



MUAG 3800.002 MUAG 5805.001

FUNDAMENTALS OF CONDUCTING

Fall 2026 | Mon/Wed/Fri 9:05-9:55 AM | MPAC 021

Instructor: Nathan Wise | Wind Studies Teaching Fellow | DMA Wind Conducting

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Office hours: By appointment

Course Description and Purpose

This course aims to develop the knowledge and skills appropriate to professional conducting. The course will include instruction in fundamental conducting techniques, score study, visual/aural discrimination skills, alternative movement approaches, and a reinforcement of essential musicianship.

Course Objectives

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

- Demonstrate efficient and expressive body carriage.
- Demonstrate effective baton technique.
- Demonstrate the following techniques:
 - Preparatory gestures, downbeats, and releases.
 - Patterns for various meters, including duple/triple, simple/compound.
 - Representation of a diversity of styles.
 - Representation of dynamic indications.
 - Independent and complimentary use of right and left arms-hand complex.
 - Entrances on beats other than one and incomplete beats.
 - Diversity of gestural vocabulary in the service of cues and more.
 - Representation of a diversity of tempos and transitions.
- Evaluate conducting techniques by:
 - Observing and evaluating videotaped conducting experiences.
 - Observing and evaluating class members.
 - Evaluating two different conductors of various ensembles in various scenarios.
- Demonstrate visual/aural discrimination skills in rehearsal situations.
- Describe the role of the conductor in historical and philosophical perspectives.
- Refine the essential skills of musicianship in a conducting context.
- Internalize transpositions and their use in score reading through independent exercises and assignments.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze a score with a focus on interpretation and rehearsal techniques.

Required Resources

For success in the course, each student must have the following materials:

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

Baton Purchasing: You will have the opportunity to purchase a handmade, balanced baton from a trusted company called Custom Batons. You may “test drive” different batons in class and, should you choose to buy it, go to <https://www.custombatons.net/students>, click on the Fiberglass Baton option under students, and enter school password (TBD) and purchase information to keep your baton.

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

Course Requirements

Participation: Attendance and participation is mandatory for all scheduled classes. The nature of a conducting course always requires active participation and interaction among all class members. Excused participation will be handled on a case-by-case basis and require email communication to the instructor.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend class meetings regularly and to abide by the attendance policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with the professor and the instructional team prior to being absent, so you and the professor can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform the professor if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community.

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

- 0-1: No effect
- 2-3: Reduction of 1 letter grade
- 4-5: Reduction of 2 letter grades
- 6+: Grade of WF if withdrawal requested or final grade of F

Lateness: Every four late arrivals (tardy by 5 minutes or more) will count as an absence, and the scale above will take effect.

Weekly Conducting Opportunities: Weekly conducting exercises and excerpts will be assigned and evaluated. Each student will be expected to conduct the assigned musical excerpts in class with the class members as the ensemble. The student must provide a method to record their conducting turn.

Assignments

Student learning will be evaluated through individual written and practical assessments aligned with course lectures and conducting activities. Written work may include self-evaluations, reflections on class discussions, and observations of professional concerts. Assessments in this course include Concert Observations, Written Assignments, Weekly Conducting Opportunities, Conducting Assessments, and a Final Exam. Details regarding expectations and evaluation criteria will be provided in class and on Canvas.

Conducting Experiences: There will be a formal midterm conducting assessment, multiple weekly conducting opportunities, assigned score study, and both formal and informal conducting reflections over the course of the semester. The formal assessment will be on a given selection of excerpts that reinforce a specific conducting technique. The student will select an excerpt of their choosing from a given list and will have approximately five minutes to conduct that excerpt with the class as their ensemble. The student is required to dress professionally and record their examination, which will eventually become a part of their portfolio. The student will be graded on their posture/ready position, clarity and accuracy of technique, overall preparedness, and their professionalism. By the end of the semester, the student will create a YouTube playlist of select conducting experiences, both in-class and assigned as homework, which will serve as their conducting portfolio.

Written Assignments: Written assignments support the development of essential analytical and musicianship skills for conducting. Students will engage in basic transposition and the acquisition of standard conducting and musical vocabulary. Assignments include the Pre-Assessment, Post-Assessment, Transposition Quiz, and Vocabulary Quiz, which are designed to assess students' ability to apply transposition principles and demonstrate understanding of relevant terminology. All assignments, along with detailed instructions and due dates, are available on Canvas.

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 must be typed: double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, and all margins 1 inch. The length of the typed assignments must be a minimum of one page, and a maximum of two pages with the above guidelines followed. For full credit, this assignment must be turned in by 5:00pm on the assigned date. Please see the section on Concert Observations for more details of content and due dates.

Final Exam: The final conducting exam will take place during the last three regular class meetings of the semester. The exam will be on a given excerpt chosen to demonstrate a variety of conducting techniques developed throughout the semester. The student will have approximately five minutes to conduct that excerpt with the class as their ensemble. The student is required to dress professionally and record their examination, which will eventually become a part of their portfolio.

Grading Procedures

The final grade is based on the following criteria.

Conducting Experiences	40%
Written Assignments	30%
Concert Observations	15%
Final Conducting Exam	15%

See the above section on Attendance for details about how absences will affect the final grade.

Flexibility Clause

Because this class is based on application of student learning, the timelines of the class will be flexible based on students' demonstration of readiness to execute conducting technique. The instructor reserves the right to push back assignments, assessments, and discussions based on class pacing and student needs.

RESOURCE LINKS

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

See: [Academic Integrity](#)

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

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

See: [Student Code of Conduct](#)

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

ACCESS TO INFORMATION – EAGLE CONNECT

See: [Eagle Connect](#)

LINK: eagleconnect.unt.edu/

ODA STATEMENT

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: [Fall Academic Calendar Information](#)

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

Semester Calendar, Fall 2026

See: [Fall Semester Calendar](#)

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

Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress

See: [Financial Aid](#)

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

See: [Financial Aid](#)

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

COUNSELING AND TESTING

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/fall-academic-calendar.html>

STUDENT RESOURCES

See: [Student Resources](#)

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

CARE TEAM

See: [Care Team](#)

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

Additional Resources for Faculty

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (including sample statement for syllabi)

See: [Faculty Guide for the Use of AI](#)

Link: <https://guides.library.unt.edu/artificial-intelligence/AIfaculty>

RETENTION OF STUDENT RECORDS

See: [FERPA](#)

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