Course Information

Title: Choral Literature (MUS 164)  
Instructor: Dr. Don Schade  
Semester Credit Hours: 4  
Location: Patterson Hall, 51  
Meeting Times: MWF 2-3pm

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Office Hours: M., 1-2pm, T.,10-11am or by appointment

Course Description

Choral Literature will introduce students to the vast body of repertoire written for vocal ensembles from the medieval period to present day. Additionally, students will explore historically significant choral masterworks through a deeper, self-directed study that will culminate in the form of a class presentation. Given the important role literature selection plays in any choral organization, attention will also be paid to the selection of repertoire for the various ensemble types and levels. Lastly, students will engage in the dialogue concerning choral programming.

Materials

Students are encouraged to order copies of *A Survey of Choral Music* (Cengage Learning, 1973) by Homer Ulrich and *Choral Repertoire* (Oxford University Press, 2009) by Dennis Shrock using an online resource of their choosing. Both would be valuable hard copy sources to have for future use in the profession; however, *Choral Repertoire* is available as an e-book through Westminster’s library services if the student wishes not to buy a hard copy at this time.

Course Outcomes

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

I. Identify the main stylistic characteristics associated with choral repertoire composed during the major style periods.

II. Identify, on hearing, the style period associated with selected listening examples, using melody, medium, harmony, meter, form and other musical characteristics, to make a determination.

III. Identify, on hearing, the title and composer of assigned listening excerpts of choral music.

IV. Develop a systematic and informed approach to selecting high quality choral repertoire suitable for mixed and like-voiced choral ensembles.

V. Assemble long (1 hour) and short (25 minutes) programs of choral music that form a unified, engaging entity.
VI. Study and analyze a major choral orchestral masterwork (determined by the instructor) from historical, theoretical and formal perspectives and articulate in writing the major features of the composition.

VII. Present findings of self-directed analytical study of a choral masterwork.

VIII. Identify and discuss significant choral works written from the Renaissance to present day.

Assessment

Class Participation and Listening Assignments (40%) – Students will be assigned compositions to analyze and assess and do brief presentations to the class that will include listening to the work in its entirety or pertinent sections deemed important. Students will also engage in daily listening activities that will constitute, along with active class participation, a large portion of the overall grade. In order to earn credit for this portion of the grade, students must be present in class. Students are allotted two (2) unexcused absences per semester. Each unexcused absence after the two allowed, will result in the loss of 5 percent (5 %) of the overall class participation grade. Assuming students are present, engaged and complete the daily listening exercises, full points will be earned for class participation.

Written Assignments (20 %) – Two required written assignments, each worth ten percent (10 %) of the overall grade, are designed to enhance the students’ approach to repertoire selection and programming and are due on the day indicated in the course plan (see below). These assignments are designed to be a springboard into the world of choral programming and are rather open-ended; however, it becomes quickly obvious if no effort has been exerted. Students should spend ample time exploring the repertoire, listening to recordings and reflecting on their programs, in order to come to a product they themselves would want to hear as an audience member. The assignments are as follows:

1) ACDA/Festival Program – Students will assemble a 25-minute program appropriate for a high school level concert or chamber choir that could be submitted for performance at a regional or national ACDA convention, choral festival, or competition. Programs should be designed to reflect a diverse range of style periods and address a variety of desired pedagogical outcomes. Additionally, considerations such as key relationships, timing, text, length, difficulty and affect should be addressed in order to create a unified and engaging entity out of the program. Basic information, such as title, composer, key, length, etc. should be listed (in concert order) along with a brief paragraph (no more than 5-7 sentences) that discusses and justifies the decisions.

2) Themed Concert Program – Students will assemble a one and a half hour-long concert program, with intermission, suitable for a
select high school concert and/or chamber choir. The program should incorporate all of the features of the short program, but should also demonstrate cohesion by way of a theme or other unifying device.

Examinations (40 %) – Two written exams will be given to supplement in class activities and assignments.

Mid-term (15 %) – The midterm will consist of two parts and will cover material discussed up to the date of the exam: 1) Listening identification, 2) Short Answer; 3) Essay response

Final Exam (25 %) – The final exam will consist of two parts: 1) Listening identification (5 %) 2) Final presentation (20 %) – Students will prepare a 10-15 minute analytical presentation of a major choral orchestral masterwork, which will be assigned at the beginning of the semester.

Extra Credit – Students may opt to bring their grade up by one half of a letter grade (A- to A, B- to B, and so forth) by attending a choral concert outside of the regularly scheduled Westminster programs. Concerts could include performances by a community chorus (such as the Shenango Valley Chorale), professional choir (such as the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh), or by a nearby collegiate choir; or, students may attend two high school spring concert programs and compare and contrast the programs.

Students should write a one-page reflection about aspects of the programming that were effective and those that could be improved upon.