

MUS 171: Sight Singing & Dictation I (Section 1)

Aaron Copland School of Music, Queens College, CUNY

Fall 2025

Schedule: Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, 10:05am–10:55am

Location: Room 310

Instructor: Vlad Praskurnin (he/him)

Email: vlad.praskurnin@qc.cuny.edu

Office Hours: After class and by appointment (email me with your available times)

This syllabus is provisional. If it is revised, I will describe the changes in class and distribute the new version via Brightspace.

Course Description and Objectives

Welcome to Sight Singing and Dictation I! This course is the first of four musicianship courses, and is the companion course to MUS 173 Harmony, Counterpoint, and Keyboard I.

Sight singing (meets on Tuesdays and Fridays):

- The goal is to develop the ability to perform notated melodies and rhythms at sight, and to develop your inner ear, i.e. the ability to hear by mentally reading a score.
- Activities will include at-sight and prepared melodies, sing-and-plays, duets, and rhythm exercises. We will work on:
 - sight singing diatonic melodies with “movable do” solfege syllables, in major and minor keys, in treble, bass, and alto clefs
 - realizing common rhythmic patterns in simple and compound meters
 - conducting in simple and compound meters while performing melodies and rhythms
 - thinking in two parts, through the ability to sing a melody while playing a different melody at the piano

Dictation (meets on Thursdays):

- The goal is to be able to memorize rhythms and melodies, apply solfege to heard melodies, and to accurately transcribe rhythms and melodies.
- We will work on:
 - Transcription of rhythms in simple and compound meters
 - Identification of intervals and diatonic triads (quality and inversion)
 - Transcription of melody and two-voice dictations
 - Harmonic progressions, in chorale style, as studied in MUS173

General aims include developing confidence in performing in front of the class and establishing effective practice techniques and regular practice habits.

Materials and Resources Required

- Berkowitz, Fontrier, Kraft, Goldstein and Smaldone. *A New Approach to Sight Singing*. 7th edition. New York: Norton, 2024. Print or digital version.
- Access to a piano.
- A means of recording videos and access to our Brightspace class page (<https://brightspace.cuny.edu/>). Brightspace will be used for submitting some assignments, accessing additional course materials and viewing grades.

- For dictation: staff paper (free to print from <https://www.blanksheetmusic.net/>), pencil and eraser, pen (for corrections). Or, less preferred, tablet and stylus.

Student and Instructor Responsibilities

Student responsibilities center around taking responsibility for one's learning:

- Attend all class meetings, be on time, and actively participate during class (see "Participation" under "Grading Policies," below). Only use devices (tablets, phones, etc.) for learning purposes.
- Prepare assignments; do the best you can in the time you have.
- Communicate to the instructor any challenges you are experiencing with the material/skills covered and how the instructor can best support you.
- Foster a supportive and non-judgmental class environment. Be supportive of your colleagues. Any form of criticism of your colleagues' in-class performances is not appropriate.

Instructor responsibilities center around facilitating students' learning:

- Foster a supportive and non-judgmental class environment.
- Assign timely and appropriate assignments, and provide timely and useful feedback.
- Communicate clearly and in advance how students will be evaluated, and evaluate accordingly.
- Be available for help in person and over email.

Grade Breakdown

Sight Singing: *2/3 of MUS171 grade*

Assignments: 45%

Participation: 10%

Midterm 1, Midterm 2, Final: 45%

10, 15, and 20% respectively

Dictation: *1/3 of MUS171 grade*

Assignments and Participation: 35%

Midterm 1, Midterm 2, Final: 65%

20, 20, and 25% respectively

Assignments, Grading, and Exams

Sight singing:

- Assignments will consist of prepared melodies to be performed in class, and of recordings of sing-and-plays, rhythms and/or other exercises, to be submitted to Brightspace. For details on grading, see the grading guidelines sheet on Brightspace. In-class melody performances will be worth roughly twice as much as other sight singing assignments.
- Exams will consist of one-on-one performances of prepared and at-sight materials.

Dictation:

- Assignments will consist of transcriptions, practice journals, and/or online drill exercises. Transcriptions and practice journals will be graded based on extent of completion, while online drill exercises will be graded according to the automatically generated score, when applicable.
- Dictation classwork (in-class transcriptions) will be collected. It will be graded based on extent of completion and counted towards your participation mark.
- Dictation exams will take place in class, and will consist of some combination of error detection, chord/interval identification, rhythm dictations, melody and two-voice dictations, and harmonic dictations.

