

MUSC 351: Music Theory IV

Post-tonal Theory and Practice

Dr. Isaac Otto Hayes

Spring 2026

1 Course Information

Lecture	Tu/Th	5:00 – 6:20 PM	Booth Hall 208
Musicianship	Mo/We	11:45 AM – 12:40 PM	Booth Hall 208
Office hours	Mo	2:00 – 5:00 PM	Booth Hall 201

Contact	
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This course is the fourth in a sequence of music theory and musicianship classes designed to provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental concepts and techniques of Western music theory.

Beginning at the tail end of Romantic harmony, we will explore a variety of 20th and 21st-century theoretical approaches to harmony and form as well as the application of these approaches to diverse musical styles, including popular music, jazz, hip hop, electronic music, and video game music.

This course will focus more on scholarly reading and writing than previous music theory courses, with the goal of empowering you to conduct and articulate your own analyses on the music that interests you most.

The class culminates in a substantial analytical paper which could be a stepping-stone toward your senior comprehensive project. The musicianship lab section will continue developing your skills in tonal and atonal sight-singing, dictation, and listening.

1.1 Important details at a glance

- **Materials:** All readings and assignments will be posted on Canvas. You will not be required to purchase a textbook for this course. *For in-class exercises, please bring a notebook, staff paper, and writing tools each class session!*
- **Communications:** All course communications will be sent via email and/or Canvas announcements. *Please check your email regularly.*
- **Academic integrity:** All work submitted must be your own. Any use of external sources must be properly cited. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please ask me.
- **AI and computer-assisted work:** The use of AI tools (ChatGPT, Grammarly, etc.) is permitted for brainstorming, outlining, etc. However, all submitted work should be your own (human) creation. If you feel any insecurity about your ability to communicate in writing, please know that I would much rather read an imperfect but earnest human effort than something copy/pasted from an AI tool. *I would love to help you improve your writing skills!*
- **Electronic devices:** Please keep laptops, tablets, and phones stowed away unless you speak with me in advance about using them for class activities. This will not be a notes-heavy course.
- **Accommodations:** If you require special accommodations for exams, coursework, or class participation, please contact Disability Services as soon as possible to make official arrangements.
- **Late work policy:** Any assignment submitted more than 48 hours after the deadline will receive a maximum of 50% credit. Extensions must be requested *in advance* by email.

2 Grades

2.1 Grading breakdown:

- **40% → Musicianship:** Determined by Prof. Kim. Updated only at mid-semester and reading week.
If you receive a failing grade in Musicianship, you will fail the whole course.
- **20% → Reading responses and quizzes:** Before each class, you will be asked to complete a reading and a response journal. I will provide 2 – 3 questions in advance to guide your reading, and occasionally give a short quiz asking you to answer one of these questions. Reading responses will be due at 11:59 PM the night before class to give me time to read them in advance of discussion.
- **20% → Weekly projects:** Each weekend, you will have a small project related to that week's material which will be due the following Tuesday at the start of class. These projects will vary in format, but may include composition exercises, short analyses, or brief essays.
- **20% → Final paper (including drafts):** This course's capstone project will be a 10 – 15-page research paper engaging with music theory or analysis. **The topic, materials, and methods of your research will be completely up to you**, except for the requirement that it engage with material covered during the music theory sequence (101, 151, 251, and 351). A complete rough draft will be due on the last day of classes, with the final draft due during finals week.
 - **5% → Topic proposal:** Due beginning of Week 10
 - **5% → Annotated bibliography:** Due beginning of Week 12
 - **5% → Rough draft:** Due last day of classes
 - **5% → Final draft:** Due during finals week
- **Extra credit** → There may be occasional opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester. These will be announced in class and/or on Canvas.

2.2 Grading scale:

Breakpoints	
A	93 – 100%
A-	90 – 92%
B+	87 – 89%
B	83 – 86%
B-	80 – 82%
C+	77 – 79%
C	73 – 76%
C-	70 – 72%
D+	67 – 69%
D	63 – 66%
F	00 – 62%

No assignments or final grades will be curved. My grading philosophy is that if I make the expectations clear enough for an assignment, everyone who follows directions and puts in the work required should be able to earn an A. If everyone does excellent work, everyone should get an A!

