

16th-Century Counterpoint

Dr. Justin Lavacek
Spring 2026

MUTH 3410/5410

MWF 11-11:50am
Room MU 250

Email: Justin.Lavacek@unt.edu

Office: MU 212

Office Hours: MW 12pm or Zoom ID 785 214 9382 by appointment

Textbook

Schubert, Peter. *Modal Counterpoint, Renaissance Style*. 2nd edition. Oxford UP, 2007.

Course Goals

In this course we'll develop competency in the Western sacred vocal polyphonic style of the sixteenth century. We study this old music today first because it is exquisitely beautiful and meticulously controlled; music to cherish and learn from. Secondly, strict 16th-century counterpoint formed the background structure from which flowered the Western tonal common practice period, music from about 1600-1900. Beneath their wonderfully diverse surfaces, all the music of the common practice period is organized according to the structural principles of counterpoint developed (perhaps perfected) in the high Renaissance.

The foundation and greatest challenge of our study will be in writing one controlled line, taking careful account of melodic contour, modal expression, rhythm, and text setting. To these cantus firmi we will by degrees add intervallic harmony, free rhythm, and prudent dissonance. Outside of working textbook examples, we'll analyze period motets and read the theoretical writings of Johann Joseph Fux (1725), Gioseffo Zarlino (1558) and Giovanni Artusi (1600).

Graded Work

Quiz (worth **30 pts**) on general introductory concepts.

Homeworks (worth **25 pts** each) are taken from the textbook. I strongly recommend doing all of the indicated exercises, only copying over onto staff paper the best *one* you would like me to grade. The more composition you do, the more deeply you'll understand and internalize the material.

Compositions (worth **25 pts** each) will be relatively short exercises to demonstrate your knowledge of the stages of counterpoint. You are encouraged to always *sing* your writing (we'll sing some of them in class every day), as the keyboard can homogenize distinct voices.

The **midterm project** (worth **50 pts**) will be a short two-voice texted motet, as the culmination of studying the various stages of counterpoint, as demonstrated in your five prior species compositions.

The **Zarlino project** (worth **25 pts**) will be a short presentation (with handout) you will give to the class summarizing a chapter by this preeminent 16th-century theorist.

The **final project** (worth **50 pts**) will be a short paper criticizing “second practice” (early Baroque) counterpoint from the perspective of the “first” (High Renaissance), the style studied in this course. Namely, we will read Artusi’s criticism and corrections(!) of Monteverdi, then discover and fix similar issues in a different piece.

A: 90-100%, B: 80-89%, C: 70-79%, D: 60-69%, F: less than 60%

The penalty for late work is 10% per class day.

Canvas

I’ll post class videos, grades, announcements, notes, and some homeworks on Canvas. You can find the course website at <https://canvas.unt.edu>.

AI Usage

In this course, I want you to engage with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For these reasons, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini are not permitted. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, paper, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the Student Academic Integrity policy.

Attendance

Arriving more than 5 minutes late to class three times will result in one recorded absence. Arriving more than 25 minutes late (half the class) is an absence. Three unexcused absences may result in the final grade dropping by one letter grade. Six unexcused absences may result in being dropped from the course with a WF (withdraw failing).

Excused absences include official University or College of Music activities, medical emergencies, and illnesses. If you have traffic problems or other family emergencies, please email me. Excused absences do not count against your attendance or lower your grade. Absences to work a job are not excused absences. If you have a chronic medical condition that might affect your class attendance or performance, please see the Office of Disability Accommodations. Students who will miss class because of a religious observance should make arrangements to make up the material. Please contact me prior to the event whenever possible.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam [or specify alternative sanction, such as course failure]. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students (Office of Academic Integrity), who may impose further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term “cheating” includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports,

solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage. The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

See: [Academic Integrity](#)

LINK: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

See: [Student Code of Conduct](#)

Link: <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>

ACCESS TO INFORMATION – EAGLE CONNECT

Your access point for business and academic services at UNT occurs at [my.unt.edu](#). All official communication from the university will be delivered to your Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect.

