Course Information

Title: Concert Choir (MUS 421, 421(V), 521)
Instructor: Dr. Don Schade
Semester Credit Hours: 1
Location: Patterson Hall Mezzanine
Meeting Times: MWF, 11:40-12:40pm
Office: Patterson Hall, Studio C
Phone: (724) 946-7278
Email: schadedb@westminster.edu
Office Hours: MW, 1-2pm; TTh, 9:20-11:00am; by appointment

Course Description

Concert Choir sings traditional, contemporary, and ethnic choral works, as well as teaches musicianship and vocal education to its members. The choir participates in the College Vesper services, in the annual Christmas Vesper service, and presents several choral concerts through the year. The Concert Choir tours annually throughout part of the United States or Europe. This class is open to all students by audition and permission of the instructor.

Course Outcomes

I. Students will understand and demonstrate ensemble skills and musical interpretations and gain a sense of musical flexibility in diverse musical situations.
II. Students will operate at an accelerated pace in rehearsals and concert preparation.
III. Students will display an understanding of fine details regarding various styles, historical performance practices, voicing and languages.
IV. Students will practice professional standards and technique that promotes individual responsibility for vocal health.
V. Students will sing with proper vocal and choral production techniques as stated and recognized by major vocal and choral pedagogues.

Materials
*Assigned musical scores will be provided, but are to be returned at end of semester. Students will be charged for music that is not returned. *Students are required to purchase a black choral folder (not a 3-ring binder). A bulk order will be made at the beginning of the year.

*Students are responsible for the purchase concert attire. Men wear a black tuxedo, black tie and
cummerbund, white tuxedo shirt, and patent leather shoes. Women all wear the same black concert dress, decided upon by the director. A bulk order will be placed at the beginning of the semester in order to cut costs and students will be made aware of the price (which fluctuates year to year) early in the semester.

*All students should bring several sharpened pencils to every rehearsal.

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

Performance Calendar

Please refer to the Westminster College Choral Calendar for all required rehearsal and performance dates.

Class Policies

Attendance/Participation/Grading

An ensemble cannot achieve its full potential without complete commitment by all members, and it is impossible for students to actively participate without being in rehearsal or at a designated performance. Daily records will be kept and a significant portion of the student's grade will depend upon rehearsal and performance participation. The grading policy is as follows:

Participation (15%)
Participation is required at ALL rehearsals and performances.

See participation grading criteria below (pgs. 10-11) regarding participation grading.

Preparation (15%)

Criteria used to establish the preparation grade include the following:

* Work ethic (positive attitude and contribution):
* Student follows instructions and marks score when instructed.
* Student’s participation is conducive to the rehearsal process.
* Student responds well to constructive criticism.
* Student brings scores and a pencil to every rehearsal.
* If unable to sing, the student attends rehearsal and takes notes.

See preparation rubric below (pgs. 8-9) for outside of class preparation and part testing.

Preparation outside of class:

* Students will be given practice assignments and are expected to come prepared. Lack of preparation may result in a lower preparation grade.

Part-testing:

* Announced and unannounced quartet tests will be administered during full rehearsal. Every student should be prepared to perform their part in this setting.

Other expectations:

Professionalism:

* Students should show respect for the conductor and their fellow students.
* Students should adhere to the above participation policy.

Concert Attire:

* Students are expected to participate in choral performances in a clean and professional manner with the proper concert attire (outlines in materials section).

Returning of Materials:

* Students are expected to return all musical scores at the end of the semester. Failure to return or pay for lost/damaged music by the announced deadline will result in the reduction of the demeanor grade.

Vocal/Choral Production (40%)

Individual and ensemble evaluation will be made using the attached choral/vocal grading rubric.

See choral/vocal grading rubric below (pg. 6-7).

Final Exam (30%)
The performances in a semester are averaged and constitute the Final Exam Grade.
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.

Choral Ensembles Grading Criteria- Concert Choir/Chamber Singers

The following represents a listing of musical concepts addressed in the evaluation of students in Concert Choir and Chamber Singers, both individually and from an ensemble perspective: tone quality, rhythm, notes, singing within a given key, dynamics, diction, posture, breathing, phrasing, intonation, and stylistic interpretation.

A (9-10)- Through performance, the student demonstrates excellence in understanding of the musical concept with at least 90% accuracy.

* tone quality is full, rich, and characteristic of the tone quality of the voice in all registers
* intonation is accurate in all ranges and registers
* rhythms are accurate throughout the performance
* posture is exemplary
* performance demonstrates full control of tempo, dynamics, phrasing, and expression in a dramatic performance consistent with the style of the solo/part
* performance demonstrates complete mastery of the technical demands of the music, including precision, facility, and clarity of pitches and diction
B (7-8) - Through performance, the student demonstrates an above average understanding of the musical concept with at least 80% accuracy.
* tone quality is characteristic in most registers, but distorts in some passages
* intonation is mostly accurate; the student adjusts the few problem pitches to an acceptable standard
* rhythms are nearly accurate, some rhythms lack precise interpretation
* posture is correct when used but student is not consistent
* performance demonstrates some control of tempo, dynamics, phrasing and expression in a performance often consistent with the style of the solo/part
* performance nearly demonstrates mastery of the technical demands of the music; minor inconsistencies in precision, facility, and clarity are isolated and rarely detract from the performance

