

**AP Music Theory**  
**Lake Mary High School, Mike Mitchell Instructor**  
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Syllabus

**Course Overview:**

In this course, students will explore the following topics:

- *Ear-training and sight-singing*
- *Philosophy and aesthetics of music*
- *Chord construction and chord progression analysis*
- *Score study and analysis*
- *Music composition and arranging*

This AP Music Theory course is designed to develop a student's ability to recognize, understand, and describe the basic materials and processes of music that are heard or presented in a score. The achievement of this goal may be best promoted by integrated approaches to the student's development of: aural skills through listening exercises, sight-singing skills through performance exercises, written skills through written exercises, compositional skills through creative exercises and analytical skills through analytical exercises.

Though this AP Music Theory class we will focus on the curriculum described in the *AP Music Theory Course Description*, students will also be exposed to a wide variety of content not covered on the AP Music Theory Exam. The study of theoretical principles in this course draws heavily from the Common Practice period (1600-1750) with additional music of other stylistic periods added as appropriate. The extensive material explored in this class will prepare students for both continued study of music in higher education and a rich understanding of how music can be performed, created, and enjoyed.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Notate pitch and rhythm in accordance with standard notation practices.
- Read melodies in treble, bass, and movable C clefs.
- Mastery of all keys; major and minor, and modes.
- Write, sing, and play major scales and all three forms of minor scales.
- Recognize by ear and by sight all intervals within an octave.
- Use the basic rules that govern music composition.
- Use of pentatonic, whole-tone scales.
- Use and recognition of hybrid scales.
- Harmonize a melody with appropriate chords using proper voice leading.
- Analyze the chords of a musical composition by number and letter name.
- Notate chords using traditional notation and with chord symbols.
- Construct compositions in four-part texture.
- Transpose a composition from one key to another.

- Express musical ideas by composing and arranging.
- Understand and recognize basic musical forms: ternary, binary, rondo, etc.
- Write simple rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic dictation.

**Textbook:**

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

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

These elements are addressed in classroom instruction in conjunction with the utilization of the textbook. The instructor will supplement the material presented in the textbook with a variety of handouts covering a diversity of topics.

**Classroom Behavior Expectations:**

- Be respectful of others.
- Take responsibility for your own learning.
- **BE ENGAGE** in class. Participate in all aspects of this course (singing,
- No food or beverages in classroom.
- No cell phones allowed to be used unless part of a lesson.
- Do not pack up to leave until you are dismissed from class. .
- Be in class on time, awake, and prepared.
- Adhere to all school policies.

**Attendance:** Attendance in all classes is **vital and mandatory!** You are expected to be in class on time and in your seat ready to go. Unlike other AP classes that are focused on one area of study, AP music theory studies several areas in one given class. If one day is missed, you have missed out on many details and information, connections, and valuable and hard-to-replace experiences that will help to make this class a success. If a class is missed, it is your responsibility to ask for the information missed and how to replace it. For makeup work, unless arranged otherwise, the policy is to allow two days for every one day missed.