3 Weekly calendar

Unit	Week	Dates	Topic
1			The Road to Post-tonal Theory
	1	Jan. 20 & 22	Tuning and temperament
	2	Jan. 27 & 29	Late Romantic harmony
	3	Feb. 03 & 05	“Non-functional” harmony
	4	Feb. 10 & 12	Dodecaphony/serialism
	5	Feb. 17 & 19	Set theory
2			20th Century Harmony and Form
	6	Feb. 24 & 26	Neo-Riemannian transformations
	7	Mar. 03 & 05	Jazz harmony and form
	8	Mar. 09 – 13	Spring Break
	9	Mar. 17 & 19	Popular music harmony and form
	10	Mar. 24 & 26	Hip hop rhythm, meter, and form
	11	Mar. 31 & Apr. 02	Electronic music and ludomusicology
3			New Targets for Music Theory
	12	Apr. 07 & 09	Music notation and inscription
	13	Apr. 14 & 16	Spectral music
	14	Apr. 21	Founder's day (no class)
		Apr. 23	Instrument and idiom
	15	Apr. 28	Meta-theory
			Exam week
	16	[<i>final exam date</i>]	Final paper due

- Weekly projects are due by the start of class on the Tuesday following their assignment.
- Any allotted revisions for weekly projects are due the following Tuesday.
- In lieu of a final exam, the final draft of your final paper will be due on [*final exam date*] at 11:59 PM.

4 Complete list of readings and assignments

Readings and reading responses should be completed before the Tuesday or Thursday class indicated.

4.1 Unit 1: The Road to Post-tonal Theory

- **Week 1** (Jan. 20 & 22): Tuning and temperament
 - Thursday:
 - * Eli Maor *Music by the Numbers*, Ch. 2: “String Theory”
 - * Eli Maor *Music by the Numbers*, Ch. 6: “Temperament”
 - **Weekly project #1**: Composition assignment #1 **due Jan. 27**
- **Week 2** (Jan. 27 & 29): Late Romantic harmony
 - Tuesday:
 - * Music Theory for the 21st-Century Classroom (MT21): Ch. 20, The Neapolitan Chord
 - Thursday:
 - * MT21: Ch. 21, Augmented Sixth Chords
 - **Weekly project #2**: Analysis and voice-leading assignment. **due Feb. 03**
- **Week 3** (Feb. 03 & 05): “Non-functional” harmony
 - Tuesday:
 - * MT21: Ch. 32, Impressionism and Extended Tonality **due Feb. 10**
 - Thursday:
 - * Kopp - Chromatic Transformations, Introduction
 - **Weekly project #3**: TBD **due Feb. 17**
- **Week 4** (Feb. 10 & 12): Dodecaphony/serialism
 - Tuesday:
 - * MT21: Ch. 34, Serialism
 - Thursday:
 - * Babbitt: “The Composer as Specialist”
 - **Weekly project #4**: Schoenberg analysis. **due Feb. 17**
- **Week 5** (Feb. 17 & 19): Set theory
 - Tuesday:
 - * MT21: Ch. 33, Set Theory
 - Thursday:
 - * Kallis: Principles of Pitch Organization in Scriabin’s Post-tonal Period
 - **Weekly project #5**: Composition assignment #2 and Webern analysis **due Feb. 24**

4.2 Unit 2: 20th Century Harmony and Form

- **Week 6** (Feb. 24 & 26): Neo-Riemannian transformations
 - Tuesday:
 - * Open Music Theory (OMT): Neo-Riemannian Triadic Progressions
 - Thursday:
 - * Lehman: Film Music and Neo-Riemannian Theory
 - **Weekly project #6**: Transformation exercises and film music analysis **due Mar. 03**
- **Week 7** (Mar. 03 & 05): Jazz harmony and form
 - Tuesday:

