

# AP MUSIC THEORY

## Course Syllabus

### ***Course Resources and Texts***

Kostka and Payne. 2004. *Tonal Harmony with and Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Benjamin, Horvit, and Nelson. 1996. *Music For Analysis: Examples from the Common Practice Period and the Twentieth Century*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. California: Wadsworth.

Berkowitz, Fontreier, and Kraft. 1997. *A New Approach to Sight-singing*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: W.W. Norton.

Kazez, Daniel. 1997. *Rhythmic Reading: Elementary Through Advanced Training*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: W.W. Norton.

### ***Technological Resources***

Gilbert DeBenedetti. [www.gmajormusictheory.org](http://www.gmajormusictheory.org) *Musical Excerpts, spanning various genres of Western music, that aid in aural analysis of specific concepts.*

### ***Course Description***

The ultimate goal of the AP Music Theory course is 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, written, and compositional skills in addition to analysis and sight-singing. These objectives will be met through various listening, performance, and creative exercises. For the purpose of practice and evaluation of learned skills, a wide variety of vocal and instrumental music from standard Western tonal repertoires will be used. In accordance with the College Board standards for Advanced Placement courses, AP Music Theory will include thorough discussion in the following topics:

- Clefs, intervals, scales, keys, chords, metric organization, and rhythmic patterns
- Composition of a bass line for a given melody, implying appropriate harmony
- Realization of a figured bass
- Realization of a Roman numeral progression
- Analysis of repertoire, including study of motivic treatment, examination of rhythmic and melodic interaction between individual voices of a composition, and harmonic analysis of functional tonal passages

- A brief introduction to twentieth-century scales, chordal structures, and compositional procedures, either through analysis or original composition.
- Procedures based in common-practice tonality, such as functional triadic harmony in traditional four-voice texture (with vocabulary including nonharmonic tones, seventh chords, and secondary dominants), tonal relationships, and modulation to closely related keys
- Standard rhythms/meters, phrase structure, and small forms (rounded binary, simple ternary, theme and variation).
- Familiarization with vocabulary (tritone, truncation, diminution, elision, retrograde, etc.) as listed in the AP Music Theory Exam Resources and Program Information manual (pg. 7-14).

## ***Expanded Course Objectives***

- Identify and notate pitch in four clefs: treble, bass, alto, and tenor
- Notate, hear, and identify simple and compound meters
- Notate and identify all major and minor key signatures
- Notate, hear, and identify the chromatic, major, and all forms of minor scales
- Name and recognize scale degree terms (tonic, supertonic, mediant, etc.)
- Notate, hear, and identify all major, minor, diminished, and augmented intervals within an octave
- Transpose a melodic line to or from concert pitch for any band or orchestral instrument.
- Notate, hear, and identify triads (including inversions)
- Notate, hear, and identify all cadences in major and minor keys
- Detect pitch and rhythm errors in written music from given aural and visual excerpts.
- Notate a melody from dictation, in major/minor (appropriate alterations for minor), simple or compound time, up to four repetitions.
- Sight-sing a melody, up to eight bars long, major or minor key, duple or triple meter, simple or compound time, using Solfege.
- Notate and analyze simple 2-voice counterpoint in Baroque style.
- Realize a figured bass according to the rules of 18<sup>th</sup> Century choral style, major or minor key, using all of the following devices: diatonic triads, seventh chords, inversions, nonharmonic tones, and secondary function chords.
- Analyze a four-part chorale style piece using Roman and Arabic numerals to represent chords and their inversions.
- Notate, hear and identify the following non-chord tones: passing, neighboring, anticipation, suspension, retardation, appoggiatura, escape, and pedal.
- Notate the soprano and bass line and the Roman/Arabic numeral analysis of a harmonic dictation.
- Compose/Harmonize a melody or expand a motive with or without text, up to twelve bars long, given specific directions about phrasing, harmonic language, and rhythm.
- Define and identify common tempo and expression markings.
- Identify the following: modulation, sequence, imitation, ostinato, augmentation, diminution, inversion, retrograde, and fragmentation

## ***Student Accountability***

Each day, students will be expected to come to class prepared with an AP Music Theory Binder. This binder will be comprised of a copy of this course syllabus, a tabbed section for manuscript paper, a tabbed section for lined paper for note-taking, a tabbed section for completed classwork and homework assignments, and a tabbed section for excerpts from practice AP Music Theory tests. Students are expected to use **pencil** at all times. Students will also participate in and prepare sightsinging and rhythmic exercises for each class. Students will also participate in melodic and harmonic dictation daily. After each conceptual class, students will be assigned work which makes use of the objectives covered that day and reviews concepts learned to that point.