**Course Planner:**

Weeks	Theory Content Covered	Kostka-Payne Chapters	Ear-Training Content

1-2	Notation, Major/minor scales, Intervals(consonant and dissonant); Rhythm, Meter, Time signatures (simple and compound)	1-2	Basic melodic dictation, scales, recognizing intervals
3-4	Triads, Seventh chords, Inversions of Chords, Inversion Symbols and Figured Bass, Lead Sheet Symbols	3	Triad quality, intervals within triads, Sight-singing, melodic dictation
5-6	Diatonic triads in Major and Minor, Diatonic seventh chords in Major and Minor. Introduction to Roman Numeral analysis for harmonic progressions	4	Recognizing triad types, Sight-singing, melodic dictation
7-8	Melodic Line, Notating Chords, Parallel Motion; Root Position writing in Four-Part Textures and Three-Part Textures. Roman Numeral analysis for harmony continued. Introduction to Realization of figured bass.	5-6	Melodic dictation incorporating leaps of 4ths & 5th, Sight-singing
9-10	Harmonic Progressions, Sequences and the Circle of Fifths, Differences in Minor, Harmonizing a Simple Melody. Realization of figured bass continued.	7	Melodic dictation incorporating leaps of 6ths & 7ths, Sight-singing
11-12	First Inversion Triads, Parallel Sixth Chords, Soprano-Bass Counterpoint. Realization of figured bass and Roman Numeral analysis continued.	8	Harmonic dictations using 1 <sup>st</sup> inversion chords, Sight-singing, melodic dictation
13-14	Second Inversion Triads (Cadential, Passing, Pedal, and Arpeggiation), Part Writing for Second Inversion Triads, and Realization of figured bass and Roman Numeral analysis continued.	9	Harmonic dictations using 2 <sup>nd</sup> inversion chords, Sight-singing, melodic dictation
15	Cadences, Phrases, and Periods; Musical Form, Harmonic Rhythm, Motives and Phrases.	10	Harmonic progressions with dictation of Soprano and Bass lines, Sight-singing. Students arrange in 4-partwriting a given melody for in class performance.

16-18	Binary and Ternary Forms, Formal Terminology, Rounded Binary forms, other Formal Designs Review and take final exam	20	Skip to Chapter 20 in Kostka-Payne to include larger form discussion. Students present a large form analysis for the class.
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**End of First Semester**

19-20	Non-Chord Tones: Passing, Neighbor, Suspensions, Retardations, Escape Tones, Anticipations, and Pedal Point	11-12	Melodic dictations on various instruments besides piano (for the remainder of the course)
21-22	Review of circle of 5ths and all major and minor keys signatures. Review relationship of parallel and relative keys. The V7 chord: Voice-Leading considerations, Inversions, Resolutions, Construction in three part writing	13	Melodic & Harmonic dictations incorporating the V7 chord, Sight-singing. Students compose and arrange for 4-part, a 16 bar harmonized melody using NCT's, correct V7 chord usage and voicings. Perform in class.
23-24	II7 and VII7 chords: Construction, Function, and Voice-Leading considerations	14	Melodic & Harmonic dictations incorporating the II7 and VII7 chords. Vocal majors assist running sight-singing.
25-26	IV7, VI7, I7, III7 chords: Construction, Function, and Voice-Leading considerations	15	Melodic & Harmonic dictations incorporating the IV7, VI7, I7 and III7 chords, Sight-singing. Students will re-harmonize 16-bar melody from week 21-22 using secondary dominant's (I7, VII7, VI7, II7, III7). Student-run dictation.

27-28	Secondary Chords, Secondary Dominant Chords, Contextual usage; Secondary leading-Tone Chords, Sequences, Deceptive Resolutions	16-17	Melodic & Harmonic dictations incorporating Secondary Dominant chords, Sight-singing
29-30	Modulations Using Diatonic Common Chords, Key Relationships, Common-Chord modulation; Altered Chords as Common Chords, Sequential Modulation, Monophonic Modulation, Direct Modulation	18-19	Melodic & Harmonic dictations with an emphasis on hearing inner voices(Tenor and Alto), Sight-singing
31-32	Modal, pentatonic and whole tone scales. Compositional techniques using these scales and harmonic derivatives.	(Chapter 20 covered in weeks 16-18)	Melodic & Harmonic dictations with an emphasis on hearing inner voices(Tenor and Alto), Sight-singing
33-34	Review for AP Test – Take Practice AP Test -Take AP Test		
35-36	Final Project and Final Exam		

### **Student Evaluation**

Approximately 33% of the class time is spent on Aural Skills and Sight Singing. During each class period some time is spent on listening and singing and a weekly dictation and/or sight-singing quiz is given. During the First Semester, the instructor leads the majority of the Aural Skills training, with a focus on dictations played on the piano. During Second Semester, students take leadership of the Ear-Training work by working in groups and playing dictations on their various instruments.

