Course Outline - Tonal Counterpoint

MUTH 3420 001
MoWeFr 10:00AM - 10:50AM Musi 320

Information for Students

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There is no assigned textbook but students are requested to bring scores for in-class discussion and analysis as needed. We will study the contrapuntal structure of various pieces from the Baroque to the present.

Tentative outline (depending on the speed of the class)

In this course, we will learn to write motivic counterpoint, i.e., counterpoint in which foreground motives are preserved. Thus, we be writing not just a counterpoint of notes but a counterpoint of motives.

- First species in two parts
- Second species in two parts (two notes to one)
- Three-part counterpoint: two parts in first species with one part in second species
- Two parts, with one part in third species (four notes to one)
- Invertible third species part
- Three-part counterpoint: second species in one part and third species in the other
- Two parts, with one part in fourth species (syncopation)
- Three-part counterpoint: one part in fourth species with one part in third species

Depending upon the speed of the class, we will progress to the study of fugue.

Break-down of Final Grade:

1) Mid-term exam: 20%
2) Final exam: 30%
3) Final project: 10%
4) Portfolio of assignments (exercises and analyses): 40%

Letter grades are as follows: “A” is excellent, “B” is good with a few minor problems, “C” is fair with serious problems, “D” is poor, “F” is failure. If you receive an “R”, that means that you must redo and resubmit the assignment (this is used when the student clearly did not understand the nature of the assignment).

Since counterpoint is a subject where knowledge and experience build cumulatively, it is vitally important that all assignments be completed on time. An assignment may be
submitted one class late; however, after that point in time the instructor reserves the right not to grade the assignment recording it as an “F”.

In terms of doing the assignments:

1) Work in pencil.
2) Use a ruler to draw barlines.
3) Leave one free staff between systems for harmonic analysis.
4) Label all motives and non-harmonic tones.
5) Do not work at the piano. (Remember that you will not have access to a piano during the mid-term and final exams, and 50% of the grade is based on these examinations.) You may use the piano to play through your assignments and projects to check for errors.
6) Work directly in the alto and tenor clefs.