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2020

### MUS 208 Music Theory I

George Lam  
*CUNY York College*

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# MUS 208 Music Theory I

Mode of Instruction: Face-to-Face  
Wednesdays and Fridays, 11am – 10:15am  
Academic Core LL01

## Instructor Contact Info

Instructor: Dr. George Lam  
Email: glam@york.cuny.edu  
Office Location: AC 1A12C  
Office Phone: (718) 262-5365  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 11am - 1pm  
Teaching Philosophy: <https://www.gtlam.com/teaching>  
Teaching Portfolio: <https://ycmusictheory.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>

## Prerequisites

MUS 110 Fundamentals of Music Theory

## Course Description

Harmonic analysis of tonal music, with an emphasis on diatonic harmony. Topics may include counterpoint, Roman numeral analysis, lead sheet symbols, and voice leading.

## Course Narrative

### Why Music Theory?

Think about the music that you already listen to. Even though your favorite playlist might be completely different from your neighbor's, we can find patterns that are common to music across different genres (e.g. blues, hip-hop, classical, soca). For example, when your favorite artists talk about their influences, they could be referring to the musical patterns they have discovered in other artists' work that helped inspire their own songs. By investigating these patterns, we can more accurately describe our music and how it works. In MUS 208, we build upon our work in MUS 110 (Fundamentals of Music Theory) by exploring how to create a harmonic analysis of tonal music, with a focus on diatonic harmony.

### Spiral Curriculum

The music theory sequence at York College comprises three semesters: MUS 110 (Fundamentals of Music Theory), MUS 208 (Music Theory I) and MUS 218 (Music Theory II). Throughout the three-semester sequence, music theory concepts will be introduced and reinforced throughout, with MUS 208 focusing on diatonic harmony and MUS 218 on chromatic harmony. For example, in our first unit in MUS 208 you will again visit the

concept of scales, but this time from the perspective of the natural minor. As you progress through the three-semester sequence, be sure to review materials and concepts that have been introduced in a previous semester, so that you can continue to expand your skillset in analyzing music across different genres.

### OER Project and Active Learning

In MUS 208, you will not only be *taking* a music theory course, you will actually learn by *creating* a shared music theory resource that will benefit future music students! Throughout the semester, you will create four compositions for the **Open Harmonic Dictionary**, an “OER” (Open Educational Resource) that will be available for public access via a dedicated website hosted on the CUNY Academic Commons. All of your contributions will be shared in the OHD via a Creative Commons license. We will review what this means in Week 1.

Since the Open Harmonic Dictionary will be an open resource for everyone, your work will not only benefit future York College music students, it will also help all musicians everywhere looking to better understand a music theory concept by looking at related musical examples. Therefore, your work in this class will not only be “just an assignment”, it will also help further future musicians’ understanding of music!

## Learning Objectives

As part of the Music BA curriculum at York College, this course helps music majors achieve the following program goal:

**Program Goal 2:** Analyze music, both aurally and visually, in order to recognize, interpret, and create musical structures across different genres.

To achieve this, MUS 208 introduces and reinforces the following student learning outcomes related to Program Goal 2:

- Analyze harmonic function in both Western classical and popular music traditions.
- Apply the principles of harmonic function by composing music that successfully demonstrate diatonic and chromatic musical structures.

## Course Objectives

We will build towards the outcomes above by focusing on the following seven course objectives:

- Identify and compose music in both simple and compound meters;
- Identify and compose music that uses a natural minor scale;
- Identify and compose music that uses a common chord progression found in pop/rock music;
- Illustrate the function of chords by using Roman numeral analysis;

- Identify form in pop/rock music with section labels including intro, verse, pre-chorus, chorus, and bridge;
- Compose examples of musical form that demonstrate an understanding of sections within a pop/rock song; and
- Analyze the relationship between form and lyrical content.

## Ancillary Course Objectives

In addition to the learning objectives above, at the successful completion of your submissions to the Open Harmonic Dictionary, you will be able to:

- Code and compose original music using Trinket.io;
- Provide constructive feedback to your classmates' compositions based on a given rubric; and
- Create and manage your contributor profile on CUNY Academic Commons.

## Required Learning Materials

- Regular access to the internet. This course is designed such that it will make use of OER (Open Educational Resources) materials that are available on the internet, as well as eBooks and learning resources (such as LinkedIn Learning) that are available to York College students. As such, you will need regular access to the internet in order to complete readings and other activities, preferably with a desktop or tablet computer.
- Regular access to your YorkMail email address and the Blackboard course site.
- Access to a piano or electric keyboard for practicing; or, alternatively, a virtual piano available on the internet.

