

LSMSA Course Syllabus

MU 254B – Mixed Ensemble

MWF 11:00-11:50; Room 203 MAB

Dr. Al Benner (318) 357-2537

Room 214 MAB - office hours as posted on office door or on website

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COURSE GOALS & OBJECTIVES

To gain knowledge and understanding of ensemble playing and your individual instrument; to develop skills that will aid the individual in effectively performing ensemble literature that suits his/her abilities and challenges them; and to develop other musical skills that will aid in future ensemble playing and other music courses. This course is designed to offer performers opportunities to play challenging music literature in a professional setting. Various players will be formed both in small and large groups according to works being performed. Overall, however, the main purpose of this course is to have fun.

MATERIALS

Pencil and paper brought to each class.

Music for pieces being played.

Music Ensemble Folder.

TEXT

Music will be provided. It is the student's responsibility, however, to bring outside music on those days requested

REQUIRED PARTICIPATION OUTSIDE CLASS

As opportunities arise, you are expected to participate as needed.

EXAMINATIONS AND GRADING

Acceptance into the Ensemble is by audition or Instructor approval. If you are a part of the Ensemble, it is not only expected, it is required that you spend time outside of class learning your individual part. You will be graded on your performance abilities. Specifics about grading procedures will be discussed in class by the Instructor. In general:

- It is projected that we will play at least two major concerts at a time outside of class. There will be several opportunities to play on other smaller concert venues. You may be asked to play on a LCC (Louisiana Composers' Consortium) concert. It is expected that when needed, you will perform on these concerts. We may also be asked to play for various events and assemblies where appropriate that take place at LSMSA. This may include, but is not limited to, the LSMSA Gala, Junior Recognition, Veteran's Day, Holiday Celebration and Martin Luther King Assembly. Attendance and playing participation is required. Attire for the concert will be discussed prior to the event. Playing for these concerts and proper stage presence at that time will determine a portion of your final grade. However, any unexcused absence that results in failure to participate in any scheduled concert, automatically gives you a D in this course. Likewise, failure to participate in any scheduled dress rehearsals, except in unusual circumstances, will result in you not participating in the concert. If you are allowed to play a concert that you have an unexcused absence for the dress rehearsal, you will automatically receive no higher than a C for that concert and will result in receiving one letter grade lower for your final grade.
- You will be given a grade for each concert or LSMSA event based on professionalism and performance (see below).
- There will be playing exams based on materials given out a minimum of 1 week after the materials were dispersed.
- You will be given up to ten points once a week comprising of two areas--professionalism and performance. Specific determination of what qualifies as a "10" in each area will consist of, but is not limited to, the following. Preparation -- show progress in learning your parts in a timely manner; show that proper practice techniques were observed. Although this has a direct bearing on your practice time outside of class (see below), the bottom line here is results. It is expected that you will practice as much as needed to show proper progress in playing your parts. Professionalism -- this will be determined according to how you act during rehearsal (class) time--are you paying attention, talking, having the proper tools, not prepared upon downbeats, etc. Inability to act as a professional during rehearsals and preparing for rehearsals shows a great lack of respect not only for the conductor, but also for your fellow musicians. A lack of any of the above will result in a loss of 1 point for each occurrence. These weekly points will be totaled and averaged to give a final class grade.

- At the beginning of each week of class, a schedule of your practice time will be turned in to the Instructor. Although practice time will vary for individuals, it is recommended that you practice a minimum of 4 hours a week. There will be individual playing exams on music you will be performing (your part) at any time. It is your responsibility to practice your part. You will be given a grade for these playing exams. Anyone found lacking would be required to attend office hours to practice with the Instructor.
- Students are required to attend **two** musical performances (as described by the Instructor) during the semester and turn in a written (computer or typed) report, minimum one page, single and ½ spaced, font no larger than 12 point, about the event (**due no later than one week after the performance date**). **One is required by the mid-term exam; the other the last day of class.** Reports turned in after the week period will not receive full credit. You can always turn in your reports before the due dates. You will receive up to 10 points for each paper depending upon meeting the qualifications above. If one of your papers is not turned in by mid-term, you will receive a 5 point deduction from your mid-semester grade. For the overall semester, missing reports will result in a 10 point deduction from your overall class average—consequently, without both reports, you cannot make an "A" in this course.
- Generally, our final exam is our main concert and normally takes place before the end of the semester. However, depending upon the date of our last concert and at the discretion of the Instructor, there may be a written and/or playing final exam. It will cover information about pieces and materials discussed in class and/or a playing exam which will be treated as a concert of individual pieces. If this is the case, the class will meet at the assigned time during final exam week for this exam--you are not excused from this exam period. Failure to attend this exam period will result in receiving a "D" to be averaged equally with your playing exam grade to determine your final exam grade.
- At the discretion of the Instructor, points can be given for either exceptional work or points deducted for behavior that is disruptive or refusal to participate in class requirements or assignments. These points will be used for student's whose grade is "on the fence." It is possible that multiple deductions will lower your grade.

