Course Information

Title: Choral Conducting (MUS 272)  
Instructor: Dr. Don Schade  
Semester Credit Hours: 1  
Location: Patterson Hall (PH) 51  
Meeting Times: TTh, 8:30-9:10 AM  
Office: Patterson Hall, Studio C  
Phone: (724) 946-7278  
Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 10:00-11:00

Course Description

Choral Conducting expands on the material covered in the prerequisite course, entitled Basic Conducting (MUS 271). As described in the course catalog, the class will center around “choral conducting techniques, including cueing, score reading and interpretation, preparation and delivery of choral rehearsals and performances, with emphasis on organization and techniques of conducting choral groups. An introductory survey of choral literature, and practice in score reading, rehearsal techniques and conducting performances,” will be undertaken.

Basic conducting techniques will be reviewed and will serve as the foundation for an in-depth study of pedagogical approaches and conducting techniques geared toward the successful preparation and performance of choral repertoire. Students will begin to develop an understanding of gestures that effect precision, tone quality and other musical aspects, with the ultimate goal of assuming greater responsibility for performance outcomes. Additional topics for discussion include rehearsal planning, score study, and group vocal technique.

Materials

Required Materials – A Video/Sound recorder- the recordings of which can be transferred to instructor, printouts of the assigned CPDL scores, 3-ring binder, a conducting baton (preferable 11-12.5” length

Books:

Suggested/purchase not required


Music for Beginning Conductors- Dennis Schrock, GIA Publisher ISBN-10: 1579997783
Required Reading – Readings will be selected from the following and will be posted for you:


An Interview with Margaret Hillis on Score Study, Dennis Shrock

Conscience of a Profession, Howard Swan

Group Vocal Technique, Frauke Haasemann and James Jordan

Suggested Reading – Students are encouraged to immerse themselves in the wealth of material available for choral conductors. See attached Bibliography.

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

I. Articulate the various roles and responsibilities of a choral conductor.

II. Rehearse and conduct advanced choral repertoire.

III. Conduct excerpts in simple, duple, triple, compound and mixed meters.

IV. Conduct a chorus through most common occurrences of the fermata.

V. Cue individual sections and bring in the entire chorus, using a variety of dynamics and articulations.

VI. Cut off the chorus, using a variety of dynamics and articulations.

VII. Discuss various ways in which conducting gestures affect musical outcomes, as they relate to the written score and the conductor’s interpretation of the score.

VIII. Articulate the basic historical considerations relating to each major style period, with the goal of developing informed interpretations of choral repertoire.

IX. Systematically and efficiently approach score study.
X. Develop efficient and well-sequenced choral rehearsals.

XI. Play unison, two- and four-part choral excerpts in open score on the piano.

**Assessment**

*Conducting Assignments (45% - 30% general/15% final)* – Students will conduct various exercises/phrases/excerpts in class to demonstrate competency of baton and hand technique as requested by the instruction. Students will also be asked to prepare and conduct excerpts from the four CPDL selections announced at the beginning of the semester. The works selected represent four of the major style periods and stylistic considerations will be discussed. Students are expected to study the score from a technical, pedagogical and historical perspective using the techniques addressed in the course. In addition, when students conduct a CPDL selection, student will view video of their conducting session outside of class and provide a short written reflection/critique.org on technical and gestural aspects (due one week later). Students will all work on a contemporary composition (Rejoice in the Lamb- Benjamin Britten) that will be conducted by the student by audio recording for the final exam which will count for 15% of the grade.

The following works will be used as a basis for study (all scores are freely available on CPDL and repertoire is subject to change):

1) Renaissance: *Sicut Cervus*, Palestrina - [CPDL #03768](https://cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Sicut_Cervus)
2) Baroque: *Cum Sancto Spiritu* (from *Gloria*) Vivaldi - [CPDL #00871](https://cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/Cum_Santo_Spiritu)
4) Romantic: *He watching over Israel* (from *Elijah*) Mendelssohn - [CPDL #21114](https://cpdl.org/wiki/index.php/He_watching_over_Israel)

*PLEASE HAVE ALL SCORES PRINTED AND IN A 3-RING BINDER BY THE START OF WEEK TWO (DUE DATE INDICATED IN COURSE PLAN).*

**Written Assignment (10 %)** – One required written assignments designed to enhance the students’ approach to rehearsal process are due on the day indicated in the course plan (see below).

1) *Honors Chorus Rehearsal Observation* – Students will compose a two- to three-page reflection on the Honors Chorus rehearsal they will attend on October 27. Constructive comments should be made regarding the overall effectiveness of the rehearsal and might include (but are not limited to) topics such as pacing, demeanor, gesture and/or any other pedagogical choices made by the conductor. This assignment is worth 100 points.

