

Music 210: Music Theory Fundamentals and Chromatic Harmony

Music 211: Chromatic Harmony

Fall 2025 - Hamilton College

Professor: Ryan Carter

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Office: List 234

Office hours: Tuesdays from 2:30-4:00pm in List 234 or by appointment
(in person or on Zoom: <https://hamilton.zoom.us/j/4795612100>)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Intensive training in the elements of music, with an emphasis on the study of melody, intervals, chords, rhythm and meter, and basic musical forms. Special attention devoted to harmonic progressions and chromatic harmony. Regular written assignments, including computer assignments aimed to develop musicianship skills. Prerequisites, the ability to read music in both treble and bass clefs, and basic knowledge of (1) key and meter signatures, (2) major and minor scales, and (3) simple rhythms. Not open to students who have taken Music 110. Students who have taken Music 110 and wish to continue with music theory should take Music 211.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MUS210 AND MUS211: Music 210 is a full-credit course that lasts the full semester and is appropriate for students who have the skills listed above. Music 211 is a half-credit course that meets only during the second half of the semester (i.e., students in Music 210 will be joined on Monday, October 20 by students enrolled in Music 211). Music 211 is appropriate for students who have previously taken Music 110 or who have passed out of Music 210 through the music theory placement exam or by earning a 5 on the AP Music Theory Exam. Those students who place into Music 211 (but not students who took Music 110) will earn an additional advanced placement half credit by completing Music 211 with a grade of B or higher.

APPOINTMENTS: I am happy to schedule appointments at our mutual convenience. My schedule is flexible. If you are having trouble in the course, you should email me to schedule an appointment (either in person or on Zoom); I will be checking my email frequently.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS: Hamilton College encourages each of its students to pursue a course of study that fosters these eight educational goals:

<https://www.hamilton.edu/educational-goals-and-curriculum>

In particular, this course will engage the following:

Analytic Discernment: The analysis of notated music combines the aural processing of sonic patterns with a sophisticated system of visual symbols. The conventions of tonal harmony - how chords function and relate to each other - can only be fully understood by developing the ability to recognize (aurally and visually) these patterns while listening to a work and reading a musical score.

Aesthetic Discernment: Music theory exists to explain musical practice. As this is a theory course, there will be no performance component, but a thorough understanding of musical structures contributes to a broad array of practical applications: how to evaluate a musical work or performance, how to craft an insightful and personal interpretation, how to articulate subjective musical reactions with precise language.

Disciplinary Practice: Certain rudimental skills are required in order to analyze a musical score, and repetitive practice is necessary to develop sufficient facility with these abilities.

TEXTS: There is no required textbook for this course. However, I ask you to subscribe to Spotify (www.spotify.com), as I will be sharing playlists there. Spotify operates on a monthly subscription plan, which you can cancel at the end of the course. Online exercises (at www.musictheory.net) will be assigned, but these do not require a subscription. There are many online resources for the study of music theory. Some are very good, some are not. An incidental component of this course will be learning to distinguish between them.

Please bring manuscript paper and a pencil with a good eraser to every class.

GRADING:

For students in 210:

45% Assignments

25% Midterm exam (open-book take-home exam due Monday, October 20 at 1:00PM)

30% Final exam (closed-book take-home exam due Wednesday, December 17 at 5:00PM)

For students in 211:

60% Assignments

40% Final exam (closed-book take-home exam due Wednesday, December 17 at 5:00PM)

Late assignments will not be accepted.

ATTENDANCE: While there is no attendance grade, attending class is essential to understanding the material. If you anticipate an absence, please inform me by email at least 24 hours in advance. **After two unexcused absences, each additional unexcused absence will lower your total grade by 5 points.**

DISABILITIES: Hamilton College will make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. If you are eligible to receive an accommodation(s) and would like to make a formal request for this course, please discuss it with me during the first two weeks of class. You will need to provide Allen Harrison, Associate Dean of Students (Elihu Root House; 315.859.4021) with appropriate documentation of your disability.

MUSICIANSHIP SKILLS: Making connections between theoretical concepts (like what notes make up a chord) and how these actually sound is critical to understanding music. This course will focus primarily on notated music, but I encourage you to enroll in Music 180 (basic aural skills) and Music 181 (basic keyboard skills). For homework assignments, you should find a way to hear what you are writing. This could involve playing assignments on a musical instrument or using notation software that includes built-in playback. One simple, free notation program that allows you to hear what you notate is Noteflight:

<https://www.noteflight.com/>

MUSIC CONCENTRATION PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS: Music concentrators must demonstrate proficiency in aural skills and keyboard skills. Concentrators are expected to complete these two proficiencies by the end of the junior year so that they may apply these skills in their advanced coursework. For this reason, potential concentrators in Music are strongly encouraged to enroll in Music 180 (basic aural skills) or Music 181 (basic keyboard skills) while taking Music 210. Additional information on the proficiency requirements for music concentrators can be found on the [Music Department website](#).

AI POLICY: There is no policy against using AI in this class, but I would be surprised if you find any productive use for it. Out of curiosity, I tried using AI to determine the notes of a particular chord, and the answer it gave was completely bonkers (and very wrong). If you try using AI in this course, it will likely give you wrong answers and you will not know they are wrong.

COURSE OUTLINE (subject to modification):

Week 1	Sep. 1 - Sep. 3	Intervals, review of scales and keys
Week 2	Sep. 8 - Sep. 10	Triads, review of rhythm and meter
Week 3	Sep. 15 - Sep. 17	Seventh chords, review of rhythm and meter
Week 4	Sep. 22 - Sep. 24	Roman numeral analysis and figured bass
Week 5	Sep. 29 - Oct. 1	Non-chord tones
Week 6	Oct. 6 - Oct. 8	Cadences and tonal syntax
Week 7	Oct. 13 - Oct. 15	Review and midterm
Week 8	Oct. 20 - Oct. 22	Introduction to species counterpoint
Week 9	Oct. 27 - Oct. 29	Introduction to four-part writing
Week 10	Nov. 3 - Nov. 5	Secondary dominants and modulation
Week 11	Nov. 10 - Nov. 12	Augmented sixth chords, Neapolitan chords, and modal mixture
Weeks 12 - 13	Nov. 17 - Dec. 3	Phrases, periods, and sentences Form and composition
Week 14	Dec. 8 - Dec. 10	Review and final exam