## ***Instructor Accountability***

The instructor will be committed to providing an authentic music theory experience for all students at all times. He/She will also make him/herself available for any student who requires extra practice on a specific concept. The instructor will also construct each class period to follow a regimented schedule of aural, analytical, compositional, and creative activities so as to provide students of all learning capabilities with an equal opportunity for success.

## ***Additional Course Information***

For the purposes of uniformity, the students will be taught sight-singing using the Solfèggio System, and rhythmic exercises will utilize the Kodály Rhythmic Syllables. This course will also use a Movable Do System.

## ***Course Planner***

This schedule is only approximate, as class ability and pace may differ from one year to another. Also, consideration must be made for instances when several students enrolled in the AP Music Theory class are missing the class period due to illness, educational field trip, or other miscellaneous reasons. Should this instance occur, no new material will be covered; the students remaining will review aural, dictation, composition, and analysis activities.

<b>Weeks 1 – 2</b> <b>Review</b>	<b>Basic Music Theory Fundamentals</b>
-------------------------------------	--

**Written:** Students will review the following concepts: basic pitch notation, clefs, octave identification, intervals (and inversions), chromatic alterations, enharmonic equivalents, and key signatures (major and minor). These concepts will be presented through both notation and analysis.

➤ **Kostka: Chapter 1**

**Ear-Training:** Students will learn and understand the language of solfeggio through primer sight-singing activities: scales, three-five note patterns, short melodic dictations.

- **Berkowicz: Chapter 1, pages 1-2**

<b>Weeks 3 – 4</b> <b>Rhythm</b>	<b>Elements of</b>
-------------------------------------	--------------------

**Written:** Students will review time signatures, note values relative to compound/simple meter (duple, triple, quadruple), dotted rhythms, and rests. These concepts will be presented through notation by both dictation and correcting exercises with erroneous rhythms.

- **Kostka: Chapter 2**

**Ear-Training:** Students will learn and understand the Kodaly system of rhythmic syllables. This concept will be practiced using dictation (simple meters, simple rhythms, and short melodies) and sight-reading rhythmic exercises

- **Kazez: Chapter 1 & selections from 3 (Simple Meter: Quarter Note Beat)**
- **Berkowicz: Chapter 1, pages 3-4**

<b>Weeks 5 – 6</b> <b>Inversions</b>	<b>Triads &amp; Seventh Chords and Their</b>
---	--

**Written:** Students will notate and analyze triads and seventh chords in root position and inversions in all keys (major and minor). They will also review the “chord quality chart,” as described in Koska (pg 60-61). At this time, figured bass will also be integrated into the notation and analysis exercises.

- **Kostka: Chapters 3-4**

**Ear-Training:** Students will continue practice of simple melodic & rhythmic dictations, eventually adding simple chordal dictations (major versus minor, diminished versus minor, etc). Melodic dictations will be transposed into Alto and Tenor clefs, respectively. For rhythmic reading, students will move to compound meter.

- **Kazez: Chapter 2 & selections from 4 (Compound Meter: Dotted Quarter-Note Beat)**
- **Berkowicz: Chapter 1, page 5 (exercises 13-15)**

**Weeks 7 – 9**  
**Progression**

**Part-Writing and Harmonic**

**Written:** Students will write short progressions with given soprano or bass, concentrating on primary triads in root position. Rules on writing “good melodies,” as discussed in Koska (pg 71-72), will be presented. Voicing triads in the correct manner will be of the utmost importance. Students will be presented with the “Commandments of Part-Writing”, as determined by the instructor, which include the most pertinent items to consider when part-writing (correct doubling for triads, avoidance of parallel octaves and fifths, using the vii° chord in first inversion only, a contrary bass and soprano whenever possible, correct spacing between voices, chord construction and voice-leading that allows for a good cadential point, etc). Realization of figured bass will be used in the beginning stages of part-writing. These concepts will be substantiated in analysis by identifying problems that violate the rules of proper part-writing.

