

**University of Southern California
Thornton School of Music
MUSC-355 Songwriting II
Section:
Tuesday, 6:00 - 7:50 pm, Fall 2016**

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Course Description

This course is a continuation of Songwriting I in the development of musical and lyrical skills in popular songs. “Songwriting II: Writing for the Marketplace” places a particular emphasis on lyric writing, fostering inspiration, collaboration, and developing a songwriter’s habit.

Basic Supplies

- Required Textbook: Popular Lyric Writing: 10 Steps to Effective Storytelling by Andrea Stolpe
- Access/ability to LEGALLY DOWNLOAD songs (iTunes, Amazon, etc.)
- Journal or other preferred method for keeping notes/song ideas
- Access to recording device (computer, phone) – that can export to digital audio files
- A user account on www.soundcloud.com account that is linked with professors' accounts (astolpe@usc.edu)

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this class students will be able to demonstrate a proficient level of organizing harmonic, melodic, rhythmic and lyrical elements into a compelling and cohesive structure through the writing of original songs. This class will help establish a “creative habit” that will increase the flow of original ideas and develop a unique songwriting “voice”. Through extensive listening examples and writing exercises, students will demonstrate a greater understanding of the popular songwriting craft and

traditions through the identification of key songwriters, writing techniques and stylistic approaches, and be able to apply these concepts to their own songwriting.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

In-class projects and assignments – 20% of grade: Several in-class projects will be presented to help develop skills and various writing assignments will be made. Grading will be determined by students' active participation in the project, thoughtful peer review of presented work and effective application of concepts learned in class. If you are not present at class on the day of an in-class project, you will receive "no credit" for that project. In-class projects cannot be made up.

Song 1 – (Collaborative Sensory Song with chart) 15% of grade

Song 2 – (Collaborative Prosody with chart) 15% of grade

Song 3 – (Solo Harmony, Melody, Lyric with chart) 15% of grade

Song 4 - (Solo Metaphor for another artist with chart) 15% of grade

Song 5 - (Collaborative or Solo Happy Song and 10 second pitches with chart) 15% of grade

DW's - Collection of sensory writing throughout the course 15% of grade

Final portfolio – 10% of grade: A final portfolio of completed songs will be due on the date of the final, May TBD. The portfolio will include lyrics and a demo recording of three independently-written songs and 1 collaborative song (labeled with your co-author's name.)

TO RECEIVE CREDIT FOR SONGS

Songs 3 and DW's must be written independently.

All songs must be presented in class on due date. They may be presented live, but a recorded version with complete lyrics must be uploaded to soundcloud.com and shared to the professor's account. Songs should be labelled as follows: STUDENT NAME - TITLE OF SONG

GRADING OF SONGS

Songs will be graded based upon effective application of concepts, originality, completeness, strength of melody, lyrics and overall presentation as outlined. Level of performance ability or recording quality of demo will not be a consideration in the grade, but students should rehearse and perfect their performances and recordings before class. Note: please do not upload audio that is overloaded (unintentionally distorted) or contains fundamental mistakes or false starts -- if work is marred by a fundamental flaw, fix it before upload. Students should make revisions to their songs as they see fit based upon in-class feedback and critique.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Establish Daily Work Habits – Students should work daily on songwriting -- writing, collecting ideas, critical listening, analysis, playing, recording or whatever helps you create new work. Establishing a creative ritual is extremely effective in increasing your creative flow and doing so will make a dramatic improvement in songwriting.

Late Assignments – Late assignments will be marked down 5% each day it is late. Late assignments will not be accepted beyond one week of the original due date.

Attendance and Participation – Attendance and participation is expected at all classes.

Songwriting II Code Of Respect

Presenting original composition before an audience requires courage. Every student's performance will be heard with respect, feedback will be constructive, and each student is responsible for fostering a classroom atmosphere that encourages artistic risk. As in most performance environments, talking during performances is never tolerated.

Weekly Class Topics

Week 1:

1. Introductions
2. Syllabus - This is a lyric heavy course, a lot of work, and heavily focused on collaboration. We will continue the charting work you've begun in Songwriting 1.
3. Book - buy it and read it to really succeed in this course.

Reading Assignment: Chapters 1,2, and 3 of Popular Lyric Writing: 10 Steps to Effective Storytelling

Writing Assignment: Begin daily destination writing journal 5 days per week- use your own keywords, or those in back of book.

****Bring Instruments to class next week. We will share songs in groups of 4.**

Week 2:

How DW is going? **Begin another week of DW.** Bring all to class next week.

Keynote slides and discuss what makes a great collaborator

Collaborative Activity: Getting to know each other.

