

MPPM_240 Drumming Proficiency
2 units

Course Instructor

Peter Erskine, Director of Drumset Studies

Brian Carmody, TA

Jake Reed, TA

Course hours: 2 x 50-minute sessions per week

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9:00 - 9:50	47341	47344	47341		
10:00 - 10:50	47342	47344	47342		47349
11:00 - 11:50					47349
12:00 - 12:50				47346	
1:00PM-1:50				47346	
2:00PM - 2:50	47343		47343	47348	
3:00PM - 3:50				47348	
4:00PM - 4:50		47345			
5:00PM - 5:50		47345			

Class Room: PIC 203

Office: PIC 207-A

Email: perskine@usc.edu

Course Description

The purpose of this 15-week course is to enable a basic level of drumming competency, laying a foundation upon which any student can increase their understanding of rhythm, promote a mastery of physical and musical coordination, and establish a set of skills on the drumset. Students will also learn how to communicate their musical wishes to any drummer they might work with in the future, both verbally as well as by way of musical notation.

Students will be tested on the following:

1. Ability to perform basic drumming rudiments, as played with 2 drumsticks on a practice pad (performance examination).
2. Ability to play a variety of basic drumming styles, in the form of specific patterns and beats (performance examination).
3. Ability to play the drums in an ensemble context, i.e., with other musicians (performance examination).
4. An understanding of the role and development of the drumset in contemporary music (aural and written examination).

Course Materials

- 1 pr. Drumsticks for practice pad studies (Vic Firth SD1)
- 1 pr. Drumsticks for drumset playing (Vic Firth “Ride” Stick)
- “Drumset Essentials, Vol. 1” by Peter Erskine (Alfred Publishing)
- “Time Awareness for All Musicians” by Peter Erskine (Alfred Publishing)

The class/course will provide drumsets in the laboratory; kits to be Roland electronic pad kits with teacher-to-individual student communications by way of headsets similar to an electronic keyboard lab. USB “Flash sticks” are recommended!

Grading and Exams

- **Aural and Written Mid-term examination (25%)** Examination of aural and written materials pertaining to drumming styles and history presented in the first 7 weeks of class.
- **Drumming Skills Exam #1 (25%)** Students must demonstrate a mastery of basic drumming skills on the practice pad as well as drumset “time” playing, i.e., beats that involve the steadiness of tempo and a measure of drumbeat competency.
- **Final Exam/Drumming Skills Exam #2 (50%)** All students will perform in a jury type of setting for the Instructor. They may be asked to play basic drum rudiments on the practice pad, as well as a beat in any of the styles, tempos that have been studied throughout the semester on the drumset. Drumset chart reading will also be part of the final examination.

Attendance

Attendance is expected for all classes. Attendance for examinations is mandatory. Please review Final Exam schedule in the Schedule of classes to avoid potential conflicts. Three or more unexcused absences will result in a half-grade reduction from the final grade. Five or more unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *Scampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the

Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Summary of class structure

(All descriptions below predicated on the assumption that most students will be right-handed; students will be asked to swap “right” to “left” instructions if they are left-handed; a kit can be set-up to accommodate left-hand students [it should be noted that the choice for a left-hander to set-up and play the kit in reverse is optional and not always practiced by some leading professional/left-handed players]; the other option is for the left-handed student to play on a “right-handed” kit utilizing an “open” grip, i.e., the left hand will play the lead rhythms on the hi-hat, etc., while the right hand plays the snare backbeat, etc.)

Week 1

Basic Drumming Techniques

1. Grip (of sticks)
2. Physical relationship to the pad, snare drum and drumset (promoting efficiency as well as safe drumming habits).
3. Alternating hand rhythms, with an emphasis on proper technique utilizing a proper combination of arm, wrist and finger involvement and movement.

SUMMARY: Intro to class: overview presented by Professor Erskine; how V-drums work, purchase books and pad

Basic techniques (grip, physical relationship to pad/drums, proper stroke technique-arm, wrist, finger); Eight on a Hand, single stroke roll, 8-7-6-5-4-

Week 2

1. Review of basic grip principles and technique.
2. Basic drumming rudiments (handouts as provided by the lecturer)
3. An explanation and exploration of the rhythmic subdivisions that make up basic drum beats and styles; students will be taught to appreciate and give full value to the spaces between the beats.

