



MUS-115: BEGINNING VOICE CLASS - BREATH/TONE

Effective Term

Fall 2026

BOT Approval Date

11/13/2025

Discipline

MUS - Music

Course Number

115

Course Title

Beginning Voice Class - Breath/Tone

Short Title

Beg Voice Class - Breath/Tone

Credit Status (CB 04)

D - Credit - Degree applicable

Units**Activity Units**

1.50

Total Units

1.50

Hours**Activity Contact Hours**

48-54

Out of Class Hours Activity

24-27

Total Contact Hours

48 - 54

Total Out of Class Hours

24 - 27

Total Student Learning Hours

72 - 81

Distance Education

No

Catalog Description

This course is one part of a two-semester package of Beginning Voice Classes. The two may be taken in any order. This section focuses on posture, breathing, tone production, and resonance. Students learn about the physiology of healthy singing through both group and solo performance.

Codes**TOP Code (CB 03)**

1004.00 - Music

**CIP Code**

50.0908 - Voice and Opera.

Repeatability Code

No

Grading Option

Letter grade OR P/NP

Minimum Qualifications

Minimum Qualifications	And/Or
Music (Masters Required)	End

Learning Objectives**Learning Objectives**

Learning Objective
1. Exhibit healthy singing posture, including incorporating ideas from Alexander Technique.
2. Explain the process of breathing and breath control, including the interaction of muscles, bones, and lungs in these processes, and demonstrate proper breathing techniques.
3. Evaluate the breathing techniques and tonal qualities of other singers and provide oral and written analysis with potential solutions to problems.
4. Analyze a song for potential breathing consideration in preparation to perform it.
5. Develop a plan outlining the preparation of an easy-to-moderately difficult song for personal performance.
6. Demonstrate progressive mastery of vocalizing exercises and explain their purpose.
7. Analyze the pitch-vowel relationship in song literature and tone production and demonstrate appropriate vowel modification to accommodate range extremes.
8. Demonstrate healthy posture, breathing, and tone production through at least two song performances of different styles.
9. Demonstrate awareness of cultural, historical, and linguistic context when preparing and performing vocal repertoire from a variety of traditions.

Learning Outcome Information**Course Learning Outcomes**

Learning Outcome
1. Students will differentiate, match, and reproduce a pitch played at the keyboard or sung.
2. Students will perform a basic song from standard English repertoire, demonstrating proper breath support.
3. Students will perform a basic song from standard English repertoire, demonstrating tone that is free, forward and focused.

Content**Course Activity Content**

1. Posture: Holding your instrument
 - a. Skeletal Alignment
 - b. Physical Freedom
 - c. Balance and Poise
 - d. Alexander Technique and Lessac Method
 - e. Discussion of postural adaptations for singers of varying abilities, for example, posture for seated singing
2. Breathing
 - a. Inhalation
 - b. The lungs
 - c. The diaphragm
 - d. The larynx
 - e. The pharynx

3. Exhalation
 - a. The physics of air pressure
 - b. The muscles of exhalation
 - c. The Bernoulli Effect
 - d. Clavicular vs. Abdominal breathing
4. Onset (Hard / Soft / Coordinated)
5. Resonance
 - a. Phonation Acoustics (formants and overtones)
 - b. Anatomy of resonators
 - c. Sensation-based vocabulary: explore how individual singers may connect with various sensation descriptions or imagery based on their background and experiences
 - d. Free, Forward, and Focused tone
6. Registers
 - a. Head voice
 - b. Chest voice
 - c. Mix / Three-register theory
 - d. Male falsetto - explore commonalities and differences in the vocal experience based on gender and physiology
 - e. The Passaggio / Register break
7. Voice Classifications
 - a. Choral voice parts
 - b. Classical/Opera voice types, including history of gender as a category factor
 - c. Voice classification in various genres - compare and contrast how classification is approached in different cultural and stylistic traditions
 - d. The developing voice and determining classification
8. Practice strategies
 - a. Warm-ups / Vocalises
 - b. Spaced repetition
 - c. Digital resources and accessibility considerations
 - d. Self-evaluation techniques
9. Performance strategies
 - a. Handling performance anxiety ("stage fright"), including how cultural norms impact our perspective of public performance
 - b. Variations in musical genre / culture
 - c. Variations in performance venue