Share songs in groups of 4. Disperse outside, in hallway, in practice room. 40 minutes. Change to a new group of 4 and share again. 40 minutes. Reconvene. Talk about collaborative struggles and benefits.

Form your collaborative group - write on a paper your top 5 choices for collaborators and give to me. Teacher will email student pairings the next day.

Reading Assignment: Chapters 4 and 6 of PLW

Writing Assignment: DW 5 days per week.

*****Bring DW's to class next week**

Week 3:

Reminder of your collaborator groups

Who has read book chapter on sensory detail and toggling?

Who brought their DW's to class?

Look at how we can write songs starting with great lyric ideas, and write more quickly and effortlessly.

Toggling:

- overcome writer's block

- use our most authentic ideas

- write more original lyric

- inspire musical ideas based on our lyric

- make the listener 'feel' strongly

- know how to use sensory detail effectively

- write more quickly

Keynote Presentation and Sensory Detail (see keynote presentation) Draw attention to creative rhymes - but don't define them specifically yet.

Song 1 Collaborative Writing Assignment: Continue DW journal, write a collaborative song based on a DW for next week. Song must use sensory detail and involve more types than just perfect rhyme. Chart due next week, bring 8 copies to class.

Reading Assignment: Chapter 5 of PLW

****Bring Instruments or recordings to class next week for performances**

Week 4:

Workshop Song 1 from DW

Due next week: Destination writing journal from Weeks 1-4

Week 5:

Continue to Workshop Song 1

Collect DW's from weeks 1-4.

Lecture: Melodic motif, rhyme and setting lyrical hooks.

DW 1-4 due today.

Rhythm and Rhyme lecture - Defining and then matching rhythms

Song Examples: Give Me One Reason, Somewhere Over the Rainbow, Police 'I'll Be Watching You', 'Free Falling', 'One Headlight', All of Me, Alanis Morissette, James Taylor, Police 'Da Do Do Do', 'Everything She Do Is Magic', Beatles, 'End of the Innocence' and 'Boys of Summer', 'Firework.'

Activity: Write balanced section then rewrite last line using different rhyme types

Song 2 Collaborative Writing Assignment: Write at least a verse and chorus in which the music and lyric are in total agreement - there is excellent prosody. Chart and make 8 copies, bring to class.

Due next week.

Week 6:

Workshop Song 2: Prosody between lyric and music

Next week: Bring 3 charts of your favorite original songs

Week 7:

Continuation of Workshop Song 2

Lecture:

What characterizes your harmonic and melodic tendencies (look at your charts)?

Key, tempo, groove

Frequency of Chord changes per measure

Chord Identities - diatonic or borrowed
Ramping up your harmonic moves
Sheryl Crow "My Favorite Mistake"
John Mayer "Gravity"
Alison Kraus "Stay"
James Taylor "Fire and Rain"
Common Progressions and alternatives

Song 3 Solo Song Assignment: Write a chord progression for a verse and chorus you like that uses a new harmonic tool for you. Write the best melody you can on top, with NO lyric. Due next week. Chart due next week, 8 copies, bring to class.

Week 8:

Workshop melody and harmony of Song 3 Solo Song.
Lecture: Plot Progressions and Second Verse Directions
Second verse hell
Past, present, future
The Theory of Kelly Clarkson

Writing Assignment: Continue DW journal and write the lyric to Song 3 for workshop next week.

Week 9:

Workshop Song 3 Solo Song Assignment
Class participation during performances - prep for 10-second pitches

Week 10:

Lecture: "Feel Something"

Write down several ideas from today that you could write in future

***Bring Instruments next week

Week 11:

Lecture: 5 Rhyme Types and Metaphor
Rhyme
Cliche and perfect rhyme
Rhyme types and prosody
What is metaphor?
Creating Accidental Collisions with Nouns, Verbs, and Adjectives
Building Out the Metaphor

In-Class Metaphor Activity

Song 4: Write a song using interesting metaphor for another student in class as the artist. Perform next week. Chart and make 8 copies and bring to class.

Week 12:

Workshop Song 4 Solo Metaphor for Another Artist

Week 13:

Writing your 10-Second Pitches and Artist Statements. (article below) Due in 2 weeks.
Industry Discussion

Assignment: Write your artist statement and 10-second pitch

Week 14:

Write A Happy Song

Use Sensory Imagery

Write from a groove

Consider tempo, key

Melody and harmony review

Assignment: Write Song 5 (Solo or Collaboratively) Happy Song. Perform next week with your 10-second pitch. Chart and bring 8 copies to class.

Week 15:

Presentation of 10-second pitches

Workshop Song 5 Happy Song

Week 16:

Continuation of 10-second pitches

Continuation of Workshop Song 5 Happy Song