

The Art of Counterpoint

SYLLABUS

Instructor

Dr. Reginald Bain, Professor
Composition and Theory

Contact Information

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Course Information

Term: Summer 2026, 3-Week Session III (3S5)
Dates: June 22 - July 8
Time: MTW: 4:10-7:40 pm¹
Website: <<https://reginaldbain.com/vc/musc726a/>>
Blackboard: <<https://blackboard.sc.edu/>>

COURSE MODULES

1. Introduction
 2. Counterpoint in the Middle Ages
 3. Renaissance
 4. Baroque
 5. Classical & Romantic Periods
 6. Twentieth Century
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Description

Analysis of counterpoint and texture in polyphonic music from the Middle Ages to the present.

Prerequisite: Undergraduate tonal harmony and voice leading.

Course Materials

Reading assignments, digital scores, and analytical media will be made available in electronic format via Blackboard and the course website.

Instructional Methods

This course will be taught using multiple instructional methods that include lecture, group discussion, and student-centered learning approaches (e.g., active learning exercises, flipping, online activities, etc.). Students will complete assignments that focus on model analyses of major works that illustrate the main topics of the course. The capstone project for the course is an instructor-mentored student presentation with associated critical discussion.

Course Goals and Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze modal, tonal, and twentieth-century counterpoint
- Compare/contrast contrapuntal techniques and styles employed in the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical & Romantic Periods, and Twentieth-Century
- Navigate online resources for counterpoint scholarship
- Engage in, and lead, an analytical discussion
- Plan, research, develop and present an analytical oral presentation with supporting digital media that includes musical examples and analytical diagrams

¹ Blended/Hybrid Up to 49% web. Course that is taught both face-to-face and online with 49% or less of the course offered online. Course meets in-person on Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday and assignments/activities are completed asynchronously online by students in lieu of a Thursday meeting.

Technical Requirements

A computer, Web access, and a university-provided Blackboard account are required to access the digital course materials and submit work via Blackboard. Microsoft Word (.docx), Excel (.xlsx), and PowerPoint (.pptx) are the preferred document creation formats. These programs are available for free to all USC students. For more information, see *Links for Students > Blended Course Information* on the course website.

Course Requirements

Daily reading, score study, and listening. Daily participation in class. Daily use of the course Blackboard page and website. Daily participation in the in-class analyses and class discussions. Daily use of the course Blackboard page and website to access digital course materials. Weekly asynchronous assignments/activities. For more information, see the *Daily Schedule* and *Listening/Analysis* documents on the class website. Two analysis projects:

1. *Before 1600*, and 2. *1600-1900*; and a final oral presentation (*1900-present*) with supporting digital media. Due dates/times are available in the *Daily Schedule* and in Blackboard.

Course Format & Policies

This course is being offered as a blended course. The course meets face-to-face (f2f) three times per week (Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays). Typical activities in the f2f classroom include lecture, interacting with your instructor and classmates, analytical discussions, open Q & A sessions, review sessions, student presentations with associated critical discussion, etc. Assignments/activities are completed asynchronously by students in lieu of a Thursday meeting. Most of the work for the course will occur online in Blackboard and on the course website. The learning modules in Blackboard are organized into assignments/activities that include links to videos, scores, recordings, analyses, quizzes, exercises, software for computer-aided analysis, etc. Online assignments/activities and in-class activities are designed to build on each other. Completion of the online assignments/activities in a timely manner, and active participation in class, are critical to success in this course. Late work cannot be accepted – except in the case of a documented excused absence. Work that is not submitted is averaged into the student's grade using a score of zero. For more information, see *Links for Students > Blended Course Information* on the course website.

University Policies

As described on the university's *Carolinian Creed*, *Honor Code* and *Center for Teaching Excellence* websites, students are expected to practice the highest possible standards of academic integrity and classroom etiquette. For more information, see *Links for Students* on the course website.

Attendance Policy

This course will follow the university's *Attendance Policy* which is available online at:

<https://academicbulletins.sc.edu/undergraduate/policies-regulations/undergraduate-academic-regulations/>

GenAI Policy

This course will follow the university's GenAI use, which is available online at:

https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/cte/teaching_resources/generative_ai/genai_teaching_guidelines/

Student Services

Information about **Graduate Student Opportunities and Support**, **Wellness at the School of Music**, and **other student services** is available on the course website under *Links for Students*.

Student Disability Resource Center

If you are registered with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC), please make sure I receive a copy of your accommodation letter by the first day of class so I may work with you (and with SDRC as necessary) to make sure your accommodations are met. The SDRC is located in Close-Hipp, Suite 102. You may reach the SDRC via e-mail sadrc@mailbox.sc.edu, or phone (803) 777-6142.