SUMMARY: Review Basic techniques, Basic Rudiments (single stroke, double stroke, paradiddle), Explain/explore subdivisions—the exact mathematical distribution of sound or silence in a given beat, measure, or phrase of music, appreciate and give full value to spaces b/n notes...whole notes to 32nd notes. Learn by rote basic drumset beat e.g. “Billie Jean”

Week 3

Basic Drumbeats 1

1. Straight-8th beats and 4-limb coordination (rock/pop style)
2. Students will work on a series of beat variations as laid out in “Drumset Essentials, Vol. 1”

3. Students will have access to “play-along” CD tracks by way of the book/CD package “Drumset Essentials, Vol. 1” (Basic Beats in Drumset Essentials, play-along)
4. Permutations of 16th note groupings

Week 4

Basic Drumbeats 2

1. Students are taught how to play the jazz “ride” pattern
 - a. ride cymbal technique
 - b. ride cymbal pattern phrasing, i.e., swing feel.
2. Basic left hand independence/coordination while right hand plays swing beat.

Week 5

A short history of the evolution of the drumset and drumming styles

1. Development of the drumset as we know it today
2. Important drummers in the history of contemporary music, vis-à-vis a study of jazz and popular music history
3. Listening assignments, plus a handout (history); students will be advised of an upcoming written test and aural exam.

Week 6

1. LABORATORY PLAYING OF ALL MATERIAL TO DATE.
2. Review of aural and written materials pertaining to drumming styles and history.

Week 7

Aural and Written Mid Term examination; this exam’s results will comprise 25% of the student’s final grade.

DRUMMING SKILLS EXAM #1 (2nd hour)

Students must demonstrate a mastery of basic drumming skills on the practice pad as well as drumset “time” playing, i.e., beats that involve the steadiness of tempo and a measure of drumbeat competency.

This exam’s results will comprise 25% of the student’s final grade.

Week 8

Time Awareness p. 15-16

Quarter-notes in BD while reading rhythms on SD

16ths w/ accents—Quarters in BD—2 bar patterns—accents on toms

Play-Along performances in class by all students (to strengthen confidence and ability to play “in front of others”).

Week 9

Time Awareness p. 35

Funk and Pop Rhythms w/ BD quarters

Week 10

Compose 8 bar solo
Write 4 grooves using 8th notes in HH

Week 11

Drum Fills

How to connect one musical phrase to the next by means of improvising rhythms on the drumset that are variations of, or different from, the beats that have been taught to date. (Students will be provided with written examples to practice, all the while being encouraged to exercise their own creative and motor skills by coming up with their own “fills.”)

Week 12

The study of written drumset parts

1. How to read a basic drumset part
2. How to write a basic drumset part

The Percussive Art Society standard of drumset notation (i.e., which part of the kit is notated on which line or space of the musical staff) will be presented and studied.

Handouts will be provided.

Week 13

The drumset in contemporary musical applications.

“Family Fun(k)” play-along

Week 14

Acoustic Drums + cymbals

1. Laboratory playing of acoustic drumset (versus lab electronic kit); every student will have the opportunity and obligation to play on a “real” drumset in front of the class. They may be accompanied by the Instructor.
2. The basics of BRUSH PLAYING will also be taught during this week. Brushes will be provided (though students will be encouraged to obtain their own personal set of brushes); jazz and popular music styles will be covered.

Week 15

Review

1. Basic drumming rudiments (including double-stroke rolls, paradiddles, etc.)
2. Straight-8th and Swung-8th beats, played on the drumset.

Final Exam (according to Final Exam Schedule in Schedule of Classes)

Final Exam / DRUMMING SKILLS EXAM #2

All students will perform in a jury type of setting for the Instructor. They may be asked to play basic drum rudiments on the practice pad, as well as a beat in any of the styles, tempos that have been studied throughout the semester on the drumset.

This exam’s results will comprise 50% of the student’s final grade.