



MUS-116: BEGINNING VOICE CLASS - DICTION AND EXPRESSION

Effective Term

Fall 2026

BOT Approval Date

06/12/2025

Discipline

MUS - Music

Course Number

116

Course Title

Beginning Voice Class - Diction and Expression

Short Title

Beg Voice Class - Diction & Ex

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 diction, style, and expression. 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. Differentiate and explain phonation, articulation, pronunciation, and enunciation.
2. Compare and demonstrate the pure vowels of Italian vs. English vowel sounds, differentiating them using International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols.
3. Categorize English consonant sounds by voiced and un-voiced, manner of articulation, and place of articulation.
4. Examine the role of consonants in clarity of diction as well as emotional expression.
5. Analyze an English language song for special diction considerations that will impact understandability, vocal freedom, tone quality, and emotional expression.
6. Demonstrate progressive ability to sing in English and Italian with clear and accurate diction, performing artistically and maintaining healthy tone production and resonance.
7. Analyze the genre and style of a song in order to make informed decisions about the best performance techniques that are faithful to its specific historical and cultural tradition.
8. Evaluate various approaches and techniques for communicating in song expressively and authentically.

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 demonstrate the techniques for singing the sounds for all IPA consonant symbols typically found in English songs.
3. Students will define and use the seven basic Italian vowel sounds and their IPA symbols.

Content

Course Activity Content

- Elements of Diction
 - Articulation
 - Pronunciation
 - Enunciation
- Anatomy of the articulators
- Vowels
 - Pure vowels
 - Primary and Intermediate vowels

- c. Front, Center and Back vowels
- d. Diphthong and Triphthong
- e. Schwa
- f. Vowel modification
- g. Differences in regional dialects
- 4. Consonants
 - a. Used for understandability
 - b. Used for expressiveness
 - c. Voiced vs. Unvoiced
 - d. Stops vs. Continuants
 - e. Plosives, Fricatives, Affricatives, Laterals, Nasals, Glides
- 5. International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)
 - a. Vowels
 - b. Consonants
 - c. Diphthongs / Triphthongs
 - d. Glides
- 6. Italian Diction
 - a. Seven vowel sounds
 - b. Purity of vowel
 - c. Dental consonants
 - d. Double consonants
 - e. Flipped R
- 7. Song Interpretation
 - a. Discovering the composer's intent
 - b. Historical periods, styles, genres, including non-western musical traditions
 - c. Understanding the text
 - d. Principle of "variety within unity"
- 8. Performance Etiquette
 - a. Various settings, including cultural considerations
 - b. Working with an accompanist
 - c. Audience-centric performing
- 9. Vocal health
 - a. General vocal care
 - b. Sickness
 - c. Vocal fatigue
 - d. Demands of various vocal styles
 - e. Singing within your range and voice classification

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 effective communication and expression through singing that is culturally-sensitive to the historical context and faithful to the genre of various musical styles.

Method

Activity

Integration

In each class period the instructor will also lead students in the application of concepts through vocal exercises and learning various songs, leading to in-class performances together as a class, in small groups, and individual solos for evaluation. 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 diction, style, and expression. 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. Audio and video recordings are also used to demonstrate a variety of vocal and performance techniques from various musical cultures and traditions.

Methods of Evaluation**Method**

Class Performance

Integration

Classroom vocal performance and participation is regularly and objectively evaluated by the instructor. Evaluation is based upon demonstrated skill improvement.

Method

Exams/Tests

Integration

In-class written exams and/or quizzes are administered, covering textbook and lecture content, including all aspects of English and Italian diction, and song interpretation and communication, including historically and culturally-informed interpretation of music from various styles and traditions. Exams and quizzes will be graded by the instructor and evaluated based on accuracy as well as demonstration of creative application of concepts and personal reflection.

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**

Reading

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class



Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Song Analysis: Analyze the text of a folk song, such as "To the Sky", for meaning and interpretational options, as well as particular diction considerations. Be prepared to discuss with the class your observations and interpretational choices.

Assignment Type

Writing

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Watch a set of assigned online videos of singers from various genres and cultural traditions. For example, contrast Jessye Norman singing "Ave Maria" in a classical style with her singing of "He's Got the Whole World In His Hand" with a black gospel choir. Evaluate the effectiveness and clarity of communication, commenting in writing on the impact her diction and expression have on the overall performance. Be prepared to share your observations in 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 folk song in English or an Italian art song by rehearsing with a recorded accompaniment track; video-record yourself performing at home and evaluate your diction and expressiveness, 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 vocal technique, clear diction, and meaningful expression, for the evaluation of the instructor and your peers.



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. Edward (2017). A New Approach to Sight Singing, 7th Ed. W.W. Norton (2024). ISBN: 978-1324071563

Open Educational Resources

<https://www.internationalphoneticalphabet.org/>

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 ensures accessibility and respect for all students by addressing the diverse backgrounds, abilities, and cultural traditions that shape vocal study. Discussion of diction includes appreciation for and acceptance of various regional dialects of English. Additionally, listening assignments feature recordings from a variety of musical traditions, fostering an appreciation for different methods of communication and expression through song.

The course also accommodates individual differences in vocal training by considering how physicality, experience, and cultural background influence diction and musical interpretation. In performance discussions, students explore how different musical traditions and styles impact performance approaches, and how their own experiences influence their own interpretations, broadening their own perspective while respecting the integrity of various musical traditions and the personal experiences of others.

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. Demonstrations, accessible digital tools, and structured self-evaluation techniques provide multiple pathways for students to engage with vocal training and track their progress.

In developing expressive singing, each student is invited to contribute their unique voice and bring their personality into their interpretation of a song. Performance opportunities are designed to be flexible and supportive, with group singing, volunteer-based solo masterclasses, and discussions on best practices for performance. 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 of their diction and expressive communication, learning from each other's perspectives and experiences. Students will engage in group discussion on various topics of pronunciation and song interpretation. 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 aspects of diction and expression. 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, and in-class discussions. Students will view/listen to various singing performances in order to evaluate and analyze the diction and communication approaches 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 in expressive communication, including planned improvements.

Key: 2242