn in your work log every week
 - record actual work done, be demanding of yourself!
 - working with another individual is helpful, counts toward daily work
 - working with computer drills a good idea
 - Room 11 has four computers, ear training software on each
 - if you do not miss a week of daily work, I'll add a point to your proficiency exam score
 - do not lie by making up entries in your work log, you cheat only yourself
- if you do not miss a class all semester, a point will be added to your exam score
- exam requires 60 out of 100 to pass
 - points gain slowly in this type work
 - start right away, work on musical fundamentals every day
- if you do a contemplative exercise of 15 minutes duration 6 of 7 days, 12 out of 13 weeks, you will gain a point on the final exam
- if you wish to talk with me about the course at any time, make an appointment:
- john.morrison@longy.edu, 617 223 1689