

Fundamentals of Conducting

MUAG 3800.002 | Spring 2026

M/W/F 8:00–8:50am, MU 232

Melinda Coleman, instructor

MelindaColeman@my.unt.edu

Office: PAC Annex 102 | **Office hours:** by appointment

Syllabus

Course Description and Purpose

To develop a professional conducting approach with emphasis on techniques appropriate to wind, orchestral, and choral conducting. This course will include instruction in beginning and intermediate conducting techniques, score analysis and preparation, transposition, terminology, visual/aural discrimination skills, and reinforcement of basic musicianship.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate proper conducting posture
- Demonstrate effective baton technique
- Demonstrate the following conducting techniques:
 - Preparatory gestures, downbeats, and releases
 - Patterns for various meters
 - Representation of various styles
 - Representation of various dynamics
 - Representation of various tempos
 - Tempo alterations
 - Independent and complementary use of right and left hand
 - Entrances on beats other than one and incomplete beats
- Evaluate the effectiveness of different conducting techniques by:
 - Observing and evaluating their personal conducting experiences on video
 - Observing and evaluating other class members
 - Observing, evaluating, and writing reflections on different conductors of various ensembles in rehearsal and concert
- Demonstrate visual/aural discrimination skills in rehearsal situations
- Define essential vocabulary terms relevant to score preparation and conducting
- Internalize transpositions and apply them both in score reading and in independent exercises
- Analyze a score with a focus on interpretation and rehearsal techniques

Required Materials

- Baton (subject to instructor approval)
- Course handouts provided by the instructor
- Three-ring binder, folder, or tablet to organize scores and other handouts
- Your primary or secondary instrument as determined by the instructor
- Electronic device with video recording capabilities

Baton Purchasing

There will be an opportunity to purchase a handmade, balanced baton from trusted company Custom Batons. There will be opportunities to “test drive” different batons in class. When you are ready to purchase a baton, visit <https://www.custombatons.net/students>, click “fiberglass,” enter the school password given to you by your instructor, and provide your payment information. You can then keep the baton you have been using in class.

Course Requirements

Attendance/Participation: Attendance is mandatory for all scheduled classes. The nature of this course requires active participation and interaction among class members at all times.

Excused absences will be handled on a case-by-case basis and require **email communication to the instructor**.

Unexcused absences will result in a lowering of the final grade as follows:

0–1 absences	No effect
2–3 absences	Reduction of 1 letter grade
4–5 absences	Reduction of 2 letter grades
6+ absences	Grade of WF if withdrawal is requested, or final grade of F

Every 4 late arrivals (tardy by 5 or more minutes) will count as an absence.

Weekly Conducting Opportunities: Each class week, different conducting exercises or excerpts will be assigned. Each student will be expected to conduct the assigned materials in class with the other class members serving as the ensemble. The student must bring a device to record all conducting opportunities—these recordings will form the basis of the **Final Conducting Portfolio**.

Assignments

Formal Conducting Assessments: There will be 4 formal conducting assessments over the course of the semester. Each assessment will focus on a different conducting technique or style. For each assessment, students will be provided with a list of excerpts and will choose one excerpt to conduct. The student is required to record their examination, which will eventually become a part of their portfolio. Conducting assessments will be graded on the following criteria:

- Posture
- Clarity and accuracy of technique
- Preparation of the score, as evidenced by clarity and appropriateness of conducting style
- Professionalism
- Participation in in-class conducting rounds prior to the assessment

Concert/Rehearsal Observations: Each student is required to submit one Concert Observation and one Rehearsal Observation, each reflecting attendance at a major university or professional conducted concert ensemble. Observe the following criteria when selecting an ensemble to observe:

- The student must be an observer, not actively playing in the ensemble
- The two observation assignments must represent two different ensembles/conductors
- The two observation assignments must represent two different performing mediums (winds, orchestral, choral, jazz, etc.)

Rehearsal/concert observations should be typed, double-spaced, and at least 250 words long. Specific criteria for the content of the observations will be posted to Canvas.

Class Discussions: Over the course of the semester, there will be 4 graded discussion topics. In preparation for each discussion, students will submit a short (100-word) reflection on the topic in Canvas before the class period in which the discussion occurs. Discussion assignments will be graded both on the written submission and on participation in class.

Vocabulary and Terms: There will be 1 Vocabulary and Terms assignment designed to assess students' knowledge of conducting terminology and common musical vocabulary found in scores. Specific criteria for the assignment will be posted to Canvas.

Transposition Quizzes: There will be 3 in-class transposition quizzes over the course of the semester.

Final Project: Conducting Portfolio: The final project in this course is a portfolio of your work as a developing conductor. The purpose of the portfolio is to demonstrate your ability to describe and analyze conducting and to reflect on your growth as a conductor over the course of the semester. The portfolio has two components: conducting footage and self-reflection.

Conducting footage: Include three separate videos of you conducting, ideally from different times in the semester.

Self-reflection: 3 analysis paragraphs (one for each video), 1 reflection paragraph on your takeaways from the semester.

Specific criteria for the content of the analysis and self-reflection will be posted to Canvas.

There is no in-person final exam for this course.

Late Work Policy

Life happens. In acknowledgement of potential complications due to illness, life events, technology issues, and other factors, all assignments submitted through Canvas have an **automatic 48-hour grace period** for late work. Work submitted during the grace period will be treated as on-time and graded for full credit. Consequently, there are **no extensions** offered for assignments submitted through Canvas.

Work submitted after the grace period **may** be graded for partial credit at the end of the semester at the discretion of the instructor.

If a student is absent from class on the day of an **in-person quiz**, the student will make up the quiz during the next class period that the student is present.

Grading Procedures

Conducting assessments	40%
Transposition, vocabulary, discussions	30%
Rehearsal/concert observations	20%
Final conducting portfolio	10%

Grading Scale

100–90	A
89–80	B
79–70	C
69–60	D
59 or below	F

Recommended Texts

There is no required textbook for this class. However, the following texts are recommended for students who wish to deepen their knowledge of conducting.

The Art of Conducting, Donald Hunsberger and Roy E. Ernst. 2nd edition. McGraw-Hill, Inc. 1992

The Elements of Expressive Conducting, Michael Haithcock, Brian Doyle, Kevin Gerald. Conway Publications 2020

Conducting: The Art of Communication, Wayne Bailey and Brandt Payne. 2nd edition. Oxford University Press 2015

Basic Conducting Techniques, Joseph A. Labuta and Wendy K. Matthews. 7th edition. Routledge 2018

The Modern Conductor, Elizabeth Green and Mark Gibson. 7th edition. Pearson 2003

Additional Resources

DEFIBRILLATORS IN THE COLLEGE OF MUSIC

- Music Building: Across from the west side of the Music Commons, directly across from the elevator
- Music Building: Third floor hallway, across from the staircase that comes up from the Copy Room. Next to Room 322
- Music Building: Across from the Copy Room next to Room 293
- Music Building: Voertman Lobby by the big double set of doors that lead out to the courtyard
- Music Building: Main Office (247) under the student worker's desk
- Music Annex: Next to room MA117, near the triple set of doors on the east side of the building
- Music Practice Building North: First floor on the Avenue C side
- Music Practice Building South: First floor on the Avenue C side
- Bain Hall: First floor by the restrooms
- Murchison Performing Arts Center: Located off the main lobby, beyond the grand staircase, across from the single occupancy restroom (next to the public water fountains)

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 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>