Grading Scale & Distribution

A = 90-100%; B+ = 85-89%; B = 80-84%; C+ = 75-79%; C = 70-74%; D+ = 65-69%; D = 60-64%; F = 0-59%

- 30% - Counterpoint Assignments/Activities (10% ea.)
- 20% - Project 1: Before 1600
- 20% - Project 2: 1600-1900
- 30% - Final Project: 1900-present

COURSE OVERVIEW

Calendar

	M	T	W	Th
June	22	23	24	25
June/July	29	30	1	2
July	6	7	8	

Asynchronous days are indicated in italics.

Schedule²

Week 1	June 22-25	Topic	Reading
	Mon., 6/22	<i>Introduction; Counterpoint in the Middle Ages</i>	Jackson, Introduction (Jackson 2009) Jackson, The Middle Ages
	Tues., 6/23	<i>Renaissance</i>	Jackson, The Renaissance; Randel 2003; Cusick 2001
	Wed., 6/24	<i>Baroque</i>	Jackson, The Baroque Period; Fux 1725; DeVoto 2007; Walker 2001
	Thurs., 6/25 – <i>A</i>	<i>16th-Century Counterpoint</i>	Benjamin 2005
Project 1: Before 1600 Due: Fri., 6/26, 11:59 pm			
Week 2	June 29-July 2		
	Mon., 6/29	<i>Baroque (cont.); Project #1 Discussions</i>	Sachs and Dahlhaus 2001; Mann et al. 2001
	Tues., 6/30	<i>Classical and Romantic Periods</i>	Jackson, The Classical Period; Jackson, The Romantic Period
	Wed., 7/1	<i>Twentieth Century</i>	Jackson, The 20 th Century
	Thurs., 7/2 – <i>A</i>	<i>18th-Century Counterpoint</i>	Benjamin 2003
Project 2: 1600-1900 Due: Fri., 7/3, 11:59 pm			
Week 3	July 6-8		
	Mon., 7/6	<i>Late Twentieth Century Project #2 Discussions Project Consultations</i>	Green and Jones 2015
	Tues., 7/7	<i>Final Project Presentations</i>	
	Wed., 7/8 – <i>A</i>	<i>20th-Century Counterpoint</i>	Owen 1992
Final Project: 1900-present Due: Fri., 7/10, 11:59 pm			

² Dates in *italics* indicate asynchronous (*A*) days.

REFERENCES

- Benjamin, Thomas. 2005. *The Craft of Modal Counterpoint*, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- _____. 2003. *The Craft of Tonal Counterpoint*, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge.
- Cusick, Suzanne G. 2001. "Imitation," in *Grove Music Online*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- DeVoto, Mark. 2007. "Fugue," in *Britannica Academic*. Available online at:
<<https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/fugue/110133>>.
- Fux, Johann Joseph. 1965/1725. *The Study of Counterpoint from Johann Joseph Fux's Gradus ad Parnassum*, translated and edited by Alfred Mann. New York: W. W. Norton.
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- Green, Douglass. M. and Evan Jones. 2015. "Counterpoint in the Twentieth Century and Beyond," in *The Principles and Practice of Tonal Counterpoint*. New York: Routledge.
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<<https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/counterpoint/110126>>.
- Kennan, Kent. 1998. *Counterpoint*, 4th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Mann, Alfred, J. Kenneth Wilson and Peter Urquhart. 2001. "Canon (i)," in *Grove Music Online*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Owen, Harold. 1992. *Modal and Tonal Counterpoint: From Josquin to Stravinsky*. New York: Schirmer/Cengage.
- Randel, Don Michael, ed. 2003. "Canon," in *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Sachs, Klaus-Jürgen, and Carl Dahlhaus. 2001. "Counterpoint," in *Grove Music Online*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Walker, Paul M. 2001. "Fugue," in *Grove Music Online*. New York: Oxford University Press.

The complete course bibliography is available online at:
<<https://reginaldbain.com/vc/musc726a/pub/biblio.html>>.

MUSIC BY

Middle Ages

- Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)
- Léonin (c1135-1201)
- Pérotin (13th c.)
- Guillaume de Machaut (c1300-1377)
- Guillaume Du Fay (c1397-1474)

Renaissance

- Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1410-1497)
- Josquin des Prez (c. 1450-1521)
- Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c. 1525-1594)
- Orlando di Lasso (c. 1532-1594)
- William Byrd (c. 1540-1623)

Baroque

- Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)
- Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713)
- J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
- George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

Classical and Romantic Periods

- Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
- Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)
- Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
- Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)
- Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Early Twentieth Century

- Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
- Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)
- Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)
- Béla Bartók (1881-1945)
- Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)
- Anton Webern (1883-1945)

Late Twentieth Century

- Luigi Dallapiccola (1904-1975)
- Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975)
- Samuel Barber (1910-1981)
- Frank Loesser (1910-1969)
- Gil Evans (1912-1988)
- Witold Lutosławski (1913-1994)
- Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990)
- György Ligeti (1923-2006)
- Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021)
- Sofia Gubaidulina (1931-2025)
- John Williams (c. 1932)
- Alfred Schnittke (1934-1998)
- Arvo Pärt (c. 1935)
- Terry Riley (1935)
- Steve Reich (c. 1936)