## Course Readings, Music, and Videos

All music, reading and videos for this course are freely accessible to York College students, either as "OER" (Open Education Resources) or as an e-resource available through the York College library. To access e-resources such as an e-book or a video in LinkedIn Learning, you'll need to activate your barcode with the library, and to have access to your YorkMail email address.

- Open Music Theory:
  - [Meter](#)
  - [Scales](#)
  - [Form Terminology](#)
  - [Harmonic Functions](#)
  - [Harmony in Pop/Rock Music](#)
  - [Analyzing Poetry](#)
  - [Using Trinket](#)
- LinkedIn Learning (available to York College students for free):
  - [Music Theory for Songwriters: Rhythm](#)
  - [Music Theory for Songwriters: The Fundamentals](#)

- HookTheory “Theory Tabs”:
  - [Stevie Wonder, \*Superstition\*](#)
  - [Kelly Clarkson, \*Breakaway\*](#)
  - [Pharell Williams, \*Happy\*](#)
  - [Radiohead, \*Videotape\*](#)
  - [Bill Withers, \*Ain’t No Sunshine When She’s Gone\*](#)
  - [Ed Sheeran, \*Thinking Out Loud\*](#)
  - [Beyoncé, \*If I Were A Boy\*](#)
  - [Beatles, \*Yesterday\*](#)
  - [Alicia Keys, \*If I Ain’t Got You\*](#)
  - [Beatles, \*Let It Be\*](#)
  - [Whitney Houston, \*I Wanna Dance With Somebody\*](#)
  - [Taylor Swift, \*Shake It Off\*](#)
  - [Sammi Cheng, 我們都是這樣長大的 \(\*We Grew This Way\*\)](#)
- YouTube:
  - [Vox EarWorm: The secret rhythm behind Radiohead’s \*Videotape\*](#)
  - [Steve Vai, \*Creamsicle Sunset\*](#)
  - [Vox EarWorm: Why we really really really like repetition in music](#)
- E-Books (available to York College students for free):
  - [MacKay, Jennifer. \*The Art of Songwriting\*, Greenhaven Publishing LLC, 2013. ProQuest Ebook Central.](#)
  - [Sarath, Ed. \*Music Theory Through Improvisation : A New Approach to Musicianship Training\*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2009. ProQuest Ebook Central.](#)
- Websites:
  - [Asaf, P., 2018. \*When Context Dictates “Breaking The Rules”\*. \[online\] Top40 Theory. Available at: <<https://www.top40theory.com/blog/category/pop-formula>> \[Accessed 9 June 2020\].](#)

## Course Requirements and Grading Criteria

Your performance in MUS 208 will be evaluated with the following assignments:

- **Online Quizzes and Tests (10%):** Quizzes and Tests to be completed via Blackboard; you will have unlimited attempts at these quizzes until the final day of the semester, and only the highest grade will be recorded.
- **Homework Assignments (10%):** Regular take-home assignments, including worksheets and/or short written assignments.
- **In-Class Unit Tests (25%):** There will be four unit tests; these will be completed in-person during our class meeting time.
- **Open Harmonic Dictionary (25%):** You will compose and revise four short pieces that demonstrate a specific harmonic concept; these will be peer-reviewed and become part of an open resource for future music theory students. Please see more information below regarding this project.
- **Midterm Exam (10%):** takes place during midterm evaluation period.
- **Final Exam (20%):** takes place during final exam week.

## Course Schedule

(subject to adjustment)

Week 1	<b>Unit 1: Meter and Pitch</b>  Session 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduction to melody, harmony, and rhythm.</li><li>• Discussion: What Makes A Song So Catchy?</li><li>• Syllabus and OER active learning overview</li></ul> Session 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Before class:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Read MUS 208 Syllabus</li><li>○ Complete Online Quiz 0: All about MUS 208</li><li>○ Watch LIL (LinkedIn Learning): <a href="#">Music Theory for Songwriters: Rhythm</a></li></ul></li><li>• Meter introduction: simple vs compound, note divisions</li><li>• Beyond 4/4: 2/2, 2/4 and 3/4; 6/8, 9/8 and 12/8</li><li>• Analysis: <a href="#">Kelly Clarkson, Breakaway</a></li></ul>
Week 2	Session 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Before class:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Read OMT (Open Music Theory): <a href="#">Meter</a></li><li>○ Watch <a href="#">Vox EarWorm: The secret rhythm behind Radiohead's Videotape</a></li><li>○ Complete Open Harmonic Dictionary (OHD) Entry 1: Strong Beats and Weak Beats</li><li>○ Complete Online Quiz 1: Meter, Strong / Weak Beats</li></ul></li><li>• Analysis, <a href="#">Radiohead, Videotape</a></li><li>• Review OHD Entry 1 submissions</li></ul> Session 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Before class:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Complete Peer Review for OHD Entry 1 submissions</li><li>○ Listen to Bill Withers, <i>Ain't No Sunshine When She's Gone</i></li></ul></li><li>• Analysis: <a href="#">Bill Withers, Ain't No Sunshine When She's Gone</a></li><li>• All about Natural Minor and Relative Major/Minor</li></ul>
Week 3	Session 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Before class:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Read OMT: <a href="#">Scales</a></li><li>○ Complete Online Quiz 2: Natural Minor Scale and Relative Minors</li></ul></li><li>• Group Analysis on songs nominated by the class</li><li>• Review for Unit 1 Test</li></ul>

