



USC University of Southern California

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*)

Luke Woodle, TA

Lauren Ellis, TA

Classroom: On-Line

Office: perskine@usc.edu OFFICE HOURS: BY APPOINTMENT

Email: perskine@usc.edu / woodle@usc.edu / lfellis@usc.edu

Course hours: 2 x 50-minute sessions per week

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.

The unprecedented and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic means that students will not be able to utilize the drumsets in the Drum Lab for classroom or practicing purposes. This necessitates an adaptation and rewriting of the syllabus for the course. GOOD NEWS: THIS IS WHAT DRUMMERS DO ... we adapt! So, the goal of this course will be to focus on the role of the drums in modern American music, also known as Black American music. The course will continue to instruct students on basic drumming techniques. Every student is required to get themselves a PRACTICE PAD and a good pair of sticks before Week #2 of class. If you have a drumset to practice on, then great! If not, we will accomplish a lot by way of the practice pad (with sticks) AND body drumming (playing on your thighs with your hands). All of that said, there will be a bit more listening and watching compared to learning how to play beats on an electronic drumset ... so, it will be a bit like teaching you how to ride a bicycle without the bicycle: you'll have all of the theory, but it might take a second to get your balance once you're on wheels.

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

The day-to-day / class-to-class instruction will be done by TAs Luke Woodle or Lauren Ellis. Professor Erskine will supply additional instruction by way of audio and video links and emails. Professor Erskine may be reached by email in place of in-office meetings. 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*, *sweetwater.com*, etc):

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

-1 practice pad with stand [SEE SYLLABUS ADDENDUM FOR ORDERING INFORMATION]

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

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

USC technology rental program

We realize that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university's equipment rental program. To apply, please [submit an application](#). The Student Basic Needs team will contact all applicants in early August and distribute equipment to eligible applicants prior to the start of the fall semester. Also: let us know if you need any assistance with your acquiring the necessary drumming supplies, etc.

USC Technology Support Links

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

Synchronous session recording notice

Synchronous sessions will be recorded and provided to all students asynchronously.

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment:

Reminder: USC has a policy that prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

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 on-line (zoom) masterclass; advance notice will be given, **attendance +/- or viewing will be mandatory.**

Netiquette Considerations

"Netiquette" or "internet etiquette," describes the recommended communication and behavior of online communication. Students are expected to be dressed appropriately for class. Class time is not snack time. You'll do your best work by approaching the course as if you were taking it in-person/on-campus. Simply put: the study of music is, in great measure, the study of being professional.

Please consult this [Menu of Discussion Norms](#) resource for guidance on how best to receive instruction, interact constructively and enjoyably get the most out of your study of drumming.

Also note: the use of mobile phones or other technology during class is not allowed.

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. 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

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

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

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

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

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

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. 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

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

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

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

Class Notes

-Practicing: Students are expected to practice 2 hours per week outside of class time.

-It is assumed that most students are right-handed. Students will be asked to swap right-for-left instructions if they are left-handed.

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

- Student mini presentation/PowerPoint at beginning of each class (every second week)
 - 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- note beats and 4-limb coordination
- 16- 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

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

Week 5: Basic Drumbeats #3

- Student mini presentation/PowerPoint
 - Rudiments and review of Week 4
 - Review of 4-limb coordination
 - Jazz Comping exercise
 - Classic jazz "fill" vocabulary
 - In-Class Listening: "Jordu" by Clifford Brown and Max Roach

Week 6: 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 7: Review

- Student mini presentation/PowerPoint
 - Review of all materials covered to date

-ASSIGNMENT for Week 8: Read *Time Awareness For All Musicians*

Week 8: 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 9: Independence and Polyrhythms

- Student mini presentation/PowerPoint
 - Introduction of new rudiments
 - Quarter-notes in BD while reading rhythms on SD (handout provided)
 - Polyrhythms 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 10: 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 (homework - watch Professor Erskine's video and submit own video of Chameleon beat)
- ASSIGNMENT due at end of next week: Listening Assignment

Week 11: Composition

- Student mini presentation/PowerPoint
 - Rudiments
 - Composition: explanation and practical application
 - Compose various grooves / fills
 - Student in-class performances
 - Student in-class ensemble play utilizing various etudes from *Time Awareness For All Musicians*

Week 12: Drum Fills

- Student mini presentation/PowerPoint
 - 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 13: Drum Charts and Brushes

- Student mini presentation/PowerPoint
 - 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 14: Contemporary Drumming 1

- Student mini presentation/PowerPoint
 - Rudiments
 - Contemporary applications of the drumset: odd-time signatures
 - "Latin" (Afro-Cuban) styles
 - Final Exam Study Guide (handout PDF provided)

Week 15: 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 13.**

SYLLABUS ADDENDUM

For drumstick, books and practice pad STAND purchases, we recommend amazon.com. sweetwater.com is an alternative music industry on-line retailer.

BOOKS

<https://amzn.to/2CpUmVi>

<https://amzn.to/3joeiZc>

PRACTICE PADS

Here are some links for practice pads, we recommend pads made by ProLogix ... they have agreed to offer all students in the MPPM-240 classes the following:

Our 8" pads are \$39.99, but with the 20% discount, the students will be looking at \$31.99.

Our 12" pads are \$59.99, but with the 20% discount, the students will be looking at \$47.99.

NOTE: YOU WILL NEED TO PURCHASE A SEPARATE PRACTICE PAD STAND @ AMAZON!

[Here is the link](#) to view our entire catalog. Students can select the product, pick the size (if applicable), and enter the USC discount code at checkout. We are planning to launch our new website during the first week of August. If this link does not work or changes, I will send you a new one ASAP.

[Here is the link](#) for the Thunderkick. [Here is the link](#) for the Practikit.

Discount Code: USC20

For all general inquiries please direct students to www.prologixpercussion.com

PRACTICE PADS and PRACTICE PAD STANDS

Here are some amazon.com links for practice pad stands (which you will need for any practice pad), etc.

Practice Pad Stand / \$53.95

<https://amzn.to/2CxLsF2>

Pad AND stand / \$64.95

<https://amzn.to/2WJZJp5>

RealFeel by Evans pad stand / \$50.43

<https://amzn.to/3fPuH6R>

Ahead Practice Pad Stand / \$31.47

<https://amzn.to/30ygchh>

DRUMSTICKS

<https://amzn.to/2Czjl2Z>

<https://amzn.to/3fPBQUJ>

<https://amzn.to/2WIqsSU>

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