

Creative Arts Department

Levelland, TX

Syllabus

Course Title: MUSC 1321, Songwriting

Instructor: Emily Wheeler

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Office Hours: Published on office CB 144

I. General Course Information:

- a. Description:** This course is an introduction to the techniques of writing marketable songs, including the writing of lyrics, melodic composition, crafting chord progressions, developing form, establishing groove, setting lyrics to music, developing hooks, and creating production plans for song demos. This course can be repeated for credit.
- b. Course Learning Outcomes:** Students will understand the anatomy of song, including intros, outros, verses, choruses, pre-choruses, bridges, interludes, etc. and devices for strengthening and connecting pieces to complete a song. Students will develop critique strategies used to edit others' work and their own. By studying performance practices typical to a variety of genres and subgenres, students will gain an understanding of compositional devices used to manipulate and develop various grooves. Through writing assignments, students will mature their writing capacities, nurture their creativity, establish effective processes for songwriting, develop their individual voice, and compose repertoire reflective of their musical curiosities and interests.
- c. Course Competencies:** Students must develop and demonstrate competency in the following areas: song analysis, song development, song construction, and song production and performance.
- d. Academic Integrity:** It is the aim of the faculty of South Plains College to foster a spirit of complete honesty and a high standard of integrity. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work which he or she has not honestly performed is regarded by the faculty and administration as a most serious offense and renders the offender liable to serious consequences, possibly suspension. Students should refer to the SPC General

Catalog, pg.22-23, regarding consequences for cheating and plagiarism (see "Academic Integrity" as well as "Student Conduct" sections).

- e. **SCANS COMPETENCIES:** C-1, C-3, C-5, C-6, C-7, C-8, C-18, C-19.
- f. **FOUNDATION SKILLS:** F-1, F-2, F-5, F-6, F-7, F-8, F-9, F-10, F-11, F-12, F-13, F-16
- g. **Verification of Workplace Competencies:** Successful completion of this course will equip the student with many of the skills necessary to complete the capstone experience presented at the end of the second semester of study for certificate candidates and at the end of the fourth semester of study for degree candidates.

II. Specific Course/Instructor Requirements

- a. **Required Materials:** There will be various handouts distributed in class and/or placed on Blackboard. Students are encouraged to keep thorough notes of class lectures, diagrams, examples, and exercises. Students must have a manuscript paper notebook, conventional notebook paper, and pen or pencil for each class session. Additionally, students should bring their comp sketch notebook to each class.
- b. **Attendance Policy:** If a student is no longer attending class, it is their responsibility to drop the course. The instructor may drop a student after four consecutive unexcused absences but is not required to do so. If a student misses class due to illness, the student should contact the teacher via phone or email. Every reasonable attempt will be made to help students who must miss class due to severe illness.
- c. **Classroom Behavior:** Disruptive, disrespectful behavior towards students or the instructor will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary measures. It is important that all students always maintain professional attitudes and actions. Cell phones, iPads, and other electronic devices should be used only as they pertain to the course. Failure to comply with any classroom policy may result in the student's removal from class.
- d. **Assignment Policy:** Students are encouraged to submit assignments at the specified time. Late assignments and/or projects **will not** be accepted. If a student misses a deadline due to illness, the student has the responsibility to contact the instructor so accommodations can be made.

e. Course Outline:

Song anatomy: Students will be provided with compositional strategies for strengthening song form, including strophic forms, through-composed forms, verses, choruses, bridges, pre-choruses, interludes, intros, and outros.

Performance practices of genres/subgenres: Students will be provided with musical practices typical to rock, country, jazz, bluegrass, hip hop, R&B, Latin, Reggae, and various subgenres of these music styles.

Individual style development: Students will participate in weekly journal writings to better understand their own musical curiosities, tendencies, and style preferences. Students will be asked to consider how that knowledge might impact their writing process.

Process for analyzing/critiquing song: Students will be shown a method for critiquing, analyzing, and editing the songs of others as well as their own. Weekly editorial session will help refine song-analysis skills.

Songwriting: Sixteen song assignments and three additional assignments will allow students the opportunity to mature and develop their songwriting capacities.

f. Grading Policy/Procedure

Critiques/class participation	10%
SONGBOOK/16 song sketches	30%
Mirror piece and performance	20%
Research paper	15%
Final song submission and performance	25%

Grades are assigned as follows: A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; F = 0-59 The weight and valuation of graded songs lies at the discretion of the instructor.

Special Requirements: It is encouraged students take this course after completing both MUSC 1313 and MUSC 2313, Commercial Music Theory I and Commercial Music Theory

II. Due to the bridged sequence between the Commercial Music Theory courses and Songwriting, students are expected to be familiar with a reasonable amount of material covered in both Commercial Music Theory courses.

See the following link for **SPC institutional statements**:

<https://www.southplainscollege.edu/syllabusstatements/>