UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER
School of Performing Arts

course syllabus for

MUAP xx87 (3287, 4287): Composition (Upper-Division Individual Lessons)
Fall 2026
By appointment, scheduled individually – FAC 1215

Professor: Dr. Kyle Gullings
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Office Hours: (contact me to set an appointment, or…)
Mondays 10:10 – 11:10 a.m.
Wednesdays 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
Thursdays 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Course Description: MUAP 3287, 3387, 4287, and 4387 consist of private, weekly applied lessons in Composition at the Junior/Senior grade levels.

Course Information: Permission codes to enroll may be obtained by contacting the Music office. Fees will be charged for this course and are subject to change. Each level of applied lessons may be taken twice for credit. Upper-division lessons are delivered in an individual setting in the instructor's university studio. Lower-division lessons are delivered in a group studio setting, usually in a classroom.

Prerequisite: None.

Course Learning Objectives: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. **Understand, discuss,** and **creatively utilize** a variety of compositional techniques, with an emphasis on the canon of Western art music – particularly that of twentieth- and twenty-first-century models.
2. **Deploy** the above techniques through solo, chamber, vocal, large ensemble, and electronic mediums.
3. **Show** the clear beginnings of a unique, contemporary compositional style, balancing creativity and craft.
4. **Articulate** the aesthetic and practical relevance of their output within the artistic landscape they occupy.
5. **Engrave, edit,** and **distribute** their compositions through proficient use of music notation software.
6. **Present** a public recital, during their senior year, of original compositions.

Required Materials: No textbook is required. Students must have regular access to manuscript paper and a pencil, and music notation software.

Assessment:

Grade Weighting	Weekly Composition Progress	80%
	Final Jury	20%
Grading Scale	90-100%	A
	80-89%	B
	70-79%	C
	60-69%	D
	Below 60%	F

Methods for Assessing Outcomes: The final grade will reflect the degree of significant progress made by the student each week, and the scope and quality of the final Jury.

Methods of Instruction: Enrolled students will meet weekly, individually, with the instructor to receive critiques of their compositions, discuss progress and techniques, assess and develop composer-specific proficiencies, and set specific goals for the following week. Outside listening and score study may also be assigned to serve as creative models. This individual meeting is in addition to any group applied composition lessons the student may be enrolled in.

** **Attendance Policy:** Weekly attendance is essential and expected. Weekly grades are given for each lesson, and unexcused absences will result in a grade of 0% for that week's lesson. Four (4) unexcused lessons (including those assigned for lack of progress) within a semester will result in an automatic semester grade of "F", and no further lessons will be scheduled for the remainder of the semester.

At the instructor's discretion, absences may be considered *excused* only for legitimate, *documented* reasons (serious illness, family emergency, etc.). Even in cases of *excused absences*, any outstanding assignments are due at the following class period. In all cases, it is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of absences with as much advance notice as possible, and to *document* that absence if an excused absence is being requested.

Make-up sessions are not offered for lower-division group lessons, even for excused absences. Make-up lessons for upper-division individual lessons are only offered upon student request, for excused absences approved by the instructor; make-ups are not offered for unexcused absences or due to lack of preparation or writing progress.

** **Composer Readings:** Once each semester, as funds and circumstances allow, the Music Department will arrange for performer(s) to present student compositions in a workshop/performance format. Instrumentation will be announced near the beginning of each semester. All students enrolled in upper-division individual composition lessons and/or lower-division group lessons are required to participate in these Readings to avoid a reduction of the final semester grade. Students not enrolled in lessons are also encouraged to participate, subject to the approval of the instructor. The performers will generally conduct open rehearsal workshop sessions with time for discussion and revisions, followed by a public recital concluding with a talkback session featuring the performers, composers, and audience members.

** **Other Composition Events:** From time to time, special events of interest to composers will be held, such as guest speakers/master classes, performances, and sessions on entering competitions, resume writing, and marketing. These events will be clearly posted in advance. When offered, these sessions are required for all Composition majors and all students enrolled in upper- or lower-division composition lessons. Composers unable to attend for excused reasons must communicate their absence in advance to the instructor. Unexcused absences from composition events will count against the semester grade in lessons.

** **Lesson Format/Expectations:** For upper-division individual lessons, at the start of each semester, the instructor and the student will jointly create a contract of pieces to be composed and specific skills to be improved during the semester. Student progress and grading will be evaluated based on fulfillment of this contract. Students in MUAP 3287 and 4287 are expected to create one or more original works each semester totaling approximately ten minutes. Failure to meet these requirements will result in a lowering of the final semester grade, at the instructor's discretion.

We spend the majority of our lesson time discussing your compositions in progress, which are the most direct demonstration of your ideas and skills. Just as with any other private music lesson, improvement and success will come only with regular practice. As a composer, time spent composing IS your practice. This activity is the primary focus for the successful Composition major.

While school work, family and job concerns, and writer's block will occasionally hinder the well-meaning composer, regular production of new music is essential to earning and maintaining the title "composer." Therefore, occurrences of no or unsatisfactory weekly progress within a semester will be handled as follows:

1. First time – No grade penalty. The hour will be spent on idea generation strategies, composer proficiency etudes, score study, and future goals.
2. Second and third times – 0% for the weekly lesson grade, and the lesson will be canceled. The composer will be encouraged to spend this time composing for the following week.
3. Fourth time – Automatic semester grade of "F", and no further lessons will be scheduled for the remainder of the semester.

