

**USC Thornton School of Music**

**MPPM 340: Intermediate Drumset Proficiency  
2 units**

**Course Instructor:**

**-Section 47465:** Professor Peter Erskine, Director of Drumset Studies *INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD ONLY*  
TA Marcello Carelli will handle the day-to-day instruction

Classroom: LPB G122B (Drum Lab)

Office: TMC G145 / *OFFICE HOURS for 47473 = by email appointment only*

Telephone: 213-740-8142

Email: perskine@usc.edu

[mcarelli@usc.edu](mailto:mcarelli@usc.edu)

Course hours: 1 x 110-minute session per week

<b>Drum Lab Schedule</b>	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9:00 - 9:50	47370 (Carelli)		47370 (Carelli)		
10:00 - 10:50	47371 (Carelli)	47374 (Pereira)	47371 (Carelli)	47376 (Pereira)	47378 (Pereira)
11:00 - 11:50	47465 MPPM-340 (Carelli)		47465 MPPM-340 (Carelli)		
12:00 - 12:50					
1:00PM-1:50	47372 (Carelli)		47372 (Carelli)		
2:00PM - 2:50	47373 (Carelli)		47373 (Carelli)	47377 (Pereira)	
3:00PM - 3:50					
4:00PM - 4:50				47375 (Pereira)	
5:00PM - 5:50					

**Course Description**

The purpose of this 15-week course is to build upon a basic level of drumming competency, strengthening the foundation upon which students can increase their understanding of rhythm, promote further mastery of physical and musical coordination, and learn more skills on the drumset. Upon completion of this class, students should expect to have the ability to play the drums in a large number of ensemble and musical settings.

**Students will gain:**

- The ability to perform basic to advanced drumming rudiments on a practice pad
- The ability to perform basic to advanced drumming styles, using sticks and brushes, with a specific focus on ‘fills’ as well as Afro-Caribbean and Brazilian drumming
- The ability to perform in an ensemble context with a focus on ‘comping’ vocabulary
- A broader and more sophisticated understanding of the role and development of the drumset in contemporary music
- The ability to read and understand notated rhythms as well as standard drum chart

**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
- 1 pair of brushes: Vic Firth “Heritage” brush (suggested model)
- Drumset Essentials, Vol. 3* by Peter Erskine (Alfred Publishing)
- Essential Drum Fills* 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).

**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 classroom instructor by the end of Week 10. More details about the Listening Assignment will be discussed in class.
- **Mid-term Exam (34%):** **A)** Written or aural 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):**

Students will be provided with a notification/link by way of BLACKBOARD for the viewing of four video lessons (total viewing time approximately 30 minutes) during the first weeks of the semester.

**C** **COVID-19 BOOKMARK** ... in the interest of getting this syllabus posted on-line, and awaiting the latest policy statements and instructions from the USC administration, please refer back at a future date for an updated syllabus that will contain that info (which should be the same info / statement included in all USC syllabi and official documents) ... that said: *STAY SAFE* and practice all suggested and/or mandatory health protocols.

## **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) when a class is not scheduled, you may enter with your USC ID 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. Left-handed students will be asked to 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 in the future).

**Week 1: Review of Basic Techniques**

- Introduction to class presented by Professor Peter Erskine
- Basic techniques: grip, stroke technique, relationship to pad etc
- Warm up and coordination exercises
- ASSIGNMENT for next week: read first section of *Drumset Essentials Vol. 3*

**Week 2: Tone Production**

- Rudiments
- Tone Production throughout the drumset: *Drumset Essentials* Page 3
- Discussion of technique with each part of drumset
- In-Class Listening: examples of notable drummers with superior tone production
- ASSIGNMENT for next week: Look over pages 10-17 in *Essential Drum Fills*

**Week 3: Fills #1**

- Rudiments
- Discussion of triplet-based fills (jazz genre) and Destination Points
- Demonstration and practicing of Pages 10-17 in *Essential Drum Fills*
- In-Class Listening: examples of notable jazz drummers and triplet fills
- ASSIGNMENT for next week: Look over pages 18-22 in *Essential Drum Fills*

**Week 4: Fills #2**

- Rudiments
- Review of Week 3 concepts
- Discussion of 'straight' 8th/16th fills in jazz context
- Demonstration and practicing of Pages 18-22 in *Essential Drum Fills*
- ASSIGNMENT for next week: Look over pages 24-29 in *Essential Drum Fills*

**Week 5: Fills #3**

- Rudiments
- Review of Week 4 concepts
- Demonstration and practicing of Pages 24-29 in *Essential Drum Fills*
- Mid-term study guide (handout provided)
- ASSIGNMENT for next week: Look over pages 30-34 in *Essential Drum Fills*
- ASSIGNMENT for week 10: Listening assignment handed out

**Week 6: Fills #4 and Review**

- Demonstration and practicing of Pages 30-34 in *Essential Drum Fills*
- Introduction to the Drum Vamp Solo
- Review of all materials covered to date

**Week 7: Mid-term Exam**

- Hour 1: Written and/or Aural exam
- Hour 2: Playing exam. All playing material learned in class including rudiments, grooves, fills etc. Refer to study guide provided in Week 5.

**Week 8: Play-Alongs**

- Introduction of new rudiments
- Play-alongs: music from *Drumset Essentials* and other sources
- Student in-class performances

**Week 9: Brushes #1**

- Rudiments
- Discussion and practicing of basic brush technique
- In-Class Listening: brush recordings
- ASSIGNMENT due at end of next week: Listening Assignment

**Week 10: Brushes #2**

- Rudiments
- Advanced concepts using brushes
- In-Class Listening: advanced brush work
- ASSIGNMENT for next week: Look over Pages 19-41 in *Drumset Essentials*

**Week 11: Other Genres / Styles**

- Rudiments
- Discussion and application of styles: Samba, Bossa Nova, Afro-Caribbean etc
- In-Class Listening: examples from styles demonstrated in class
- ASSIGNMENT for next week: Look over Pages 49-69 in *Drumset Essentials*

**Week 12: Other Genres / Styles #2**

- Rudiments
- Odd-Time signature study
- Discussion and application of styles: African, Indian, Balkan etc
- In-Class Listening: examples of odd-time signature drumming

**Week 13: Drum Charts**

- Rudiments
- Study of written drumset parts (charts), reading and writing
- Final Exam Study Guide (handout provided)

**Week 14: Soloing and Review**

- Study and application of soloing found in both class method books
- Student in-class performances

**Week 15: Review**

- Review of all materials covered to date

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

**Final Exam**

- All students will perform in a jury-type setting for the instructor.