Midterm exams will take place during normal class meeting times. The final exams will take place during final exams week, with dates TBD. Provisional midterm dates:

Midterm 1, Dictation: Thursday, September 25th

Midterm 1, Sight singing: Tuesday, September 30th

Midterm 2, Dictation: Thursday, November 6th

Midterm 2, Sight singing: Tuesday, November 11th (to be confirmed)

General Grading Policies

- **Minimum passing grades:** In accordance with Aaron Copland School of Music policy, a minimum of 65% in both components of Music 171 and a minimum overall average grade of C– (70%) is required in order to continue into Music 172 (Sight singing and Dictation II). Students receiving grades of D or D+ receive credit for the course, but must still repeat the course if they wish to continue in the sequence. (Grade replacement will apply for students who repeat any course in this sequence.) The grade of INC may not be given. The course may not be taken more than twice without the permission of the Chairperson.
- **Extension policy:** I will generally grant extensions for assignments, provided you email me as soon as you know you need one (at least an hour before it is due) and propose a new due date, which should be within a few days after the original deadline. I won't grant multiple extensions on the same assignment.
 - There is no need to specify a reason for your extension request.
 - If you are frequently requesting extensions, I may request to speak to you regarding your situation and to establish a plan going forward, and I may refuse further extensions.
- **Missed and late assignments:** If no extension has been granted, missed assignments, including those resulting from a missed class, will receive an automatic zero. I generally won't accept late assignments. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. same day emergencies, technical issues with digital submissions), assignments to be digitally submitted might be accepted up to one day late, at my discretion, with a late penalty. You must email me to let me know.
- **Participation grades** will be based on active engagement in class and attendance. As mentioned, in-class dictation work will count towards your participation mark. If you will be late or absent, please email me to let me know.
 - You are allowed three absences (two for sight singing, one for dictation), no questions asked. Apart from these, an additional absence will result in a deduction of -7% from your participation grade(s), and each further absence will result in a deduction of -10% from your participation grade(s). There are no "excused" absences.
 - Arriving to class five minutes or more after the starting time is considered a late. Lates and/or lack of engagement in class (e.g. not singing with the class or taking dictation, texting, surfing the web, etc.) will result in deductions to your participation grade.
 - If you are sick or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or another contagious illness, do not come to class. Your participation mark may still be affected. If an assignment is due, email me before class for an extension.

- If you are experiencing major life difficulties that obstruct regular attendance and completion of assignments for more than a week, please let me know, and we will discuss how to best proceed. I am here to help you.

Important Dates

September 23, Tuesday: No class (Rosh Hashanah)

October 2, Thursday: No class (Yom Kippur)

October 14, Tuesday: No class, Monday Schedule

October 24, Friday: No class, Monday Schedule

November 7, Friday: Class may be canceled, TBD

November 27, Thursday: No class (Thanksgiving)

November 28, Friday: No class (Thanksgiving)

December 16–22 (Tuesday to Monday): Final exams week. Final exam date TBD.

For more information, see <https://www.cuny.edu/academics/academic-calendars/>.

CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity

Academic Dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion as provided in the [Academic Integrity Policy](#). If you share an assignment with a classmate and they copy your work, with or without your permission, both of you can be penalized. If you are unsure whether an action you wish to take is academically dishonest (e.g., working on a homework assignment with a friend), please consult the instructor.

Advice on Practicing

Consistently practicing for short time spans several times a week (e.g. 20 minutes three times a week) will be much more effective than one long practice session per week. Make sure you set clear goals for each practice session. Think about how you can break down difficulties into smaller, achievable steps. Reviewing previous goals and challenges helps you decide on next steps.

Disability Accommodations

Students with disabilities or other conditions requiring academic accommodation should register with and provide documentation to the Special Services Office (108 Kiely Hall) and bring a letter to the instructor during the first week of classes indicating the need for accommodation, and of what type. The Special Services Office can be reached at 718-997-5870, qc.spsv@qc.cuny.edu (email), or <https://www.qc.cuny.edu/sp/>. Regardless of your needs, please let me know any way that I can facilitate your learning. I will make every effort to ensure an inclusive class space.

Student Wellness and Counseling Services

As a student, you may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. QC services are available free of charge. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on campus at the Counseling Services Department: <https://www.qc.cuny.edu/cs/>.