

AP® Music Theory

Syllabus

Course Overview

AP® Music Theory is a rigorous course that expands upon the concepts and skills learned in the Introduction to Music Theory Course, and it is designed for students who need it for career study as well as those who desire it for enrichment. [C15]

C-15 The course includes, but is not limited to, study of a wide variety of vocal and instrumental music from the standard Western tonal repertoires.

Course Objectives

This course is designed to develop musical skills that will lead to a thorough understanding of music composition and music theory. Students are prepared to take the AP Music Theory Exam when they have completed the course. Students planning to major in music in college may be able to enroll in an advanced music theory course, depending on individual colleges' AP policies.

Course Content

1. Review of music fundamentals, including: scales, key signatures, circle-of-fifths, intervals, triads, and inversions
2. Daily ear training, including rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic dictation
3. Weekly sight singing using solfege for pitches
4. The study of modes
5. The study of figured bass
6. The study of two-part counterpoint
7. The study of four-part harmony
8. The study of seventh chords
9. The study of secondary-dominant functions
10. The study of musical form
11. The study of common compositional techniques

The objectives below have been adapted from the Expanded Course Specifications posted on the AP Music Theory Home Page on AP Central®.

Expanded Course Objectives

1. Identify and notate pitch in four clefs: treble, bass, alto, and tenor.
2. Notate, hear, and identify simple and compound meters.
3. Notate and identify all major and minor key signatures.
4. Notate, hear, and identify the following scales: chromatic, major, and the three minor forms.
5. Name and recognize scale degree terms, for example: tonic, supertonic, mediant, subdominant, dominant, submediant, subtonic, leading tone.
6. Notate, hear, and transpose the following modes: Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, and Mixolydian.
7. Notate, hear, and identify whole-tone and pentatonic scales.
8. Notate, hear, and identify all major, minor, diminished, and augmented intervals inclusive of an octave.
9. Transpose a melodic line to or from concert pitch for any common band or orchestral instrument.
10. Notate, hear, and identify triads, including inversions.
11. Notate, hear, and identify authentic, plagal, half, and deceptive cadences in major and minor keys.
12. Detect pitch and rhythm errors in written music from given aural excerpts.
13. Notate a melody from dictation, 6 to 12 bars, in a major key, mostly diatonic pitches, simple or compound time, three to four repetitions.
14. Notate melody from dictation, 6 to 12 bars, in a minor key, chromatic alteration from harmonic/melodic scales, simple or compound time, three to four repetitions.
15. Sight-sing a melody, 4 to 8 bars long, major or minor key, duple or triple meter, simple or compound time, using solfege.
16. Notate and analyze simple 2-bar counterpoint in Sixteenth- and/or Eighteenth-Century styles.
17. Realize a figured bass according to the rules of Eighteenth-century chorale style, major or minor key, using any or all of the following devices: diatonic triads, seventh chords, inversions, nonharmonic tones, and secondary-dominant and dominant seventh chords. [C3]
18. Analyze a four-part chorale style piece using Roman and Arabic numerals to represent chords and their inversions.

C3—The course progresses to include more sophisticated and creative tasks: realization of a figured bass.

19. Notate, hear, and identify the following nonharmonic tones: passing tone (accented and unaccented), neighboring tone, anticipation, suspension, retardation, appoggiatura, escape tone, changing tone (cambiata), and pedal tone.

20. Notate the soprano and bass pitches and the Roman and Arabic numeral analysis of a harmonic dictation, eighteenth-century chorale style, seventh chords, secondary dominants, 4 to 8 bars in length, major or minor key, three to four repetitions.

21. Compose a melody or expand a motive with or without text, 6 to 12 bars long, given specific directions about key, mode, phrasing, rhythm, and harmonic language. Harmonize a 4- to 12-bar melody by writing a bass line, chords and/or chord symbols, given specific directions about key, mode, phrasing, rhythmic and harmonic language. [C9, C13]

C9—This course also teaches: phrase structure.

22. Define and identify common tempo and expression markings.

23. Identify aurally and/or visually the following: modulation, transposition, melodic and harmonic rhythm, sequence, imitation, ostinato, augmentation, diminution, inversion, retrograde, and fragmentation.