Because some independence in composition will be expected at a later point in this unit, students will be introduced to the Harmonic Progression Chart, as discussed in Kostka (pg 109).

- **Kostka: Chapters 5-7**

**Ear-Training:** Week 7: Students will be tested on all aural skills learned to this point (sightsinging, rhythmic reading, melodic dictation). Weeks 8-9: Students will begin simple harmonic dictation – bass and soprano line only, including I, IV, V, V7, I in root position.

- **Kazez: Rhythm test on examples from Chapters 1/3 & 2/4**
- **Berkowicz: Sight-singing test on examples from pages 2-5.**

**Weeks 10 – 13**  
**Inversions**

**Usage of Triads and Seventh Chords in**

**Written:** Students will learn the proper usage of inverted triads and seventh chords in their compositional exercises. While maintaining proper melody writing, harmonic progression and the adherence of proper part-writing rules, students will begin to create four and eight bar compositions. They will hand these in as assignments and do a peer analysis (Roman Numeral, following the rules of part-writing, etc).

- **Kostka: Chapters 8-9, 13-15**

**Ear-Training:** Students will hear melodic dictations that involve at least one leap. Harmonic dictations will include bass, tenor and soprano lines. The ii chord will be added to progressions. They will also begin sight-singing examples which have several leaps (outlining triads, etc). For rhythm, students will move on to half note beat rhythms (5/2, 2/2, etc) and dotted half-note beat rhythms (6/4, 9/4, etc)

- **Kazez: Chapter 5 & 6**
- **Berkowicz: Chapter 1, pages 5-6**

<b>Weeks 14 – 15</b> <b>Tones</b>	<b>Non-Chord</b>
--------------------------------------	------------------

**Written:** Students will learn the nuance of each non-chord tone. They will embellish simple melodies with various non-chord tones and eventually add a more concrete harmonic foundation for these melodies using proper harmonic progression. They will analyze various diatonic excerpts from *Music For Analysis* (Benjamin) using Roman numeral analysis to find non-chord tones.

- **Kostka: Chapters 11-12**

**Ear-Training:** Students will be introduced to the aural identification of non-chord tones. Other dictation continues with the same skills.

- **Berkowicz: Chapter 1, pages 7-9**

<b>Week 16 – 17</b> <b>Form</b>	<b>Cadences, Phrase Structure, and Small</b>
------------------------------------	--

**Written:** Students will learn the formula for all cadences (including the function of the I 6/4 in a cadential pattern) in addition to the construction of a phrase by motivic material. Discussion will include two phrase periods, three phrase periods, and double periods. Practice of this concept will come through analysis of excerpts from *Music for Analysis* (Benjamin). Students will do full analysis as a quiz grade: Roman/Arabic numeral, non-chord tones, cadences, and form.

- **Kostka: Chapter 10**

**Ear-Training:** This week will focus the majority of time on harmonic dictation, adding the vi and vii triads. Melodic dictation and sight-singing (minor keys) become more advanced, with an equal amount of time spent on rhythmic dictation and rhythmic sight-reading from Kazez.

- **Kazez: Chapter 7 & 8**
- **Berkowicz: Chapter 1, pages 11-13**

**Week 17 – 18**

**Binary and Ternary**

**Forms**

**Written:** Students will use the information presented during Weeks 16-17 to substantiate form into binary and ternary forms. This concept will be explored through the examples and Self-Tests in the corresponding **Kostka** chapter listed below.

- **Kostka: Chapter 20**

**Week 19 – 20**

**Secondary**

**Functions**

**Written:** Students will be introduced to secondary functions (secondary dominant and secondary leading-tone chords). Practice of this concept will come through Roman Numeral analysis of excerpts from *Music For Analysis* (Benjamin).

- **Kostka: Chapters 16-17**

**Ear-Training:** Harmonic dictations will now include the iii chord and will be approximately four measures in length. Sight-singing (compound meter) and rhythmic reading will continue.

- **Kazez: Chapter 9**
- **Berkowicz: Chapter 1, pages 13-14**

**Week 21 – 22**

**Modulation**

**Written:** Students will be introduced to modulation to closely related keys (common chord, direct, common tone, sequential, and monophonic), in addition to presentation of contrapuntal devices. This



concept will be presented using examples from **Kostka**, in addition to analysis of excerpts from *Music for Analysis* (Benjamin).