Methods of Instruction

Method

Discussion

Integration

Discussion is used to assist students to fully understand the principles involved in singing, and so that students can explore their understanding of these principles in a group setting and learn from others' perspectives and experiences. Discussion will include cultural, historical, and linguistic context or the vocal repertoire from a variety of traditions to be studied.

Method

Activity

Integration

Large group, small group, and in some cases in solo vocal performances are used to further the development of student vocal performance skills. In-class performances are coupled with instructor critique and advisement, focused on positive reinforcement.

Method

Lecture



Integration

Lecture is used to convey the principles of posture, breathing, tone and resonance. Lecture concepts are enhanced by audio/visual examples.

Method

Observation and Demonstration

Integration

Physical and vocal demonstrations are given by the instructor, as well as by student performance examples in a Masterclass format. Students will also listen to and evaluate recordings of singing performances from various genres and cultural traditions to demonstrate a variety of vocal and performance techniques.

Methods of Evaluation

Method

Class Performance

Integration

Class performance and participation is regularly and objectively evaluated by the instructor. Evaluation is based upon demonstrated skill improvement, such as healthy posture, correct inhalation, energized exhalation and phonation, and relaxed tone production.

Method

Exams/Tests

Integration

In-class written exams and/or quizzes are administered, covering textbook and lecture content, including singing technique (posture, breathing, phonation, resonance, etc.) and performance practice (managing performance anxiety, culturally-sensitive interpretation, etc.). Exams and quizzes will be graded by the instructor and evaluated based on accuracy as well as demonstration of creative reasoning and personal insight.

Method

Final Performance

Integration

A Final Examination is administered in two parts: 1) A vocal solo performance which objectively measures student skill development with a written evaluation by the instructor. 2) Written comments by the student critiquing the performance of several other students, providing both positive feedback and constructive criticism, implementing concepts and vocabulary from the textbook and lectures.

Assignments

Assignment Type

Writing

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Watch a set of assigned online videos of singers from various genres and traditions, such as contrasting Harolyn Blackwell's interpretation of Gershwin's "Summertime" in the original operatic style with Ela Fitzgerald singing the same song as a Jazz Standard, then a college student recital video. Evaluate their posture and breathing, commenting in writing on the effect on tone production and overall performance. Be prepared to share your observations in a class discussion as well as submitting in writing to the instructor a paragraph for each performance.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Prepare to perform a song by rehearsing with a recorded accompaniment track; video-record yourself performing at home and evaluate your posture and breathing, taking notes on your observations; discuss with the class what you observed and any changes you want to implement.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Formative or Summative

Summative

Assignment

Perform a prepared song in class, demonstrating healthy posture, breathing, and tone, for the evaluation of the instructor and your peers.

Assignment Type

Reading

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Read Chapter 5 "Practice Habits" and be prepared to answer a series of True/False and Multiple-Choice questions about the recommended system of practice, as well as a one-paragraph essay question about how you might implement three of these ideas into your practice routine.

Course Materials

Textbooks

Vaughn, Cynthia. The Singing Book. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; Fourth edition (June 1, 2024). ISBN: 978-1538180280

Berkowitz, Sol; Fontrier, Gabriel; Goldstein, Perry; Smaldone, Edward. A New Approach to Sight Singing, 7th Ed.; W.W. Norton (2024). ISBN: 978-1324071563

Ashwood, Aria. Vocal Warm-ups & Technical Exercises for Singers. Independent Publishing (2024). ISBN: 979-8320542430

Other Resources

The Royal Conservatory. Vocalises, Technique, and Musicianship Level 5-7. RCM Publishing; (2025). ISBN: 978-1-77895-015-5

Open Educational Resources

Public Domain voice music available for free at artsongcentral.com

Class Size Information

Class Size

32

Class Size Category

G - Large lab 32

Diversity and Inclusion

Course Design and Materials: Course will incorporate diverse perspectives, authors, and examples that reflect a variety of cultures, identities, and lived experiences. Instructional materials will be reviewed regularly to ensure representation, inclusivity, and alignment with equity-minded practices across disciplines.