24. Recognize standard musical algorithms, i.e., standard melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic idioms that occur in music.

Textbooks

Kostka, Stefan, and Dorothy Payne. *Tonal Harmony with an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music*. 6th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008.

Ottman, Robert, and Nancy Rogers. *Music for Sight Singing*. 7th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2007.

Hall, Anne. *Studying Rhythm*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2005.

Ricci Adams' Music Theory website: www.musictheory.net

Throughout the Kostka–Payne textbook, basic music theory elements such as Roman numerals and functional harmonic progressions are addressed in the context of a variety of Western art music. These elements are addressed in classroom instruction in conjunction with the utilization of the textbook. Furthermore, elements of twentieth-century music are addressed in classroom instruction in conjunction with the utilization of Chapter 28 of the textbook. [C4, C5, C6, C7]

C6—The course includes the following scales: major, minor, modal, pentatonic, and whole tone.

C7—The course covers the following concepts or procedures based in common-practice tonality: functional triadic harmony in traditional four-voice texture, including non-harmonic tones, seventh chords, and secondary dominants.

Course Planner

This schedule is only approximate, as classes may move slower or faster from one year to another. Written homework and reading assignments are given at each class meeting [C13]. Students are also assigned specific exercises on the Kostka-Payne CD and www.musictheory.net (see Teacher Resources below) to drill ear training outside of class. In general, I try to devote about one third of each class meeting to ear training—sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on the amount of new material discussed during class.

C13-Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: written exercises.

Course Planner

Note: Part references are to the Ottman-Rogers textbook.

Chapter references are to the Kostka-Payne textbook.

First Nine Weeks

Week 1 – Chapter 1

Review of basic pitch notation: the staff and its evolution, clefs, ledger lines, grand staff, octave designation, half steps and whole steps, intervals, chromatic alterations, enharmonic equivalents, and accidentals [C1]

Part 1

Melody: Diatonic intervals; Rhythm: division of the beat

C1-This course enables students to master the rudiments and terminology of music: notational skills, intervals, scales, keys, chorus, meter, and rhythm.

Sight singing in Major keys; treble clef; bass clef; other time signatures [C11, C12]

Melodic dictation: major; simple duple meter; treble clef

C11-Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: listening (discrete intervals, scales, etc.; dictations; excerpts from literature).

Week 2 – Chapter 2

Review of meter and rhythm, the proportional system, beat and tempo, accent, meter and measure, meter signatures, simple meters, compound meters, asymmetric meter, conflict of rhythm and meter, borrowed divisions, syncopation, cross rhythms, hemiola, dots, ties, rests, dynamic and articulation markings.

Part 2

Major keys, treble clef, intervals of the third, fourth, fifth, and octave from the tonic triad; the quarter note as the beat unit; undotted notes

Sight singing in major keys; treble clef; bass clef; the half note and eighth note as beat units [C12]

Melodic dictation: major key; simple triple meter; bass clef

Harmonic dictation: bass voice

C12-Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: sight singing.

Week 3 – Chapter 1

C6-The course includes the following scales: major, minor, modal, pentatonic, and whole tone.

Review of major scales/circle-of-fifths/key signatures: the chromatic scale, the whole-tone scale, the major scale, pentatonic scale, transposition, tonality, key signatures, the placements of sharps and flats, the outer circle-of-fifths, and modal, whole-tone, and pentatonic scales [C6]

Part 3

Intervals from the tonic triad; compound time (meter); the beat and its division into three parts

Sight singing: the dotted half note and dotted eighth notes as beat-note values; bass clef

Melodic dictation: major key; simple quadruple meter; treble clef

Harmonic dictation: bass voice

Week 4 – Chapter 1

Review of minor scales/circle-of-fifths/key signatures: the inner circle-of-fifths, relative major and minor scales, the natural minor scale, the harmonic minor scale, the melodic minor scale, the parallel minor keys

Part 4

Sight singing: minor keys; intervals from the tonic triad; simple and compound time

Melodic dictation: major keys, diatonic pitches; simple triple meter, bass clef

Harmonic dictation: outer voices

Week 5 – Chapter 1

Review of intervals; numeric values of intervals, quality of intervals (major, minor, diminished, augmented), the intervals of the major scale, alteration of interval quality, enharmonic intervals, inversions of intervals, simple vs. compound intervals, diatonic vs. chromatic intervals

Part 5

Intervals from the dominant triad; major and minor keys; simple and compound time

Melodic dictation: major keys, diatonic pitches, melodies with skips using scale degrees 1, 3, and 5 (do, mi, and so).