See: [Eagle Connect](#)

LINK: eagleconnect.unt.edu/

ODA STATEMENT

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter. You can now request your Letters of Accommodation ONLINE and ODA will mail your Letters of Accommodation to your instructors. You may wish to begin a private discussion with your professors regarding your specific needs in a course. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester. For additional information see the Office of Disability Access.

See: [ODA](#)

LINK: disability.unt.edu. (Phone: (940) 565-4323)

Health and Safety Information

Students can access information about health and safety at: <https://music.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness>

Registration Information for Students

See: [Spring Academic Calendar Information](#)

Link: <https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/spring-academic-calendar.html>

Semester Calendar, Spring 2026

See: [Spring Semester Calendar](#)

Link: <https://registrar.unt.edu/sites/default/files/spring-2026-academic-calendar.pdf>

Final Exam Schedule, Spring 2026

See above

Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress

Undergraduates

A student must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to continue to receive financial aid. Students must maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA in addition to successfully completing a required number of credit hours based on total hours registered. Students cannot exceed attempted credit hours above 150% of their required degree plan. If a student does not maintain the required standards, the student may lose their financial aid eligibility.

Students holding music scholarships must maintain a minimum 2.5 overall cumulative GPA and 3.0 cumulative GPA in music courses.

If at any point you consider dropping this or any other course, please be advised that the decision to do so may have the potential to affect your current and future financial aid eligibility. It is recommended that you to schedule a meeting with an academic advisor in your college or visit the Student Financial Aid and Scholarships office to discuss dropping a course before doing so.

See: [Financial Aid](#)

LINK: <http://financialaid.unt.edu/sap>

Graduates

A student must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to continue to receive financial aid. Students must maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA in addition to successfully completing a required number of credit hours based on total registered hours per term. Music scholarships require a 3.5 cumulative GPA. Students cannot exceed maximum timeframes established based on the published length of the graduate program. If a student does not maintain the required standards, the student may lose their financial aid eligibility.

If at any point you consider dropping this or any other course, please be advised that the decision to do so may have the potential to affect your current and future financial aid eligibility. It is recommended you schedule a meeting with an academic advisor in your college, an advisor in UNT-International or visit the Student Financial Aid and Scholarships office to discuss dropping a course.

See: [Financial Aid](#)

LINK: <http://financialaid.unt.edu/sap>

RETENTION OF STUDENT RECORDS

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates.

See: [FERPA](#)

Link: <http://ferpa.unt.edu/>

COUNSELING AND TESTING

UNT's Center for Counseling and Testing has an available counselor for students in need.

Please visit the Center's website for further information:

See: [Counseling and Testing](#)

Link: <http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>

For more information on mental health resources, please visit:

See: [Mental Health Resources](#)

Link: <https://disparities.unt.edu/mental-health-resources>

ADD/DROP POLICY

Please be reminded that dropping classes or failing to complete and pass registered hours may make you ineligible for financial aid. In addition, if you drop below half-time enrollment you may be required to begin paying back your student loans. See Academic Calendar (listed above) for additional add/drop Information.

Drop Information: <https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/spring-academic-calendar.html>

STUDENT RESOURCES

The University of North Texas has many resources available to students. For a complete list, go to:

See: [Student Resources](#)

Link: <https://success.unt.edu/aa-sa-resources>

CARE TEAM

The Care Team is a collaborative interdisciplinary committee of university officials that meets regularly to provide a response to student, staff, and faculty whose behavior could be harmful to themselves or others.

See: [Care Team](#)