- * OMT: Chord-scale theory
 - Thursday:
 - * Salley: Beyond Chord-Scale Theory - Realizing a Species Approach to Jazz Improvisation
 - **Weekly project #7:** Reharmonization exercise and transcription analysis **due Mar. 17**
- **Week 8** (Mar. 09 – 13): Spring Break (no readings or assignments)
- **Week 9** (Mar. 17 & 19): Popular music harmony and form
 - Tuesday:
 - * MT21: Ch. 12 Form in Popular Music
 - Thursday:
 - * Peres: Everything You Need to Know about the Postchorus
 - **Weekly project #8:** Song form analysis **due Mar. 24**
- **Week 10** (Mar. 24 & 26): Hip hop rhythm, meter, and form
 - Tuesday:
 - * Cambridge Companion to Rhythm: Ch. 12
 - Thursday:
 - * Duinker: Song Form and Mainstreaming in Hip Hop
 - **Weekly project #9:** Rhythm transcription and analysis **due Mar. 31**
- **Week 11** (Mar. 31 & Apr. 02): Electronic music and ludomusicology
 - Tuesday:
 - * Native Instruments: Sound Synthesis 101
 - * Osborn: Formal Functions and Rotations in Top 40 EDM
 - Thursday:
 - * Medina-Gray: Analyzing Modular Smoothness in Video Game Music
 - **Weekly project #10:** Write an annotated bibliography for your final paper **due Apr. 07**

4.3 Unit 3: New Targets for Music Theory

- **Week 12** (Apr. 07 & 09): Music notation and inscription
 - Tuesday:
 - * Bent: Evolution of Western staff notation (Britannica)
 - Thursday:
 - * Ligeti: New Notation: Means of Communication or End in Itself?
 - **Weekly project #11:** Write an abstract for your final paper **due Apr. 14**
- **Week 13** (Apr. 14 & 16): Spectral music
 - Tuesday:
 - * Hasegawa: Gérard Grisey and the Nature of Harmony
 - Thursday:
 - * Scholl: Olivier Messiaen, Spectralist
 - **Weekly project #12:** Write the introduction for your final paper **due Apr. 21**
- **Week 14** (Apr. 21 & 23): Instrument and idiom
 - Tuesday: Founder's Day (no class)
 - Thursday:
 - * De Souza: Music at Hand, Ch. 3: Idiomaticity; or, Three Ways to Play Harmonica
 - **Weekly project #13:** Finish the rough draft of your final paper **due Apr. 28**
- **Week 15** (Apr. 28): Meta-theory
 - Tuesday:
 - * McCreless: Rethinking Contemporary Music Theory
 - **Final assignment:** In lieu of final exam, final draft of research paper **due at exam time**

5 Recommended Resources

- **Staff paper:** This class may require you to write music by hand on staff paper. Feel free to use whatever brand you like, either loose-leaf or in a notebook. Staff paper should also be available at the [Occidental Bookstore](#). I'll try to have some on hand for emergencies, but please come prepared! Here are some recommendations:
 - Inexpensive option: [Carta Manuscript Paper No. 1 Basic Staff Paper](#)
 - The expensive stuff I like: [Judy Green Music Manuscript Paper](#)
 - Printable staff paper: isaacotto.com/pdf/staff-paper-01.pdf
- **Notation software:** Use whichever of the following you are most comfortable with. I recommend one of the following rather than a tablet-centric notation app (like Notion or StaffPad) only because those apps tend to be less flexible and less industry-standard, but if you strongly prefer one of those, go for it!
 - MuseScore: musescore.org (recommended; free and open source)
 - Dorico: dorico.com (powerful; expensive at full price)
 - Sibelius: avid.com/sibelius (long-time industry standard)
 - Finale: finalemusic.com (deprecated!)
- **Scanning device:** There are some terrific scanning tools available for smartphones (iOS and Android). These may be useful for submitting handwritten assignments or sharing sketches with me. Here are some recommendations:
 - Genius Scan (free with limited features)
 - Adobe Scan (free with limited features)
 - OpenScan (free and open source)
- **Keyboard or piano access:** You need access to a keyboard to play melodies and chord progressions. There are plenty of pianos available at Booth Hall in various classrooms and practice rooms. If you do not have regular access to a piano or keyboard, please let me know as soon as possible so we can make arrangements.
- **Online resources:** This class will make extensive use of free and/or open-source online music theory resources, including but not limited to the following:
 - *Music Theory for the 21st-Century Classroom*: musictheory.pugetsound.edu
 - *Open Music Theory*: viva.pressbooks.pub/openmusictheory

