

**USC Thornton School of Music**  
**MPPM 240: Drumming Proficiency For the Popular Musician**  
**2 units**

**Course Instructors:**

Professor Peter Erskine, Director of Drumset Studies (*instructor of record only*)  
 Chris Brawley, TA  
 Conor Malloy, TA

Classroom: LPB G122B (Drum Lab)

Office: TMC G145 / *OFFICE HOURS = Tues + Wed 11 - 11:45 a.m. by email appointment only*

Telephone: 213-740-8142

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

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Course hours: 2 x 50-minute sessions per week

<b>Drum Lab Schedule</b>	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9:00 - 9:50	47360 <i>(Brawley)</i>		47360 <i>(Brawley)</i>		
10:00 - 10:50	47361 <i>(Brawley)</i>	47363 <i>(Malloy)</i>	47361 <i>(Brawley)</i>	47365 <i>(Malloy)</i>	47367 <i>(Malloy)</i>
11:00 - 11:50	47473 <i>(Brawley)</i> MPPM-340		47473 <i>(Brawley)</i> MPPM-340		
12:00 - 12:50					
1:00PM-1:50	47368 <i>(Brawley)</i>		47368 <i>(Brawley)</i>		
2:00PM - 2:50	47362 <i>(Brawley)</i>		47362 <i>(Brawley)</i>	47366 <i>(Malloy)</i>	
3:00PM - 3:50	47474 <i>(Serfaty)</i> MPPM340				
4:00PM - 4:50	MPPM340 con't.	47364 <i>(Malloy)</i>			
5:00PM - 5:50					

**Course Description**

The purpose of this 15-week course is to enable a basic level of drumming competency, laying a foundation upon which students 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 drummers they might work with in the future, both verbally as well as by way of musical notation.

**Please note! Professor Erskine is the Instructor of Record only for this course.**

Because of the lab nature of MPPM-240, the day-to-day / class-to-class instruction will be done by TAs Chris Brawley or Conor Malloy. Professor Erskine will supply additional instruction by way of audio and video links, emails, and is available in his office as noted above. Students will be notified in advance of any masterclass presentations hosted by Professor Erskine.

**Students will gain:**

- The ability to perform basic drumming rudiments with drumsticks on a practice pad
- The ability to perform a variety of basic drumming styles, patterns and beats
- The ability to play the drums in an ensemble context, i.e., with other musicians

- An understanding of the role and development of the drumset in contemporary music

**Mandatory Course Materials (all items available from amazon.com, etc):**

-1 pair of drumsticks for practice pad studies: Vic Firth SD1 model

-1 pair of drumsticks for drumset studies: Vic Firth “Peter Erskine Big Band” model

-*Drumset Essentials, Vol. 1* by Peter Erskine (Alfred Publishing)

-*Time Awareness for All Musicians* by Peter Erskine (Alfred Publishing)

Drumsets will be provided in the ‘Drum Lab’ (G122B). Drumsets are Roland electronic pad kits with teacher-to-individual student communications by way of headsets (similar to an electronic keyboard lab). Remo Rhythm Pal Bucket Drums and RhythmTech LapTops will also be provided. USB flash drives are recommended!

**Grading Criteria:**

- **Attendance and Participation (16%):** Attendance is expected at all classes and is mandatory for exams. Classes which meet once per week can allow one unexcused absence per semester. Each additional unexcused absence will result in a 4% reduction in overall mark. Classes which meet twice a week can allow two unexcused absences per semester. Each additional unexcused absence will result in a 2% reduction in overall mark. Please be on time and participate in class!
- **Listening Assignment (10%):** Students will be emailed a small set of music samples by Week 5 of the semester. Listen to the music provided and compose a journal-style response between 500-1,000 words. The assignment is due, via email, to Professor Erskine and your respective TA by the end of Week 10. More details about the Listening Assignment will be discussed by your TA in class.
- **Mid-term Exam (34%): A)** Written exam testing drumming styles, players and history presented in class. **B)** Playing exam testing basic drumming skills on the practice pad as well as drumset skills that have been learned in class.
- **Final Exam (40%)** Students will perform in a jury-type setting for the Instructor. They may be asked to play basic drum rudiments, as well as any of the styles or tempos that have been studied throughout the semester. Drumset chart reading may also be part of the final examination.

**Compulsory Video Viewing (outside of class), plus 1 group lecture:**

Students will be provided with an internet website address for the viewing of four video lessons (total viewing time approximately 30 minutes) during the first weeks of the semester. In addition, Professor Erskine may present an evening masterclass; advance notice will be given, **attendance will be mandatory**. Students are also encouraged to attend ‘live’ concerts and recitals at the Thornton School of Music, and recommendations will be made for those.

### **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 Professor Erskine (or to your TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30am – 4:30pm, 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 Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” [policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b](http://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b). 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>.