	<p>Session 6:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review for Unit 1 Test</li> <li>○ Complete Online: Unit 1 Test Review</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Unit 1 Test</li> </ul>
Week 4	<p><b>Unit 2: Melody and Harmony</b></p> <p>Session 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Read Sarath, selections from <a href="#">Chapter 5 on Inversions</a></li> <li>○ Read OMT: <a href="#">Introduction to Harmonic Functions</a></li> <li>○ Complete Online Quiz 3: Roman numerals review</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Orientation on Using Trinket to Compose Short Pieces</a></li> </ul> <p>Session 8:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Read OMT: <a href="#">Harmonic Functions</a>, <a href="#">Harmony in Pop/Rock Music</a></li> <li>○ Complete Online Quiz 4: Inversions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group analysis: <a href="#">Steve Vai, Creamsicle Sunset</a>; <a href="#">Ed Sheeran, Thinking Out Loud</a></li> </ul>
Week 5	<p>Session 9:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Watch LIL: <a href="#">Music Theory for Songwriters: The Fundamentals: 2. Triads and Chord Progressions</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group analysis: authentic and plagal cadences; <a href="#">Bebe Rexha, Meant To Be (feat. Florida Georgia Line)</a></li> </ul> <p>Session 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Read <a href="#">“When Context Dictates ‘Breaking The Rules’”</a></li> <li>○ Complete OHD Entry 2: Harmonic and Melodic Minor</li> <li>○ Online Quiz 5: Cadences</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review OHD Entry 2 Submissions</li> </ul>
Week 6	<p>Session 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete OHD 2 Entry 2 peer reviews</li> <li>○ Complete online: Unit 2 Test Review</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group analysis: <a href="#">Beatles, Yesterday</a>; <a href="#">Alicia Keys, If I Ain’t Got You</a></li> </ul> <p>Session 12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review for Unit 2 Test</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit 2 Test (Melody and Harmony)</li> </ul>
Week 7	<p>Session 13:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Session for Midterm Exam</li> </ul> <p>Session 14:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Midterm Exam</li> </ul>
Week 8	<p><b>Unit 3: Anatomy of a Song</b></p> <p>Session 15:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Watch LIL: <a href="#">Music Theory for Songwriters: The Fundamentals: 4. Song Forms</a></li> <li>○ Complete Online Quiz 6: Verse and Chorus</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group analysis of <a href="#">Beatles, Let It Be</a></li> </ul> <p>Session 16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Submit OHD Entry 3: Authentic / Plagal Cadences</li> <li>○ Read OMT: <a href="#">Form in Pop/Rock Music</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group analysis of <a href="#">Taylor Swift, Shake It Off</a></li> </ul>
Week 9	<p>Session 17:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete peer review of OHD Entry 3 submissions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group analysis of <a href="#">Kelly Clarkson, Breakaway</a> (from the perspective of harmony and form)</li> </ul> <p>Session 18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Read OMT: <a href="#">Form Terminology</a></li> <li>○ Complete Online Quiz 7: Hook and Refrain</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group analysis of songs nominated by the class, focusing on verse/chorus form and AABA form.</li> </ul>
Week 10	<p>Session 19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete online: Unit 3 Test Review</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review for Unit 3 Test</li> </ul> <p>Session 20:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review for Unit 3 Test</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Unit 3 Test</li> </ul>