If you would like additional resources for ear training and musicianship practice, please let me know and I'll be happy to provide recommendations.

6 Class policies

Office hours and communication My office hours are listed at the beginning of this syllabus. You are welcome to drop by during those times without an appointment. If you cannot make it during regular office hours, please email me to set up an appointment at another time.

Workload expectations MUSC 351 is a 4-unit course. On average, you should expect to spend at least twelve (12) hours per week (including in-class time) on this course. *That number includes both 351 and 351A, which requires 5 hours of in-class time – meaning you should expect to spend 7 hours per week outside of class.*

Attendance policy: This course places a strong emphasis on discussion and other forms of in-class participation. Thus, attendance is required for this course and will be taken at the beginning of each class. You will be given 3 “free” absences to use at your discretion throughout the semester. While I do not require a doctor’s note or an explanation for these absences, I ask that you inform me via email if you plan to be absent. Any additional absences will each incur a penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., from A- to B+) off of your final grade. You will be notified in advance if you are in danger of exceeding your allowed absences.

Revise and resubmit policy: If you submit an assignment, test, paper, etc. which fails to meet the requirements to receive a 70%, you will have a chance to revise and resubmit it for a higher grade. You must submit the revised work within one week of receiving your graded assignment back. Submitted revisions can never harm your grade; the revised grade will either replace or augment your original grade, whichever is higher.

Electronic devices policy: In order to maintain an engaged and focused classroom environment, I ask that you keep all electronic devices (laptops, tablets, phones, etc.) stowed away during class time unless you have spoken with me in advance about using them for class activities. This will not be a notes-heavy course, so you should not need to use a laptop or tablet for note-taking. If you have a documented need to use an electronic device during class, please let me know as soon as possible so we can make arrangements.

AI and computer-assisted work policy: As emphasized above, AI tools (ChatGPT, Grammarly, etc.) are permitted (*though not necessarily encouraged*) for brainstorming, outlining, etc., but all submitted work should be your own (human) effort. If I get the sense that an assignment has been completed primarily or entirely by an AI tool, I will ask you to meet with me to discuss it. If we determine that the assignment does not meet the requirements for being your own work, you will be required to resubmit it following the guidelines of the revise and resubmit policy above.

Mid-semester progress reports: Mid-semester progress reports will be available following Week 7. These are not intended to determine or predict final grades, but to provide an opportunity for the faculty to communicate an estimation of students’ progress in the course by the midpoint of the current semester.

7 Additional information

7.1 Campus resources

- **Laptop lending program:** If you need to borrow a laptop for this course, please visit oxy.freshservice.com/support/catalog/items/108 to reserve one via the Library Information Desk at the Academic Commons.
- **On-campus tutoring:** Information about drop-in tutoring for all subjects, including languages, can found at: oxy.edu/academics/student-success/peer-learning.
- **Intercultural Community Center:** The ICC aims to reduce institutional barriers for marginalized communities through intentional and meaningful programming, identity-specific services and accessible resources. To learn more, contact icc@oxy.edu, or reach out directly to Robin Maxile, at maxile@oxy.edu.

7.2 University policies

Language on special accommodations/learning differences Students with documented disabilities and learning differences who are registered with Disability Services are required to present their accommodation letter to the instructor at the beginning of each semester, or as soon as possible thereafter. Students are encouraged to contact or meet with the instructor to discuss how accommodations can support them in meeting the course learning objectives. Any student who has, or thinks they have, a physical, learning, or psychological disability may contact Disability Services at accessibility@oxy.edu to learn about available services and support. More information is available at oxy.edu/disability-services.