C (5-6) - Through performance, the student demonstrates an average understanding of the musical concept with at least 70% accuracy.
* tone quality exhibits some flaws in production (i.e. slightly thin/unfocused or forced sound)
* intonation is somewhat accurate but includes out of tune notes; the student adjusts these pitches with some success
* many rhythm patterns are accurate, but some lack precision (approximation of written rhythms)
* posture is somewhat accurate but exhibits some flaws; the student attempts to correct some aspects with some success
* performance demonstrates basic control of tempo, dynamics, phrasing and expression; basic attempts at dramatic performance and basic knowledge of style are evident
* most passages are handled with reasonable technical facility; some passages include incorrect or unclear pitches and/or articulations, precision and/or facility

D (3-4) - Through performance, the student demonstrates a below average understanding of the musical concept with at least 60% accuracy.
* tone quality has several flaws in basic production (i.e. consistently thin/unfocused sound)
* exhibits a basic sense of intonation, yet has basic problems; student makes little attempt to adjust problem pitches
* many rhythms performed incorrectly or inconsistently
* posture and holding position is flawed; student makes little attempt to correct problems
* some inconsistency in control of tempo, dynamics, phrasing, and expression is present; performance demonstrates little attempt at dramatic performance, many stylistic inconsistencies are present
* performance demonstrates basic knowledge of the technical demands of the music; consistent errors are made in pitch, diction, facility, and precision

F (1-2) - Through performance, the student demonstrates no understanding of the musical concept.
* tone quality is of a quality that hinders the performance
* intonation is not accurate and hinders the quality of the performance
* the majority of rhythms are performed incorrectly
* posture is incorrect; student makes no attempt to correct problem
*lack of control of tempo, dynamics, phrasing and expression hinder the performance; attempts at dramatic and/or stylistically correct performance are unsuccessful or nonexistent

**Preparation Grade (15%)**

Criteria used to establish the preparation grade includes the following:
* Work ethic (positive attitude and contribution):
* Student follows instructions and marks score when instructed.
* Student’s participation is conducive to the rehearsal process.
* Student responds well to constructive criticism.
* Student brings scores and a pencil to every rehearsal.
* If unable to sing, the student attends rehearsal and takes notes.

**Preparation outside of class:**
* Students will be given practice assignments and are expected to come prepared. Lack of preparation may result in a lower preparation grade.

**Part-testing:**
* Announced and unannounced small group tests will be administered during full rehearsal. Every student should be prepared to perform their part in this setting.

**Preparation Grading Rubric**

**Concert Choir/Chamber Singers**

- **Occasional errors. 50-60% of pitches, rhythms, intervals, and dynamics are sung accurately. Pulse is sometimes consistent and appropriate.**
  - Pitches, rhythms, intervals, and dynamics are sung with 90-100% accuracy. Pulse is consistent and appropriate throughout sections.
  - Consistent errors. 10-20% of pitches, rhythms, intervals, and dynamics are sung accurately. Pulse is inconsistent and inappropriate.
  - More frequent errors. 30-40% of pitches, rhythms, intervals, and dynamics are sung accurately. Pulse is mostly inconsistent and not appropriate.
  - Occasional errors. 50-60% of pitches, rhythms, intervals, and dynamics are sung accurately. Pulse is sometimes consistent and appropriate.
Infrequent errors. 70-80% of pitches, rhythms, intervals, and dynamics are sung accurately. Pulse is mostly consistent and appropriate.

9-10
7-8
5-6
3-4
1-2
0

Participation Grading Criteria
Students are expected to arrive on time and remain alert and engaged throughout the class period. Again, participation is required at ALL rehearsal and performances. In the instance that a rehearsal must be missed, the student should submit a written note, one full week in advance of the given date, outlining the reason for the absence. The instructor reserves the right to deny a student’s request for absence for reasons deemed inappropriate.

Ordinarily, Unacceptable reasons for requesting absence from rehearsal and performances include (but are not limited to):

* Voice lessons
* Meetings with faculty members or other organizations
* Make-up classes or exams
* Registration appointments
* Doctor/dental appointments when a student is not ill
* Personal obligations

Absences for the following reasons are considered excused but the instructor must be contacted before the time of absence:

* Institutional excuses given five days in advance
* Acute illness with doctor's verification
* Death in the immediate family
* Religious holidays
* Immediate family emergencies
Performances and dress rehearsals should not be missed under any circumstance other than emergency. In the extremely rare instance that a student must miss a performance for reason other than an emergency, the student should approach the instructor during the first week of classes to discuss any potential conflicts and submit, in writing, a description of the conflict, so the issue may be resolved. The instructor reserves the right to deny an absence request for reasons deemed inappropriate. Such reasons include, but are not limited to, those listed in the previous section.

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 for the day. Unexcused absences in excess of one missed class will result in the loss of 5% of the overall participation grade per absence.

Participation/grading guidelines:

* FAILURE TO PARTICIPATE in a dress rehearsal without the prior approval of the instructor will result in a loss of one full letter grade. (Ex., from A to B for the final grade)
* FAILURE TO PARTICIPATE in performances without the prior approval of the instructor will result in a loss of two full letter grades. (Ex., from A to C for the final grade)
* FAILURE TO PARTICIPATE during the week of a performance will result in a loss of two full letter grades. (Ex., from A to C for the final grade)