All official composition assignments must ultimately be notated using computer software such as MuseScore, Dorico, Sibelius, or Finale. Hand-written drafts are acceptable for weekly lessons, but not the final Jury submission. Notation software on a laptop or manuscript paper and a pencil are required at each lesson.

** **Portfolio / Juries:** Near the end of each semester, students in upper-division individual lessons will prepare an end-of-semester Jury of all original compositions completed, representing his/her work over that semester only. All notated

compositions and excerpts must include computer-engraved score(s), suitable audio renditions (synthesized or recorded), and a Composition Jury Sheet, submitted digitally to the primary instructor, ahead of a live feedback session with a 3-member faculty committee.

Note: Students completing a Senior Recital in Composition in the same semester as applied composition lessons are exempt from the Jury requirement, but may participate in Juries at their discretion. If not taking a Jury, the final Senior Recital grade will serve as the 20% "Jury" component of the Applied Composition Lesson grade.

Only students enrolled in lower-division group composition lessons will prepare a *separate* end-of-semester Portfolio of all listening assignments, etudes, and assigned compositions completed in group lessons, which will receive written feedback by the primary instructor only. Students enrolled in both levels of composition lessons will submit *both* a Portfolio and a Jury.

** **Grading Requirement – Public Performance of Compositions:** Every student enrolled in applied composition lessons (upper- or lower-division) must arrange for a public performance of at least one original composition each semester. The piece chosen needn't be written during the current semester of study. Both acoustic and electronic compositions (though not mere MIDI realizations of acoustic works) satisfy this requirement.

Suitable opportunities for public performance include Departmental Student Recitals, Degree Recitals (the composer's or others'), Composer Readings Recitals (detailed above), and any other student- or Department-organized events recognized on the official Music Department calendar. Students may perform their own works or enlist the help of colleagues. While the Department strives to arrange a number of performance opportunities each semester, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to secure performances. Failure to complete this requirement by the end of each semester will result in a lowering of that semester's grade by one letter grade.

** **Senior Recital:** During the last year of study, students majoring in Composition must present a 50+ minute recital of original works. While every effort will be made by the Department to help facilitate the performance, **it is solely the student's responsibility** to enroll in MUAP 4100, secure a 3-member Faculty Committee, schedule a date and location for the hearing and recital, and ensure that performers are secured, rehearsed, and prepared to perform at a passable level. While all circumstances will be taken fully into account, the recital will be graded primarily on the quality of the compositions as reflected in the performance.

No later than four weeks before the recital, the student must present a live Recital Hearing with all performers present. At the hearing, the Faculty Committee will hear the entire program and vote on whether the recital will be ready for performance. If the hearing is passed, the recital is cleared to proceed. If the hearing receives a provisional pass, the student generally has two weeks to rectify any concerns of the committee. If the student does not pass the hearing or resolve the provisional pass, the recital is postponed until the following semester and the student will receive a grade of "F" for MUAP 4100, unless an Incomplete is warranted by circumstances outside the student's control.

Students enrolled in MUAP 4100 must also be enrolled in MUAP 4287 upper-division individual composition lessons in the same semester. Please see www.uttyler.edu/music for additional details regarding recital policies.

** **Communication:** Students are required to regularly check their Patriot e-mail account and the class Canvas page.

** **Academic Integrity**: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated (cheating, copying homework, plagiarism, etc.).

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in This Course: For this course, students are allowed to use artificial intelligence (AI) to brainstorm or improve on composition strategies, creative concepts, and lists of related repertoire for listening. All such uses of AI in this course must be disclosed at the time of submission. Unless you get prior permission from your instructor, you may **not** use AI in any other ways to assist with any text-based assignments (listening reflections, etc.) or to generate audio or music notation for any purpose in this course.

Other: For additional **Student Resources** and **University Policies and Information**, please those sections on our course Canvas site under the Syllabus Module.

Composition (Upper-Division Individual Lessons) – Fall 2026

Course Calendar

(assignment due dates subject to change)

Date(s)	Event
8/24 Mon.	- Classes Begin (Group and individual lessons scheduled individually)
9/7 Mon.	- *NO CLASSES:* Labor Day
9/8 Tue.	- *Census Date* (Last day to withdraw from course without penalty)
9/29 Tue.	**Composer Readings: First Draft Due 5:00pm in Canvas (score + audio)** (the work is substantially complete; no major additions or changes)
10/13 Tue.	**Composer Readings: Final Draft Due 5:00pm in Canvas (score + audio)** (no revisions after this date unless requested by your performer(s))
10/30 Fri.	- *Withdrawal Deadline*
11/2 Mon.	Registration Begins: Meet CAS Advising and your Music faculty for advising prior to today
11/11-11/13	- *NO LESSONS:* Instructor out of town for a conference (reschedule)
11/17 Thr.	**Composer Readings: Piano Studio & Composer Readings Recital 6:00–7:00pm BRH**
11/23-11/27	- *NO CLASSES:* Thanksgiving Holiday
12/3 Thr.	**Composition Portfolios** (lower-division) & **Jury Submissions** (upper-division) **Due 5:00pm**
12/7 Mon.	**Composition Juries** (upper-division only; slots 2:30–4:10pm, see Canvas)

Please keep an eye out for possible updates to this calendar, including:

- Composer Readings: Workshop on effective piano writing
- Composer Readings: Workshop and feedback session
- Composer Readings: Dress rehearsal
- Composer exchange events, on or off campus