#### **Support Systems:**

*Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. [engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling)

*National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255*

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

*Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call*

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. [engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp](http://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp)

*Sexual Assault Resource Center*

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: [sarc.usc.edu](http://sarc.usc.edu)

*Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086*

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. [equity.usc.edu](http://equity.usc.edu)

*Bias Assessment Response and Support*

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support)

*The Office of Disability Services and Programs*

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. [dsp.usc.edu](http://dsp.usc.edu)

*Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710*

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. [studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa](http://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa)

### *Diversity at USC*

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. [diversity.usc.edu](http://diversity.usc.edu)

### *USC Emergency Information*

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. [emergency.usc.edu](http://emergency.usc.edu)

*USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.*

Provides overall safety to USC community. [dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

### **Class Notes**

-Practicing: Students are expected to practice approximately 3-4 hours per week outside of class time. The drum lab schedule is provided at the beginning of this document. Any time, 24/7, a class is not scheduled, you may enter with your USC Card to practice.

-It is assumed that most students are right-handed. Students will be asked to swap right-for-left instructions if they are left-handed. A drumset can be set up to accommodate left-hand students. Alternately, left-handed students could play on a right-handed drumset utilizing an “open” grip (this is the recommended solution, preparing/allowing left-handed drummers to play on any kit).

### **Week 1: Introduction and Basic Techniques**

- Introduction to class presented by Professor Peter Erskine (video link)
- Basic techniques: grip, stroke technique, relationship to pad etc
- Warm up and coordination exercises
- ASSIGNMENT for next week: *Drumset Essentials Vol 1* Read page 1-25

### **Week 2: Rudiments, Subdivisions and Beginning Grooves**

- Review of Week 1 concepts
- Drumming rudiments (handout provided)
- Discussion of subdivisions from whole notes to 16th notes
- Basic drum notation and slashes
- In-Class Listening: "Billie Jean" by Michael Jackson
- ASSIGNMENT for next week: *Drumset Essentials* Page 29, #'s 1-6

### **Week 3: Basic Drumbeats #1**

- Review / additional Rudiments
- Straight 8<sup>th</sup> note beats and 4-limb coordination
- 16<sup>th</sup> note variations (3-note) (handout provided)
- In-Class Listening: "Wait For Tomorrow" by Jimi Hendrix and "Give Me One Reason" by Tracy Chapman
- ASSIGNMENT for next week: *Drumset Essentials* Pages 28-31, #'s 1-10

### **Week 4: Basic Drumbeats #2**

- Rudiments and review of Week 3
- Jazz: Swing Feel, Ride Cymbal Pattern, Basic Coordination
- 16<sup>th</sup> note accents and variations (2 note)
- In-Class Listening: "Freddie Freeloader" by Miles Davis

### **Week 5: Drumset / Drumming Styles; History and Evolution**

- Drumset Development & Influential Drummers
- History of The Blues
- Stylistic Developments
- Mid-term study guide (handout provided)
- ASSIGNMENT for week 10: Listening assignment handed out

### **Week 6: Review**

- Review of all materials covered to date
- ASSIGNMENT for Week 8: Read *Time Awareness For All Musicians*

### **Week 7: Mid-term Exam**

- Hour 1: Written exam; history, drummers, stylistic developments, etc
- Hour 2: Playing exam. All playing material learned in class including rudiments, grooves, independence etc. Refer to study guide provided in Week 5.

### **Week 8: Independence and Polyrythms**

- Introduction of new rudiments
- Quarter-notes in BD while reading rhythms on SD (handout provided)
- Polyrythms and Hemiolas: *Time Awareness For All Musicians* Page 38
- Student in-class ensemble play utilizing Remo Rhythm Pal Bucket Drums and various etudes from *Time Awareness For All Musicians*

### **Week 9: Advanced Drum Grooves**

- Rudiments
- Funk and Pop Rhythms: *Time Awareness* Page 35
- Other Advanced Grooves / Fills: Paradiddle groove, opening HH etc
- In-Class Listening: “Chameleon” by Herbie Hancock
- ASSIGNMENT due at end of next week: Listening Assignment

### **Week 10: Composition**

- Rudiments
- Composition: explanation and practical application
- Compose various grooves / fills
- Student in-class performances
- Student in-class ensemble play utilizing Remo Rhythm Pal Bucket Drums and various etudes from *Time Awareness For All Musicians*

### **Week 11: Drum Fills**

- Rudiments
- Written, listening and playing examples of drum fills
- Compose solo using information from this and previous lesson
- Student in-class performances
- In-Class Listening: “The End” by The Beatles

### **Week 12: Drum Charts and Brushes**

- Rudiments
- Study of various drum charts (1st hour)
- Basic brush playing (2nd hour)
- In-Class Listening: “Since I’ve Been Loving You” by Led Zeppelin

### **Week 13: Contemporary Drumming 1**

- Rudiments
- Contemporary applications of the drumset: odd-time signatures
- In-Class Listening: “Clocks” by Coldplay

### **Week 14: Contemporary Drumming 2**

- “Latin” (Afro-Cuban) styles
- Final Exam Study Guide (handout provided)

### **Week 15: Review**

- Review of all materials covered to date

### **Final Exam**

-All students will perform in a jury-type setting for the instructor. They may be asked to perform drum rudiments, grooves, fills and/or other concepts from the semester. Refer to study guide provided in Week 14.