

**Course name: MPPM-340, Intermediate Drumset Proficiency**

**Section: 47466**

**Monday, 3-4:50PM**

**Room: Drum Lab**

**Units: 2**

**Instructor Name: Aaron Serfaty**

**Office Hours; By appointment only**

**Course created by Peter Erskine**

### **Course Description**

The purpose of this 14-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.

The unprecedented 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 also 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 TA Luke Woodle. 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 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 charts

**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**]
- 1 pair of drumsticks for practice pad studies: Vic Firth SD1 model recommended
- 1 pair of drumsticks for drumset exercises & studies: Vic Firth "Peter Erskine Ride" 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)
- Bass Drum Control* by Colin Bailey

*Professor Erskine will work with students and the Thornton School of Music's MUSIC OPERATIONS Center to provide appropriate equipment for drumset studies practice and performance (in-class, mid-terms, finals).*

### **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.

**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.

-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 in a right-handed drumset manner 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 by way of video
- 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*
- ASSIGNMENT: pages TBA in the Colin Bailey Bass Drum (pedal) Control book
- WEDNESDAY CLASS: STUDENT POWERPOINT PRESENTATION #1 ON TRIPLET 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*
- ASSIGNMENT: pages TBA in the Colin Bailey Bass Drum (pedal) Control book

#### **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
- WEDNESDAY CLASS: STUDENT POWERPOINT PRESENTATION #2 ON MIXING SUBDIVISIONS

#### **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
- WEDNESDAY CLASS: STUDENT POWERPOINT PRESENTATION #3 ON DRUM VAMP SOLOS

#### **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
- WEDNESDAY CLASS: POWERPOINT PRESENTATION #4 ON BRUSHES

#### **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*
- WEDNESDAY CLASS: STUDENT POWERPOINT PRESENTATION #5 ON "LATIN" STYLES

#### **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
- WEDNESDAY CLASS: STUDENT POWERPOINT PRESENTATION #6 ON ODD TIME PLAYING

#### **Week 13: Drum Charts**

- Rudiments

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

#### **Week 14: Final Exam**

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

#### **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/2ZQE9kW> Drumset Essentials Vol. 3
- <https://amzn.to/3eT7FdU> Essential Fills
- <https://amzn.to/3fPBDk9> Bass Drum Control

#### **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-340 class 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](http://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/2CzjI2Z>

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

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

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