- **Kostka: Chapters 18-19**

**Ear-Training:** Students will continue harmonic dictations with same level of difficulty.

- **Kazez: Chapter 10**
- **Berkowicz: Chapter 1, pages 15-16**

**Week 23**  
**Ranges**

**Transpositions and Instrument**

Students will learn the correct transpositions for all common band and orchestra instruments. During this week, they will take simple compositions from *Music for Analysis* (namely vocal/piano selections) and arrange for specified transposing instruments. As practice, we will also take examples from the Berkowicz sightsinging text.

- **Kostka: Appendix A**
- **Berkowicz: varies**

**Week 24**  
**Administered**

**First Practice Exam**

**Week 25-27**  
**Assigned**

**Composition Project**

Students will be asked to compose an original composition 16 bars in length including non-chord tones, correct cadential points, and at least one secondary function. They will complete a full piano score and include at least two transposition instruments. This project will be performed in class during Week 27.

**Week 28**  
**Week**

**Aural Training**

In preparation for the AP exam, students will spend an entire week drilling rhythmic exercises from Kazez (Chapters 9 & 10, and Ensemble Exercises p 178-179), sightsinging examples from Berkowicz (Chapter 1) and full harmonic dictations (four measures) every day. During this week, as an “end of week project” the students will have prepared one piece of their choice (popular, classical, jazz, etc) to present

to the class using Solfege to sing the main melody of the chorus/refrain and one verse. We will use this activity as a melodic dictation for the rest of the class.

**Week 29**

**Analysis Review**

**Week**

In preparation for the AP exam, students will spend an entire week analyzing a Bach chorale or the first movement of a Mozart piano sonata. Analysis will include Roman/Arabic numerals, non-chord tones, cadences, form, and correct notation of modulation/secondary functions should they occur.

**Week 30-32**

**Review and**

**Exam**

During these weeks, the final practice test will be administered, following which students will take the Exam during the designated Exam Day.

**Weeks 33-36**

**Introduction to 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

**Music**

Students will have an introductory glance into Western music, post-1900. We will explore early atonal music, Twelve-tone serialism, impressionism, and jazz.

➤ **Kazez: Chapter 28**

## ***Teaching Strategies***

I'm a true believer in consistency and regiment. Each day, students will come to class prepared to begin with a dictation, followed by presentation of sight-singing/rhythm assignments, and then moving towards the conceptual objective of the day. Vocabulary (and synonyms where appropriate) will be emphasized from day one, as they will need to become accustomed to the verbiage of the AP curriculum.

The composition projects that are assigned throughout the term will be used in multiple ways. After an assignment is handed in to be graded, I will photocopy each student's manuscript (without the grade, of course!) and distribute to the class. We might then sight-sing the alto line, if it is written in four parts. Or, we might go a step further and sight-sing each vocal line and then divide students on parts as appropriate and perform this as a class. These composition assignments could also be used for me to give melodic or harmonic dictations throughout that portion of the course. Students could also do a Roman/Arabic numeral analysis of each other's work. The possibilities are endless!

When assigning the composition projects, I give students a bulleted list of items that must be included in their composition (cadences, non-chord tones, only one melodic focal point per phrase, etc) so that they are able to "check" things off as they go through the creative process. This also allows me to grade the assignments from an objective stand-point. I rarely grade a student's composition after I've heard it played on the piano. Beauty is in the ear of the beholder; what sounds good to me might not sound good to them and vice versa. So long as they have effectively accomplished the items on the assigned list, they will achieve success.

Because this course is also taught during the same class period as our Honors Music Theory course, I will often times employ the AP Music Theory students to assist me in presenting a concept to the Honors class. The students find that teaching a concept (very basic...intervals, triads, minor scales) will give them a new perspective and deeper understanding of it.

I teach the Honors Music Theory course with the clear intention of these students going on to AP Theory; therefore, the concepts presented are the same but at a slightly slower pace. This makes their transition into AP very smooth, as it's virtually all a "second-go" at what they learned in Honors. Most students taking Honors Music Theory are in the performance ensembles in our school, so we're all on the same page coming into the course.

## ***Student Evaluation***

Each marking period, students' grades are broken down as follows:

Classwork/Participation	20%
Homework	10%
Aural Tests (Sightsinging/Dictation)	20%
Compositions	30%
Analysis Assignments/Projects	20%