For playing exams, concerts, LSMSA events, class grades, mid-term and the final exam, you will be given a certain number of points based on a letter grade of A, B, C, or D. The number of concerts we will play during the semester will determine the proportions for the various areas that will ascertain your final grade. These proportions will be discussed at the appropriate time during class.

CONCERT ATTIRE

Members of the Mixed Ensemble must have proper concert attire. For ladies: a black skirt below the knee, a white dress blouse (long sleeve), and black dress shoes. Black dress slacks may be substituted for a black shirt upon Instructor's approval. For gentlemen: a black suit, white dress shirt (long sleeve), dark tie, and black dress shoes. A dark suit may be substituted upon approval of the Instructor. The above dress is necessary for our formal concerts. For our informal concerts, proper attire will be discussed at that time.

PRACTICE

Practice outside class is required to become a better ensemble player (and to make the progress that will be the main foundation for your grade). Treat practice sessions as you do studying for any other course here at LSMSA. The time to prepare for playing is before you come to class, not during class time. Like any other subject, the amount of practice time between individuals will vary depending upon your skill level. By being accepted and consequently enrolled in this class, you accept the responsibility that you will prepare your part to the best of your abilities. For some, this may require more than the "recommended" minimum practice time of 4 hours a week to prepare properly.

LMEA

Although not a requirement, it is strongly encouraged that every member of the Ensemble auditions to be a member of either the All-State Band(s) or Orchestra and the District II Honor Band or Orchestra. Details about this will be discussed early in the semester. The group will participate in the Solo & Small Ensemble Festival and the Large Ensemble Festival at the appropriate times. Attendance is required.

CURRENT CONCERT DATES

Major concert: Dec. 5 & 6; LCC concert(s): TBD; We will play other venues as requested.

We will also be giving impromptu mini concerts in the CPT throughout the semester. Dates to be announced.

ATTENDANCE

Students must adhere to the LSMSA attendance policy. Failure to attend a class will be reported on the attendance report. The administration and/or the school nurse, not the Instructor, will determine whether or not an absence is excused. If you do miss a class for any reason, it is your responsibility to contact a classmate to know what took place during your absence and to prepare for any class assignment or exam that will take place upon your return. Unexcused absences will result in a minus for any class assignment you missed. Attendance is taken at the beginning of class. If you enter after attendance is taken, you will be marked tardy. Three unexcused tardies are considered as one absence. You are tardy once class begins. Tardiness is especially disruptive because your individual part is important to an ensemble. If you are tardy, it is your responsibility to get the material you missed from a classmate.

ADDITION

Your grade in Mixed Ensemble is an earned one. It WILL NOT be based solely on your skill level. Rather it will be based upon the contribution you make to the success of the group. Also, please remember that in addition to grades for playing exams, your grade will be based on your attitude, your behavior, your attendance in class and at concerts, and how hard you are willing to work for the excellence of our ensemble. It will not be enough merely to SAY that you are interested in the group's success; you must demonstrate by your actions that you are dedicated to that goal. As a supplement to what has been listed above on this syllabus, TO EARN AN "A" IN MIXED ENSEMBLE, A STUDENT MUST:

- Be in attendance at all concerts and performances, unless illness, family emergency or a previously arranged school function should prevent attendance. The student must notify the director BEFORE the event to be excused.
- Be on time to class, in the assigned seat and ready to play when the Instructor starts rehearsal.
- Have all instrumental supplies (reeds, valve oil, etc.) as needed. This means having backups always handy!
- Having worked during time outside of class on your ensemble parts, demonstrate knowledge of your parts and have your parts ready to play at concert time.
- Demonstrate by a positive attitude and by disciplined behavior that the ensemble's excellence is of prime importance.
- Show a willingness to cooperate in every way your talent permits.
- Turning in your concert reviews in a timely manner.

PLEASE NOTE: Excessive absences (or not being able to participate in rehearsals), whatever the reason, will likely result in a lowered grade. Because there is no homework outside your practice time, being at and performing during rehearsals is VERY important. Because talking is disruptive to our group effort, talking in class will likewise result in a lowering of the grade.

OVERALL GRADE BREAKDOWN

Depending upon the number of concerts given per semester, this may be altered. If that is the case, it will be discussed in class. In general, the following applies:

Overall Professionalism and Preparedness: 60%

Major Concert(s): 25% [based on weight given to other variable areas]

LCC Concert(s) if needed: 5-10% [based on weight given to other variable areas]

Playing Exam(s): 5-10% [depending upon the need]

Concert Review Papers: 10%

HONOR CODE

Students will abide by the Honor Code regulations as stated in the student handbook.

LIFE PHILOSOPHY

Do what is right even if it is unpopular.

Take responsibility for your actions.

Don't let others think for you.

There is always a choice.

Be true to yourself.

I can think of no good reason to use "curse" words in the context of this class. You will not hear such language from me either in or out of the classroom. I don't expect to hear it from you.