

## MPPM\_240 Drumming Proficiency 2 units

### Course Instructors:

Peter Erskine, Director of Drumset Studies  
 Pete Johnson, TA  
 Ana Barreiro, TA

Class Room: LPB G122B

Office: CTV G145

Telephone: 213-740-8142

Email: [perskine@usc.edu](mailto:perskine@usc.edu)

[peterjjo@usc.edu](mailto:peterjjo@usc.edu) / [souzabar@usc.edu](mailto:souzabar@usc.edu)

Course hours: 2 x 50-minute sessions per week

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9:00 - 9:50	47360 <i>(Johnson)</i>		47360 <i>(Johnson)</i>	Room available for practice time	Room available for practice time
10:00 - 10:50	47361 <i>(Johnson)</i>	47364 <i>(Barreiro)</i>	47361 <i>(Johnson)</i>	47366 <i>(Barreiro)</i>	47368 <i>(Barreiro)</i>
11:00 - 11:50	47473 <i>(Johnson) MPPM-340</i>		47473 <i>(Johnson) MPPM-340</i>		
12:00 - 12:50	Room available for practice time	Room available for practice time	Room available for practice time	Room available for practice time	Room available for practice time
1:00PM-1:50	47362 <i>(Johnson)</i>	Room available for practice time	47362 <i>(Johnson)</i>	Room available for practice time	Room available for practice time
2:00PM - 2:50	47363 <i>(Johnson)</i>	Room available for practice time	47363 <i>(Johnson)</i>	47367 <i>(Barreiro)</i>	Room available for practice time
3:00PM - 3:50	47474 <i>(Serfaty)</i> <i>MPPM340</i>	Room available for practice time	Room available for practice time		Room available for practice time
4:00PM - 4:50		47365 <i>(Barreiro)</i>	46815 <i>(ERSKINE)</i> <i>MPWP 440</i>	Room available for practice time	Room available for practice time
5:00PM - 5:50	Room available for practice time		Room available for practice time	Room available for practice time	Room available for practice time

### 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 — MANDATORY**

1 pr. Drumsticks for practice pad studies (Vic Firth SD1)

1 pr. Drumsticks for drumset playing (Vic Firth “Peter Erskine Big Band” Stick)

“Drumset Essentials, Vol. 1” by Peter Erskine (Alfred Publishing)

“Time Awareness for All Musicians” by Peter Erskine (Alfred Publishing)

*All of these items, i.e., sticks & books, are available from amazon.com, etc.*

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.

Because of the amount of material to covered each semester, it is necessary to impose the following attendance policy:

Classes that meet once a can allow one unexcused absence. Each additional unexcused absence will result in a half grade deduction. Classes that meet twice a week (i.e., the

single 50-minute class) can allow two unexcused absences. Each additional unexcused absence will result in a half grade deduction. Being more than ten minutes tardy will count as an absence! BE ON TIME.

### **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 Conduct and Support Systems**

#### **Academic Conduct**

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards*<https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department-department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage [sarc@usc.edu](mailto:sarc@usc.edu) describes reporting options and other resources.

#### **Support Systems**

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

## **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, 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 warm-up and coordination exercise

### **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.
4. Assignment: p. 29 1-6, read pp. 1-25 in D.S. Essentials
5. Listening: “Billie Jean”
6. Doubles, Paradiddles

SUMMARY (Week 2): 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 32<sup>nd</sup> notes. Learn by rote basic D.S. Essentials beat e.g. “Billie Jean”

### **Week 3**

#### Basic Drumbeats 1

1. Straight-8<sup>th</sup> 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 16<sup>th</sup> note groupings
5. Hand out: 16<sup>th</sup> note variations—3 note variations
6. Rudiments: multiple bounce, double bounce “diddles”, 5 stroke roll, flam, drag
7. Assignment: pp. 28-31 1-10, emphasize 4 bar phrasing, use simple 2 beat fills
8. Listening: groove-“Wait For Tomorrow” by Jimi Hendrix (#6 on p. 28), fill-“Give Me One Reason” by Tracy Chapman (“Pat Boone Debbie Boone” 2 beat fill)

#### **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.
3. 16<sup>th</sup> note variations—2 note variations
4. Exercise: accents w/ 16<sup>th</sup> notes
5. Listening: “Freddie Freeloader” (brief explanation of 12 bar blues) and “Jimmy Cobb” 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. How the blues form has been used in various styles. History of bass drum pedal.
4. 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**

1. Aural and Written Mid Term examination; this exam’s results will comprise 25% of the student’s final grade.
2. DRUMMING SKILLS EXAM #1 (2<sup>nd</sup> 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.
3. **Assignment for next week: read Time Awareness**

#### **Week 8**

1. Quarter-notes in BD while reading rhythms on SD
2. 16ths w/ accents—Quarters in BD—2 bar patterns—accents on toms
3. Polyrhythms and hemiola (p. 38 in Time Awareness)

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

### **Week 9**

1. Funk and Pop Rhythms w/ BD quarters (Time Awareness p. 35)
2. Advanced drum grooves pt. 2
3. Rudiment: single stroke four and application on d.s.
4. Advanced drum grooves pt. 1: “Chameleon”, paradiddle groove, opening HH, accents on HH
5. Fills with syncopation: e.g. Phil Collins fill, Raphael Saadiq more contemporary usage
6. Ted Reed book (p. 33, 38)

### **Week 10**

1. Write 4 grooves using 8<sup>th</sup> notes in HH
2. Compose grooves w/ 8<sup>th</sup> in HH, 16<sup>th</sup> note variations with BD integration to improve facility—use these ideas as fills, etc.

### **Week 11**

1. 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.”)
2. In-class performance of 1 beat written by students, work on “four on floor” coordination, write solo using 16<sup>th</sup> ideas (possibly taken from “Syncopation” hand out from week 9)
3. Listening: “The End” by The Beatles
4. Compose 8 measure solo using “four on the floor”

### **Week 12**

The study of written drumset parts

1. How to read a basic drumset part
2. How to write a basic drumset part
3. Slash notation vs. Rhythmic notation  
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.
4. Work on/perform solos, chart reading
5. Listening: “Since I’ve Been Loving You” by Led Zeppelin

### **Week 13**

1. The drumset in contemporary musical applications.

2. Solo w/ “four on floor”, Family Fun(k), brushes, other types of grooves (eg. include use of flams, non-backbeat grooves)
3. Listening: “Clocks” by Coldplay

#### **Week 14**

1. Listening quiz
2. TAs will provide help in preparation for FINAL exam

#### **Week 15**

##### Final Exam and Course Evaluations

##### 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.

**IN ADDITION: PROFESSOR ERSKINE WILL PROVIDE IN-CLASS LECTURES AS WELL AS OUTSIDE-OF-CLASSROOM WORKSHOPS:**

##### 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. Students may be accompanied by the Instructor, or an actual rhythm section.
2. The basics of BRUSH PLAYING will be demonstrated. Jazz and popular music styles using brushes will be covered, and long-term practice methods will be demonstrated. RhythmTech “LapTop” pads will be distributed for brush –playing experience.