**Examinations (20 %)** – Two exams will be given to supplement in-class activities and assignments. Each exam will be worth 10 % of the overall exam grade and will use a point system, with a total of 100 possible points per exam. Conducting will be evaluated based on the rubric handed out in class.

**Mid-term- Prep Analysis (15%)** – Students will choose one of the four compositions assigned
from the CPDL website and use *Analysis Format* listed below. Due end of 7th week as per Academic Calendar.

*Final Exam* –the conducting of instructor chosen excerpts from Benjamin Britten’s Rejoice in the Lamb by recording.

**Class Participation (10%)** – Students are expected to attend class every day and actively participate. Due to the fact that this course functions largely as a lab choir, lack of attendance will greatly effect the student’s grade. Additionally, completion of the assigned readings and assignments, as well as involvement in class discussions, is necessary in order to earn all of the participation points.

*Attendance Policy* - If a student must miss class for any reason, they should alert the instructor well in advance and absences will be approved at the instructor’s discretion. Examples of excused absences include illness (with appropriate documentation from a medical professional), family emergency, observance of a religious holiday, school field trip (with a note from the advising professor, or other unavoidable conflicts at the instructor’s discretion.

*Unexcused absences in excess of two missed classes will result in the loss of 5% of the overall participation grade per absence.*

**Grading Scale**

A = 93-100  A- = 90-92
B+ = 87-89  B = 83-86  B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79  C = 73-76  C- = 70-72
D = 60-69  F = 59 or below

**Class Policies**

**Attendance/Participation**

Attendance is mandatory and a substantial portion of the student’s grade is based on class participation. Students are expected to arrive on time and remain alert and engaged throughout the class period. Tardiness will not be tolerated; arriving later than ten minutes after the start of class will constitute an unexcused absence and will result in the loss of participation points in accordance with the grading policy. See above for specific information regarding class participation as it relates to the grading policy.

**Electronic Devices**

Please silence all portable electronic devices prior to the beginning of each class period. Disruptions will not be tolerated and students responsible for disturbing the class will be asked to leave, resulting in an unexcused absence for the day.
Academic Honesty

Westminster College Academic Integrity Statement:

“Academic dishonesty is a profound violation of the expected code of behavior. It can take several forms including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation of facts or experimental results, unauthorized use of or intentional intrusion into another’s computer files and/or programs, intentional damage to a computer system, and unauthorized use of library materials and privileges. Academic dishonesty in any of these forms will not be tolerated. Students who engage in academic dishonesty face penalties such as failure in the course involved or expulsion from the College. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of the College.”

Failure to follow this policy may lead to failure of the course or other disciplinary action.

Disability Statement

As stated on the Office of Disability Resources website, “Westminster College is committed to removing barriers to education that may be experienced by students with disabilities, by providing appropriate supports and academic accommodations. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulate the provision of services and accommodations for students with disabilities in higher education.” Students with disabilities are encouraged to reach out to the Office of Disability Resources in order to determine what services may be available to them. Once a determination has been made, the instructor will work, in collaboration with the administration, to make the necessary accommodations.

Analysis Format (for Mid-term)

EXAMPLE: Presented by: Conductor Analytical Synopsis of: Title

Composer: Name (Dates) Insert paragraph containing biographical information here. Include information specifically pertinent to the composition being rehearsed/performed.

Author: Name (Dates) Insert paragraph containing biographical information here. Include information specifically pertinent to the composition being rehearsed/performed.

Text & IPA:

*Discuss meaning of text

*; My spirit sang all day O my joy. Nothing my tongue could say, only my joy!

[mái sprı́rt sæŋ al deı̆ o mái dʒoı̆ nɔθiŋ mái tʌŋ kʊd seı̆ ɔnlí mái dʒoı̆] Continue IPA translation here.

Harmonic and Melodic Analysis:
A discussion of the general harmonic and melodic flow of the composition.

**Significant Musical Features:**

- engaging and complex text gives rise to multiple interpretations
- careful dynamic and diacritical markings give sense of line and word stress
- rich, quartal harmonies throughout
- dissonances create tension and word stress, as in m. 12 (hide *not* thy joy)
- restatement of opening theme in last phrase serves to strengthen resolution

**Potential Rehearsal Issues:**

- negotiating mixed meters is tricky, but can be facilitated by letting the words guide the process
- breaths between phrases are often not indicated and will require some decision making
- special attention should be paid to dynamic markings as the piece is easy to over sing
- word stress and diction are essential and can be difficult as there are a lot of harsh consonants
- achieving desired emotional affect associated with individual sections is essential

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**Selected Bibliography**

**Literature**


**Methods**


Demorest, Steven M. 2001. *Building choral excellence: Teaching sight-singing in the choral*


**Conducting**


Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.


**Vocal Pedagogy**