Week 11	<p><b>Unit 4: Form and Lyrics</b></p> <p>Session 21:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Read MacKay <a href="#">Chapter 4: All In The Words</a></li> <li>○ Watch: <a href="#">Vox EarWorm: Why we really really really like repetition in music</a></li> <li>○ Complete Online Quiz 8: Lyrics</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group analysis: Verse / Chorus, <a href="#">Stevie Wonder, Superstition</a></li> </ul> <p>Session 22:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Submit OHD Entry 4: Sections and Form</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group analysis: AABA</li> </ul>
Week 12	<p>Session 23:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Read OMT: <a href="#">Analyzing Poetry</a></li> <li>○ Complete peer review of OHD Entry 4 submissions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review OHD Entry 4 submissions</li> </ul> <p>Session 24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review LIL: <a href="#">Music Theory for Songwriters: The Fundamentals: 4. Song Forms</a> (focus on hooks and refrains)</li> <li>○ Complete Online Quiz 9: Form</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Group analysis on songs nominated by the class</li> </ul>
Week 13	<p>Session 25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Complete online: Unit 4 Test Review</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review for Unit 4 Test</li> </ul> <p>Session 26:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unit 4 Test (Form and Lyrics)</li> </ul>
Week 14	<p>Session 27:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusions: What makes a song so catchy?</li> </ul> <p>Session 28:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review for Final Exam</li> </ul>

## Course Policies



### Come to class on time

Our class starts at 11am. Please arrive early so that we may start on time.



### Food and Drink

No food or drink is allowed in LL01. Finish your food and drinks before coming to class.



### Email Policy

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact me by email. I usually respond within 24 hours.



### Blackboard

It is your responsibility to regularly check the course website on Blackboard for information, announcements, assignment guidelines and posted resources. This course uses Blackboard extensively. Homework assignments are generally submitted electronically via Blackboard.

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## Academic Integrity

Deliberately submitting someone else's work as your own is a serious offense that will result in an F for the course. If you are ever uncertain about whether or not using some piece of information would be plagiarizing, please contact me and I can help you figure that out. For more information about plagiarism, see "Rules, Regulations and Policies: Definitions and Examples of Academic Dishonesty" in the York College Bulletin.

## Succeeding in Music Theory

Successful students in Music Theory exhibit two key characteristics: 1) they ask questions about the concepts that they don't understand and 2) they regularly practice new concepts and analyze their own performance. Come ready to work, and reach out to me and your classmates when you need more information.

## Students with disabilities

CUNY York College is committed to providing access to programs and services for qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and require accommodations to participate and complete requirements for this class, contact the STAR Program (Specialized Testing & Academic Resources), services for students with disabilities (AC-1GO2, 718-262-2191/3732) for verification of eligibility and determination of specific accommodations. If you need the course materials to be in a different format, please let me know and we can work together to find a better solution.

## Example Assignment for Open Harmonic Dictionary

### Entry 1: Strong Beats and Weak Beats

For this entry, you will compose two short examples that demonstrate the difference between *simple meter* and *compound meter*, in the way that each meter highlights strong and weak beats differently.

Here are the steps to complete this assignment:

1. Review the assigned reading on meter in Open Music Theory.
2. Choose a short poem excerpt from a poem in [Public Domain Poetry](#); your excerpt should include between 20 and 30 syllables.
3. Analyze the poem:
  - a. Separate each word into syllables by separating each syllable with a hyphen, like this: “se-pa-rat-ing each syl-la-ble with a hy-phen...”
  - b. Using a [dictionary](#), underline all stressed syllables in your poem excerpt. In the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) version of the word, the stressed syllable will be preceded by a single quotation mark ( ' ).
4. Compose two versions of a rhythmic setting for the excerpt:
  - a. The first setting should use either an example of simple triple or simple quadruple meter.
  - b. The second setting should use an example of compound meter.
  - c. Be sure to only place the stressed syllables on strong beats according to the meter.
5. Write out your rhythmic setting by using the provided manuscript paper.
6. Using [Trinket](#), code each setting and play it back on your computer; make adjustments as necessary.
7. Share a URL of your Trinkets on Blackboard (e.g. <https://trinket.io/music/c84ff09c8a>)

Next, as a class, we will review all submitted composition examples, as well as tagging each example with the relevant tags to help future users search for examples. You will have a chance to complete any necessary revisions, and your new Trinkets will then be published on the CUNY Open Music Theory website (<https://ycmusictheory.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>), so that users can see and listen to examples of music related to a specific concept.

All submitted examples will be shared with a Creative Commons license. A CC license allows users to copy, share, and build upon the work. In return, you will also have the chance to similarly copy, share and remix other submissions that are shared with a CC license. [Please take a look at Creative Commons](#) for more information about the types of license that we will consider as a class for this project.