

WESTERN UNIVERSITY  
DON WRIGHT FACULTY OF MUSIC

**Music 9574 – Choral Seminar 1**  
Fall 2023 and Winter 2024

**Instructor:** Dr. Mark Ramsay  
**Pronouns:** he/him  
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**Office Hours:** by appointment  
Class times and location are posted on the course OWL site.

**Course Description:**

Selecting repertoire is one of the most important responsibilities of any choral leader. This seminar will explore choral repertoire, analysis techniques, and related rehearsal strategies with the intent to refine the skillset of practicing choral leaders. Students will actively seek out, select, analyze, and evaluate repertoire on a weekly basis, sharing their findings with their colleagues, and expanding the breadth of their own programming knowledge. Repertoire will be explored by theme, composer traits, and ensemble needs. Students will have the opportunity to research the work of a self-selected composer and to build a cohesive concert program for an identified ensemble.

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

Students will...

- expand knowledge of available choral repertoire.
- refine the ability to research and select appropriate repertoire in response to targeted search criteria.
- improve repertoire analysis skills to better inform rehearsal approaches.
- enhance communication skills.
- engage with colleagues to consider multiple perspectives related to repertoire selection.

**Methods of Evaluation:**

Weekly repertoire selection and analysis/Bi-weekly class presentations	60%
Composer Research Project	20%
Programming Assignment	20%

*Weekly repertoire selection and analysis*

Each week, students will seek out and analyze one piece of choral music that fits the identified theme, composer trait, or ensemble need. The selected score must be shareable with the class (in print or digital form) and must be entirely or almost entirely visible (some digital previews will hide a small portion of the score). The completed analysis will be posted in a shared folder on OWL for all classmates to access. A basic analysis structure will be provided and practiced in class. Evaluation will be based on the depth and accuracy of the analysis, the appropriateness of the selected repertoire to the search criteria, and the student's commitment to broaden the scope of their repertoire knowledge.

*Bi-weekly class presentations*

Every second week, students will have 20 minutes to present their selected score to the class, sharing aspects of their analysis in greater detail and exploring rehearsal strategies with the class that align with identified challenges in the music. Evaluation will be based on the

effectiveness and clarity of communication and the appropriateness of the selected rehearsal strategies for the identified challenge in the music. See presenter schedule below.

*Composer Research Project (due by December 15, 2023)*

Students will identify and research one composer of their choice with the goal to broaden their understanding of the composer’s output, compositional approaches, and stylistic traits. The completed project will include: (1) a one-page fact sheet with links to relevant biographical information, repertoire lists, sources for published works, and recordings; and (2) a detailed, written comparative analysis of three pieces the student deems to be representative of the composer’s overall work. Evaluation will be based on the clarity of the information presented and the depth and accuracy of the analysis.

*Programming Assignment (due by April 15, 2024)*

Students will identify an ensemble of their choice and build a 45-60 minute program of music that is cohesive and accurately meets the needs of the ensemble. The final product will contain: (1) a written description of the needs, abilities, and goals of the ensemble; (2) a written overview of the program that explains how the repertoire is appropriate for the ensemble and how it holds together as a cohesive program; and (3) an analysis of each piece on the program. Evaluation will be based on the appropriateness of the repertoire selected and the depth and accuracy of the score analysis.

**Grading Scale:** A = 80 – 100%; B = 70 – 79%; C = 60 – 69%; F 00 – 59%

**Course Materials**

Sources for repertoire will be shared with students via OWL and together we will build an extensive list of sources students can use beyond the class. Students are encouraged to invest in purchasing musical scores to build their own music libraries as they are able.

**Tentative Schedule**

*Revised versions will be discussed in class and available via OWL throughout the year.*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Presenters (20 mins)</b>
September 11, 2023	Welcome, Overview, and Introductions	
September 18, 2023	Analysis structure	
September 25, 2023	Composer of colour	Emer, Julia
October 2, 2023	Song audience would know	Vynz, Rabekah, Jason
October 9, 2023	Thanksgiving – no class	
October 16, 2023	Female composer	Emer, Julia
October 23, 2023	SAB voicing	Vynz, Rabekah, Jason
October 30, 2023	Reading Week – no class	
November 6, 2023	Music outside the performance hall	Lorinda
November 13, 2023	Composer outside of Canada, USA, and Europe	Emer, Julia
November 20, 2023	Queer composer	Vynz, Rabekah, Jason
November 27, 2023	Combined forces	Emer, Julia
December 4, 2023	Improvisation/Aleatoric	Vynz, Rabekah, Jason
December 15, 2023	Last day to submit Composer Research Project	

January 8, 2024	Canadian composer	Emer, Julia
January 15, 2024	Unison or 2-part for adult choir	Vynz, Rabekah, Jason
January 22, 2024	Nod to the past	Emer, Julia
January 29, 2024	Environmental music (Anthropocene)	Lorinda
February 5, 2024	Composer under the age of 25	Vynz, Rabekah, Jason
February 12, 2024	Rhythmic	Emer, Julia
February 19, 2024	Reading Week – no class	
February 26, 2024	Singing for a cause	Vynz, Rabekah, Jason
March 4, 2024	With single instrument	Emer, Julia
March 11, 2024	Local composer	Vynz, Rabekah, Jason
March 18, 2024	Alternative sound-making/creating (i.e., soundscapes)	Lorinda
March 25, 2024	Indigenous composer	Emer, Julia
April 1, 2024*	A staple	Vynz, Rabekah, Jason
April 8, 2024	Review and Wrap-up	
April 15, 2024	Last day to submit Programming Assignment	

*\*Note: this is Easter Monday and the university has regularly scheduled classes and rehearsals.*

### **Enrollment Restrictions:**

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in MMus in Performance (Choral Conducting) as well as any student who has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

### **Statement on Academic Offences:**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a scholastic offence, as found at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

### **Statement on Health and Wellness:**

Students who are in emotional or mental distress should refer to Western's [Wellness & Well-being](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### **Statement on Accommodation for Medical Illness:**

The Graduate Program in Music recognizes that a student's ability to fulfill academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by illness or injury. To ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's course grade shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student could not reasonably be expected to meet the academic responsibilities. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the office of the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies), not to the course instructor.

Students with special learning needs or other circumstances are asked to inform the instructor as soon as possible so that necessary accommodations can be considered.

**Accessible Education Western (AEW):**

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

**Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:**

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, either recently or in the past, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html) . To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca) or call 519-661-3568.