Week 6 – Chapter 3

Review of triads/seventh chords; building and identifying triads (major triads, minor triads, diminished triads, augmented triads), building and identifying seventh chords (major seventh chords, minor seventh chords, diminished seventh chords, augmented seventh chords) [C7]

Part 5

Intervals from the dominant triad: major and minor keys; simple and compound time

Melodic dictation: major keys, diatonic pitches, melodies with skips using scale degrees 1, 3, and 5 (do, mi, and so)

Harmonic dictation: outer voices

Week 7 – Chapter 3

Chord inversions; identifying and building triadic inversions (root position, first inversion, second inversion), identifying and building inversions of the seventh chord (root position, first inversion, second inversion, third inversion)

Part 5

Intervals from the dominant triad: major and minor keys; simple and compound time

Melodic dictation: major keys, diatonic pitches, melodies with skips using scale degrees 1, 3, and 5 (do, mi, and so).

Harmonic dictation: outer voices

Week 8 – Chapter 3

Chord symbols and figured bass: using traditional Eighteenth-Century nomenclature to identify and analyze chords; realization of Roman numeral progressions [C4]

Part 6

Sight singing in alto and tenor clef; major and minor keys; intervals from the tonic triad and dominant triad; simple and compound time

Melodic dictation: major keys, diatonic pitches, melodies with skips using scale degrees 1, 3, and 5 (do, mi, so), add cadential skips from scale degrees 5-1

Harmonic dictation: outer voices

C7-The course covers the following concepts of procedures based in common-practice tonality functional triadic harmony in traditional four-voice texture, including non-harmonic tones, seventh chords, and secondary dominants.

C4-The course progresses to include more sophisticated and creative tasks; realization of a Roman numeral progression.

Week 9 – Chapter 4

Diatonic triad functions in major and minor keys; diatonic primary and secondary chords in a major key, diatonic and chromatically altered primary and secondary chords in a minor key (based on form of scale) [C7]

Part 6

Sight singing in alto and tenor clef; major and minor keys; intervals from the tonic triad and dominant triad; simple and compound time

Melodic dictation: major key, diatonic pitches, melodies with skips using scale degrees 1, 3, and 5 (do, mi, so), add cadential skips from scale degrees 5-1

Harmonic dictation: outer voices

Second Nine Weeks

Week 1 – Chapters 5, 7

Functional tonal principles: tonality, chordal hierarchy, progression vs. regression, harmonic motion, harmonic rhythm, variants in a minor key, idiomatic chord substitutions (vii/V, IV/ii) [C7]

Part 6

Sight singing in alto and tenor clef; major and minor keys; intervals from the tonic triad and dominant triad; simple and compound time

Melodic dictation: major key, diatonic pitches, melodies with skips using scale degrees 1, 3, and 5 (do, mi, so), add cadential skips from scale degrees 5-1

Week 2 – Chapters 7, 10

Cadences: authentic and perfect authentic cadence, plagal cadence, half cadence, deceptive cadence

Part 7

Melodic Dictation/Sight singing: Further use of diatonic intervals; use of simple and compound time: major key, melodies with skips, add skips to scale degree 6 [C11]

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, add authentic, plagal cadences

Week 3 – Chapter 11

Embellishing/nonharmonic tones: passing tone, neighboring tone, changing tone, anticipation, suspension, retardation, simultaneous embellishing tones, pedal point; use of nonharmonic tones in harmonic analysis [C8]

Part 7

Melodic Dictation/Sight-singing: Further use of diatonic intervals; use of simple and compound time: major key, melodies with skips, add skips to scale degree 6

Harmonic Dictation: outer voices, add half and deceptive cadences

C7-The course covers the following concepts of procedures based in common-practice tonality functional triadic harmony in traditional four-voice texture, including non-harmonic tones, seventh chords, and secondary dominants.

C11-Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: listening (discrete intervals, scales, etc.; dictations; excerpts from literature).

