

Syllabus

Voice Studio: Music 215, 315, 415, 515

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Objective

The primary goal of voice lessons is to develop your ability to reach out to others and to the world through melody and meaning. Our first objective will be to deepen your comprehension of what is possible: your understanding and awareness of the fundamentals and nuances with which art and music are created. We will then work tenaciously to enable you to express that vision through mastery of your own instrument: to develop a rainbow of tone colors across a wide range of pitches, the ability to shape phrases from softest piano to brilliant forte, and to release your imagination, empathy, and intellect through vocal freedom and fluidity.

Studio Expectations

1. Read and abide by the Vocal Area Policies. These and many other helpful materials can be found on the “Voice Department Announcements and Masterclass Attendance” Canvas Page. Please pay careful attention to the guidelines about repertoire and performance requirements, and grading parameters.
2. I expect you to attend vocal recitals, concerts, guest masterclasses, and opera and musical theater productions at WWU. Please let me know if you will not be able to make any such event; otherwise, I will plan to see you there!
3. Plan to have the required materials listed in the Policies document available by the fourth week of the quarter at your lesson and for practicing.
4. I ask that you keep me informed of your vocal activities outside of lessons and WWU ensembles. Please confer with me before auditioning for student-led *a cappella* groups, musicals, and other productions.

Attendance

There are nine lessons per quarter at WWU. Please do everything you can to stay healthy and take care of your voice (see “Vocal Health Tips and Warming Up” on the Studio Canvas Page).

- **Make Up Policy:** If you are ill, you **MUST** notify me **AND** your accompanist by 9 pm the evening before your lesson to cancel it. If you need to miss a lesson for any other reason we will need to discuss it at least a week in advance in order to consider making up the lesson.
- Lessons will begin promptly. Please arrive early in order to get your listening and practice journal out, scores opened and ready, and any note-taking or recording materials handy. Knock on the door and come in when it is five minutes before your lesson time.

Scores

Please keep all scores and materials for this class neatly organized/tabbed in a binder, prepared as follows:

1. Translate first. Write the English equivalent word-for-word on your score, including any expressive markings or unfamiliar music symbols.
2. Create copies for me and for your accompanist *of this translated version*. This will enable all of us to discuss the text and musical setting on the same level. (3 prepared binders total.)
3. *All* the copies must be double-sided and three-hole punched, including yours. (Exception: two-page songs...think: the point is to eliminate unnecessary page turns for the pianist.)

Un-translated copies, single-sided copies, or those which are illegible or missing any part of the score, will be returned to you. Lessons are for addressing technique and interpretation. You are expected to learn on your own all pitches, rhythms, entrances, rests etc. and be comfortable enough with the score to concentrate on what your voice, mind, and heart are doing by the time you bring it to me. We will not dedicate any part of your lesson to learning notes; if songs are unprepared, I will ask you to spend that time in the practice room.

Please refer to the documents “Program Notes” and “Character Development Sheet” on Canvas. I will expect that you have answered the questions posed therein for yourself before bringing any score to your lesson – whether you take written notes or prefer to work mentally and verbally – and that you are ready to discuss the material at this level of depth and artistry. Also take a look on Canvas at “Masterclass Memorization Strategies and Score Learning Process” and the “Spillman Reading” for useful practice checklists.

Accompanists *Students in their first quarter of 215 are exempt from this requirement.*

Before scheduling your lesson time at the beginning of the quarter, make arrangements with an accompanist who is available to attend in that time slot. Collaboration with pianists is a critical part of the interpretive rehearsal process and a privilege. Therefore giving this aspect of your preparation the serious attention it deserves will substantially affect your grade. Please refer to “WWU Singer-Pianist Collaboration Guidelines” on Canvas.

Options:

- Check with me to see whether a student pianist from the Accompanying Studio will be coming to your weekly lessons and masterclass. You will get to go to their accompanying lesson in return and also sing for the accompanying masterclass; you are also expected to schedule a half hour rehearsal together each week.
- If you have not been assigned a student pianist for the quarter, you will need to arrange to work with a staff accompanist or another local collaborative pianist (see the Voice Department Canvas Page for a list).

Practicing

You are expected to practice daily. Aim for several sessions spaced out across the day, totaling about an hour of work. Since I only see you one day out of seven, you might say that your independent practicing is *the* most important part of this class. You need to develop your practice process and strategies just as much as you do technical and interpretive facility with your voice. I will therefore ask you to include a couple of sections in your binder designed to help us communicate about these skills:

Technique Book

I will expect you to use the exercises that we use in lessons to warm yourself up before practicing, ideally each morning, before choir. I have written down some of the standard ones in the “Technique Book” document, but have left space for more, as well as notes about purpose and range guidelines. I will usually ask you to demonstrate the way you are using these during your lessons so that we can talk them over.

Practice and Listening Journal

You will find a lot of ideas about strategies in the “Practicing Singing Strategically” document on the Canvas page for this class. Please keep a spiral notebook with lined paper on which you can jot down goals from your lesson, as well as notes on strategies, repertoire, performances, and questions for me. Each week should also include a section for your Listening Journal, which is a voice department-wide requirement. (see Policies document). See “Singers Listening List” on Canvas, and plan to spend about 50 minutes of time listening to your own repertoire, other material by these composers, and other singers from the list or from Music 166B. Write brief notes about your choices and impressions to share with me at the start of your lesson.

I cannot stress strongly enough that you must be consistent, *whenever you sing*, in paying attention to what you are doing. We have a fantastic choral program here at WWU, and you can think of your hour of choir as a bonus practice session IF you are really concentrating on breathing athletically, using a coordinated onset, and singing with the free and resonant sound that we all want to hear and which our excellent directors will expect of you as much as I do. Even if you are just singing in the shower or in the car, do not allow yourself to unwittingly practice old habits or awkward vocal production. Think about your use of your speaking voice as well. The saying is “Practice begins when you get it *right*.” (Coyle)