Students are expected to participate actively in classroom discussions and presentations. In addition to completing assigned homework, they are required to keep a comprehensive theory notebook containing all handouts as well as homework, quizzes, and exams that are returned. Students also take turns demonstrating their understanding of the concepts using a whiteboard, the voice, or an instrument. We will use several types of sight-singing methods, but the preferred method will be the Solfege theory of sight-singing. When available, students will utilize the keyboards available for a variety of exercises, including developing the skills necessary to play some homework assignments, harmonic progressions, and melodies. Writing good melodies is especially stressed during our first semester together. Special projects, such as short compositions, may be added during the third and fourth nine week periods.

Students will receive a workbook that accompanies the Kostka-Payne textbook and many of the assignments for the class will be from the Kostka-Payne workbook, but there will

be other assignments, and assessments designed to simulate the AP music theory exam. There is a final Exam at the end of each Semester.

**60% Assignments**

**40% Tests and Quizzes**

The grading scale for this class is the following:

100-93%     **A**

92-84%     **B**

83-77%     **C**

76-70%     **D**

69% and  
below     **F**

### **Teaching Strategies**

In teaching music theory it is crucial to constantly make connections between the principles that are taught and the music that students are playing on their instruments or in their vocal ensembles. The instructor will stress to students constantly that music theory is study of music intended to give the student a deeper understanding of how music functions; which creates more in-depth music performance skills as well. They will learn to understand why composers arranged the notes to work together in particular patterns and groups. To reinforce this philosophy, the instructor may have students analyze the music they are performing in their ensembles to see how it connects to the concepts that are being taught in class. Student composition will be a large part of the class work as it is an essential development in the understanding of Music Theory. Also, students will learn through instructing small dictation and sight-singing modules, presentations to class and in class student composition.

Another key to helping students develop a thorough knowledge of music theory is to utilize repetition and mastery. Just as students practice scales, arpeggios, and etudes on their instruments in order to develop muscle memory, we do the same with the fundamental elements of music theory such as intervals, chord construction, and harmonic progressions. Any time the instructor presents a new topic in the class, it is embedded in a rapid review of the other principles that preceded it. The instructor will rely on visual, verbal and aural quick-response drills in order to help students move their theoretical understanding from a belabored cognitive process into a near intrinsic knowledge.

***AP Music Theory Syllabus, Lake Mary High School***

Students are encouraged to use music technology for their theory and composition work. Computer notation software is required for the final draft of composition projects or chorale writing assignment. Also encouraged is that students to use ear-training websites for personal practice and growth outside of class. There are also many websites that students use to supplement their understanding of the principles studied in the courses. During the two weeks preceding the AP Test, students are given the opportunity to take an AP Released Exam. Students will also review test-taking strategies and practice how to deal with questions and concepts that might seem foreign in the beginning glance, but given time, will aid to better understanding of the test. Our work with sight-singing and timed dictation drills is very strict during the final preparations for the AP test.

### **Teacher Resources**

Burkhart, Charles. *Anthology for Musical Analysis*. 6th edition. New York: Schirmer, 2003.

Benward, Bruce, and J. Timothy Kolosick. *Ear Training: A Technique for Listening*. 6th edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000.

Marcozzi, Rudy. *Strategies and Patterns for Ear Training*. Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2009

Mayfield, Connie E. *Theory Essentials*, Second Edition. Schirmer, 2013

Ottman, Robert. *Music for Sight Singing*. 8th ed. Prentice Hall, 2010

Spencer, Peter. *The Practice of Harmony*. Prentice Hall, 2003

Phillips, Joel, Paul Murphy, Elizabeth West Marvin, Jane Piper Clendinning. *The Musician's Guide to Aural Skills, Volume 1*. W.W. Norton and Company, 2011