C8- The course covers the following concepts or procedures based in common-practice tonality: Modulations to closely related keys.

Week 4 – Chapter 8

Melodic principles in four-part writing/voicing chords characteristics of the individual line's range, tessitura, spacing, movement, doubling and resolution of tendency tones [C9]

C9-The course also teaches: phrase structure.

Part 7

Melodic Dictation/Sight singing: Further use of diatonic intervals; use of simple and compound time: major key, melodies with skips, add skips to scale degree 4

Harmonic dictation: outer voices and primary triads (major and minor)

Week 5 – Chapters 6, 7

Principles in chord connection: contrary motion, oblique motion, similar motion, parallel motion

Melodic dictation/sight singing: major key, diatonic pitches, melodies with skips to any scale degree

Harmonic dictation: outer voices primary and secondary triads (major and minor)

Week 6 – Chapters 3, 6

Connecting root position triads: triads in a fifths relationship, triads in a thirds relationship, triads in a seconds relationship, realization of figured bass

Melodic dictation/sight singing: major key, diatonic pitches, melodies with skips to any scale degree

Harmonic dictation: out voices, primary and secondary triads (major and minor)

Week 7 – Chapter 8

Voicing triads in first inversion: frequency, spacing, doubling of first inversion chords, connecting root position and first inversion triads, successive first inversion triad

Melodic dictation/sight singing: major key, diatonic pitches, melodies with skips to any scale degree

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, primary and secondary triads (major and minor) [C11]

C11-Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises: listening (discrete intervals, scales, etc.; dictations; excerpts from literature).

Week 8 – Chapter 12

Part writing using nonchord tones: voicing suspensions and retardations, stylistic use of nonchord tones

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, primary and secondary triads (major and minor)

Week 9

Review for Exam

Chapter summaries from the Kostka-Payne textbook

Melodic dictation/sight singing: major key, diatonic pitches, melodies with skips to any scale degree

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, primary and secondary triads (major and minor)

Semester One Exam

Third Nine Weeks

Week 1 – Chapter 9

Triads in the second inversion: the cadential six-four chord, the passing six-four chord, the pedal six-four chord, the arpeggiated six-four chord

Part 4, section 2

Melodic dictation/sight singing: major key, chromatic pitches based on natural minor

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, primary and secondary triads (major and minor)

Week 2 – Chapters 8, 9

Connecting triads in all positions

Part 4, section 2

Melodic dictation/sight singing: major key, chromatic pitches based on natural minor

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, primary and secondary triads (major and minor)

Week 3 – Chapters 8, 9

Harmonizing a melody and part writing for SATB voices: writing with inversions, writing with nonchord tones, writing with inner voices [C2]

Part 4, section 3

Melodic dictation/sight singing: major key, chromatic pitches based on natural minor

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, primary and secondary triads (major and minor)

C2-The course progresses to include more sophisticated and creative tasks: writing a bass line for a given melody or harmonization of a given melody in four parts.

Week 4 – Chapter 10

Phrase structure, motives, melodic form

Part 7

Melodic dictation/sight singing: major key, chromatic pitches based on harmonic minor

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, primary and secondary triads, seventh chords

Week 5 – Chapter 13

The dominant seventh chord: part writing with the V^7 chord, part writing with the inversions of the V^7 chord, proper resolutions of tendency tones in the V^7 chord

Part 8

Melodic dictation/sight singing: major key, chromatic pitches based on harmonic minor; intervals from the dominant seventh chord; other diatonic intervals of the seventh; simple and compound time [C12]

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, primary and secondary triads, seventh chords

C12 -Musical skills are developed through the following types of musical exercises; sight singing.