Link: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care-team>

| 16th-Century Counterpoint | | | | MUTH 3410/5410 |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| Dr. Justin Lavacek | | | | Spring 2026 |
| MWF 11:00-11:50a | | | | MU 250 |
| Week | Date | Topic for class (Schubert text section) | Classwork | Graded Assignment Due |
| 1 | M W F | 12-Jan 14-Jan 16-Jan Intro: What is 16th-c. sacred vocal polyphony? (pp. 1-8) rhythm, Victoria: O vos omnes text setting (Appendix 1) | handout handout handout | |
| 2 | M W F | 19-Jan Martin Luther King Day (no classes) 21-Jan 23-Jan mode (Ch. 1) and chant notation melody (pp. 20-5), accidentals (pp. 7-8, 83) | | handout handout |
| 3 | M W F | 26-Jan QUIZ on introductory concepts 28-Jan 30-Jan 16th-c. notation & transcription cadences, "Sicut cervus" | | QUIZ |
| 4 | M W F | 2-Feb SPECIES: Intro (Ch. 2) and 1st species (Ch. 3) 1st species error detection, read Fux 1st species review, invertible counterpoint | | HW1: Exercise 3-C: 1-3 (pick one) |
| 5 | M W F | 9-Feb 2nd species (Ch. 4) 11-Feb 2nd species error detection, read Fux 13-Feb 2nd species review, 1st --> 2nd species, inv. ctp. @ 12th | | Composition 1 HW2: Exercise 4-C: 1-3 (pick one) |
| 6 | M W F | 16-Feb 3rd species (Ch. 5) 18-Feb 3rd species error detection, read Fux 20-Feb 3rd species review, 1st --> 3rd species, swap CF/ctp | | Composition 2 HW3: Exercise 5-C: 1-3 (pick one) |
| 7 | M W F | 23-Feb 4th species (Ch. 6) 25-Feb 4th species error detection, read Fux 27-Feb 4th species review, inv. ctp., swap CF | intro to cadences hand. | Composition 3 HW4: Exercise 6-C: 1-4 (pick one) |
| 8 | M W F | 2-Mar 5th species (Ch. 7) 4-Mar 5th species error detection, read Fux 6-Mar 5th species review, cambiata | Exercise 7-B Exercise 7-D2, cambiata | Composition 4 HW5: cf: A-G-C-Bb (3 above/below) |
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| Week | Date | Topic for class (Schubert text section) | Classwork | Graded Assignment Due |
| | M 9-Mar | SPRING BREAK (no classes) | | |
| | W 11-Mar | SPRING BREAK (no classes) | | |
| | F 13-Mar | SPRING BREAK (no classes) | | |
| 9 | M 16-Mar | Free Composition: two parts in mixed values (Ch. 11) | <i>Frankenstein motet 1</i> | Composition 5 |
| | W 18-Mar | more mixed values, to p. 149 | <i>Frankenstein motet 2</i> | |
| | F 20-Mar | evaded and elided cadences (pp. 140-1) | Lassus duets | |
| 10 | M 23-Mar | motet project workday | get fundamental line approved | |
| | W 25-Mar | motet project error detection | | |
| | F 27-Mar | mensuration and coloration | | |
| 11 | M 30-Mar | analytical reduction (Victoria motet pp. 308-9) | species to florid | <u>MOTET PROJECT due</u> |
| | W 1-Apr | motives against a CF (Ch. 8) | | |
| | F 3-Apr | imitation (Ch. 12, 161-8 only) | | |
| 12 | M 6-Apr | Motivic Variation (Ch.9, pp. 117-23) | handout | HW 7: Exercise 12-C4, p. 168 |
| | W 8-Apr | canons: writing (154-5) and puzzle (153), improvisation video | | |
| | F 10-Apr | three parts (Ch. 14) | handout | |
| 13 | M 13-Apr | three parts: mixed values (p. 200ff.) | | |
| | W 15-Apr | three parts: mixed values again; add 3rd voice to Fux | | |
| | F 17-Apr | <u>late Renaissance</u> comparison: Lassus- <i>Prophetiae sibyllarum</i> | handout | |
| 14 | M 20-Apr | <i>Seconda pratica</i> (Baroque) & Artusi controversy | | |
| | W 22-Apr | four parts (Ch. 17) | | |
| | F 24-Apr | Zarlino presentations | | Zarlino presentations |
| 15 | M 27-Apr | Zarlino presentations | | Zarlino presentations |
| | W 29-Apr | Zarlino presentations | | Zarlino presentations |
| | F 1-May | READING DAY (no classes) | | |
| | | | | |
| | W 6-May | Final Project due by 11:59pm | | <u>FINAL PROJECT due</u> |