Inclusive Learning Environment: Instructors will establish classroom norms and policies that promote respect, civil discourse, and belonging in both online and face-to-face classes. Clear expectations for communication and engagement will support a learning space where all students feel valued and heard.

Accessible Instruction: Course content will be delivered using accessible design. Materials will follow accessibility guidelines within the CMS, including captioned media, readable document formats, and multiple means of engagement to support diverse learning.

Equitable Teaching Practices: Instructors will use transparent and grading criteria, varied assessment methods, and timely feedback to promote fairness and student success. Opportunities for revision, reflection, and multiple demonstrations of learning may be incorporated when appropriate to the discipline.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogies: Instructional strategies will encourage critical thinking about diverse perspectives and systems of power relevant to the course content. Faculty will foster opportunities for students to connect course material to real-world contexts.

Ongoing Reflection and Improvement: Faculty will engage in continuous professional development related to IDEAA principles and reflect on course practices using metacognition to identify opportunities for increased equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Explain how diversity and inclusion(e.g., gender, culture/race, sexuality, etc.) is infused into the course.

This course addresses the diverse backgrounds, abilities, and cultural traditions that shape vocal study for the individual. Voice classification is discussed beyond the standard Western framework, incorporating historical and cultural variations in vocal categorization. Additionally, listening assignments feature recordings from a variety of musical traditions, fostering an appreciation for different stylistic and aesthetic values.

The course also considers how physicality, experience, and cultural background influence singing technique and performance. In performance discussions, students explore how different cultural traditions shape attitudes toward public singing and stage presence, broadening their perspective while respecting the integrity of various musical practices.

Describe how assignments, instruction, evaluation, course content, and interactions are contextualized for diverse learners promoting an equitable course.

This course is structured to be accessible and adaptable, ensuring that all students can engage with the material effectively. Instruction includes considerations for singers with varying physical abilities, offering adaptations for posture and breath support to accommodate different needs. Sensory and imagery-based teaching methods are adapted to ensure students can connect with descriptions in ways that make sense to them. Hands-on experiments, accessible digital tools, and structured self-evaluation techniques provide multiple pathways for students to engage with vocal training and track their progress.

Performance opportunities are designed to be flexible and supportive, with group singing, volunteer-based solo masterclasses, and discussions on managing performance anxiety. Evaluation methods focus on individual growth and skill development rather than rigid, one-size-fits-all criteria. By incorporating a range of teaching methods and perspectives, the course provides an equitable learning environment where students can develop their skills while respecting a diversity of musical and cultural traditions.

Interactions**Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-student interaction.**

Students will observe each other's performances and make constructive critiques, learning from each other's perspectives and experiences. Students will engage in group discussion on various topics. Students will sing together as a whole class and in small groups.

Explain how the course will incorporate instructor-to-student interaction.

The instructor will engage with students through lecture, demonstration, and leading various group exercises and singing activities in class, as well as leading discussions and answering questions on various lecture topics. The instructor will also give individual feedback on in-class performances, both verbally and in writing.

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-content interaction.

Students engage with the content through lectures, demonstrations, audio/video examples, in-class discussions. Students will view/listen to various singing performances in order to evaluate and analyze the technique used. Students will complete textbook readings and take quizzes and exams over reading and lecture content. Students will view other student performances and give written and/or verbal critique based on the concepts discussed in the lectures and reading.

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-self interaction (metacognitive).

Students will record themselves singing and write evaluations of their progress, including planned improvements.

Key: 2241