Week 6 – Chapter 14

The leading-tone seventh chord: part writing with the $vii^{\circ 7}$ chord, part writing with inversions of the $vii^{\circ 7}$ chord, proper resolution of tendency tones in the $vii^{\circ 7}$ chord

Part 8

Melodic dictation/sight singing: major key, chromatic pitches based on harmonic minor; intervals from the dominant seventh chord; other diatonic intervals of the seventh; simple and compound time

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, primary and secondary triads, seventh chords

Week 7 – Chapter 15

Harmonizing with other seventh chords: common diatonic seventh chords in major keys, common diatonic seventh chords in a minor key (based on scale), voice leading with non-dominant seventh chords, predominant seventh chords, sequences using seventh chords, chain suspensions using seventh chords

Part 8

Melodic dictation/sight singing: major key, chromatic pitches based on harmonic minor; intervals from the dominant seventh chord; other diatonic intervals of the seventh; simple and compound time

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, primary and secondary triads, seventh chords

Week 8 – Chapter 16

Secondary dominant chords: the V/V, V/iii, V/ii, V/vi chords and the V⁷/V, V⁷/iii, V⁷/ii, V⁷/vi chords

Part 11, sections 1 and 2

Melodic dictation/sight singing: diatonic intervals except the seventh and tritone; the dominant seventh chord; intervals of the seventh and tritone

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, all triads, seventh chords, secondary dominants

Week 9 – Chapters 16, 17

Secondary leading tone chords: the vii^o/V, vii^o/iii, vii^o/ii, vii^o/vi chords and the vii^{o7}/V, vii^{o7}/iii, vii^{o7}/ii, vii^{o7}/vi chords

Melodic dictation/sight singing: major key, chromatic pitches based on melodic minor; intervals from the dominant seventh chord; other diatonic intervals of the seventh; simple and compound time

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, all triads, seventh chords, secondary dominants

Fourth Nine Weeks

Week 1 – Chapter 17

Identifying secondary dominants in analysis of music, part writing with secondary dominants, voice leading with secondary dominants [C5]

Part 12

Melodic dictation/sight singing: Chromatic nonharmonic tones; augmented and diminished intervals whose second tone resolves to a tonic triad; the secondary dominant chord, V/V or V⁷/V; modulation from a major key to its dominant key

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, all triads, seventh chords, secondary dominants

Week 2 – Chapter 17

More harmonization and analysis with use of secondary dominant chords

Part 13

Melodic dictation/sight singing: Chromaticism: modulation to closely related keys; additional secondary dominant harmonies [C8]

Harmonic dictation: outer voices, all triads, seventh chords, secondary dominants

Week 3 – Chapters 20 and 21

Small forms; simple binary, ternary form, and theme and variations [C10]

C5-The course progresses to include more sophisticated and creative tasks: analysis of repertoire, including analysis of motivic treatment and harmonic analysis.

C8- The course covers the following concepts or procedures based in common-practice tonality: Modulations to closely related keys.

Weeks 4-7

Review for AP Music Theory Exam

Take practice free-response questions

Review all chapter summaries from the Kostka-Payne text

Melodic and harmonic dictation: simple and compound time, major and minor keys

Sight singing: simple and compound time, major and minor keys

Week 8

Introduce final composition guidelines and begin working on final compositional projects

Week 9

Work on final compositional projects

Present final compositional projects

Semester Two Exam

Teaching Strategies

Entrance into the AP Music Theory Course requires completion of a .5 semester Introduction to Music Theory course. Those students who have signed up to take the AP Music Theory course are given a moderate amount of summer work to keep their fundamental skills up to date.

Vocabulary is emphasized because learning music theory terminology is critical to achieving success on the AP Exam. Likewise, it is crucial that the students understand standard music theory protocol, both in analysis and composition.

Composition is used as a means of practical application of learned strategies and techniques.

The students work individually as well as in groups to develop their skills. The benefits of another “set of eyes” on a composition or assignment are quite valuable as a means of proofreading; another person’s opinion also enhances students’ abilities to grow musically.

The students have listening assignments for which they write reports or analyses. Listening is critical to hear the progression of music from the medieval through the 20th and 21st Centuries, as well as drilling aural skills.

Technology is used as a supplement to the course. Ricci Adams' www.musictheory.net has become a great asset in the Introduction course, and continues to be so in the AP course as a refresher of basic skills. As more programs become available through the Promethean® software, that technology will be used as well.

Two times during the year, the students use released practice AP Exams to practice their skills and become familiarized with the AP Exam format.

Student Evaluation

Daily assignments	20 percent
Homework (listening descriptions, analyses, reports)	10 percent
Sight singing	10 percent
Dictation	10 percent
Listening	10 percent
Unit tests/quizzes	20 percent
Composition	20 percent