Statement of shared academic integrity commitment Academic Integrity is a shared community value. It is built around trust and respect between members of the Occidental Community, and embodies a commitment to honesty and integrity in every aspect of one's academic life. All members of the Occidental community are committed to uphold the highest degree of academic integrity. Unless stipulated otherwise, the academic work done for all assignments is expected to be the student's own; students are expected to give proper credit to the ideas and work of others.

Student Handbook: oxy.edu/student-handbook

COVID-19 precautions Your health and well-being, and that of our community, are essential. If you are feeling any symptoms of illness, even if they are slight, please refrain from attending class until you receive a negative COVID test or it has been 10 days since your symptoms began. Please work with Emmons and the COVID Operations team to confirm when and how you can end your isolation. Similarly, if you have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, please follow the instructions for testing and isolating sent to you by Emmons and the COVID Operations team, and wear a high-quality mask when around other individuals for 10 days.

Mental health and wellness Your Mental Health and emotional well-being impacts learning and academic success. Symptoms like depression, anxiety, and trauma may cause loss of motivation, difficulty concentrating, and other issues that make learning difficult. Emmons Counseling staff are committed to supporting the mental health needs of our students. To get connected to any of the free, confidential services at Emmons call (323)-259-2657.

Civil rights & Title IX statement In the event that you write or speak about having experienced discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected characteristic or sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation or any other form of sexual and/or gender-based harassment), as a designated Responsible Employee, I must inform the Civil Rights & Title IX Office. They will contact you to let you know about resources and support services at Oxy, as well as reporting options both on and off-campus. You have no obligation to respond to the Civil Rights & Title IX Office or to meet with them to discuss support services and reporting options.

If you do not want the Civil Rights & Title IX Office contacted, instead of disclosing this information to your instructor, either through conversation or a class assignment, you can speak confidentially with:

- Oxy's Survivor Advocate, Project SAFE (survivoradvocate@oxy.edu)
- Emmons Counseling Center ((323)–259–2657)
- Rev. Dr. Susan Young, Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (young@oxy.edu)
- Oxy 24/7 Confidential Hotline ((323)–341–4141)

The College's civil rights policies, along with additional resources, can be found at: oxy.edu/civil-rights-title-ix. If you would like to contact the Civil Rights & Title IX Office directly, you may email Civil Rights & Title IX Coordinator Alexandra Fulcher at afulcher@oxy.edu or call (323)–259–1338.

Accommodations for reasons of faith and conscience Consistent with Occidental College's commitment to creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that students should be excused from class for reasons of faith and conscience without academic consequence. While it is not feasible to schedule coursework around all days of conviction for a class as a whole, faculty will honor requests from individual students to reschedule coursework, to be absent from classes that conflict with the identified days. Information about this process is available on the ORSL website: oxy.edu/student-life/resources-support/orsl/academic-accommodations

Discrimination, harassment, and retaliation policy I strive to foster an inclusive classroom environment. Consistent with College policy on discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, I seek to maintain an environment of mutual respect among all members of our community. Please come to me with any concerns. More information can be found in the student handbook under: [general-college-policies/discrimination-harassment-and-retaliation](#)

Lived name policy Occidental College seeks to provide an inclusive and non-discriminatory environment by making it possible for students to use a lived first name and pronouns on college records when a legal name is not required. Where appropriate, students are encouraged to use Zoom to display their lived name and pronouns. These can be set at occidental.zoom.us/profile.

Land acknowledgement Occidental College occupies the traditional territory and homelands of the Tongva people. For more information, please visit gabrielinotribe.org to read more about the history and culture of the Gabrielino-Tongva people.

Update policy Though I have made every effort to ensure that this syllabus is complete and accurate, occasional changes may be necessary. Any such changes will be announced in class and via email/Canvas. Just as it is my responsibility to inform you of any changes, it is your responsibility to remain informed!