

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Course Outline

Part I

Programme Title	:	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Creative and Digital Arts and Bachelor of Education (Honours) (Music) Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Creative Arts and Culture and Bachelor of Education (Honours) (Music)
Programme QF Level	:	5
Course Title	:	Creative Composing
Course Code	:	MUS4260
Department	:	Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA)
Credit Points	:	3
Contact Hours	:	39
Pre-requisite(s)	:	Nil
Medium of Instruction	:	English
Level	:	4

Part II

The University's Graduate Attributes and seven Generic Intended Learning Outcomes (GILOs) represent the attributes of ideal EdUHK graduates and their expected qualities respectively. Learning outcomes work coherently at the University (GILOs), programme (Programme Intended Learning Outcomes) and course (Course Intended Learning Outcomes) levels to achieve the goal of nurturing students with important graduate attributes.

In gist, the Graduate Attributes for Sub-degree, Undergraduate, Taught Postgraduate, Professional Doctorate and Research Postgraduate students consist of the following three domains (i.e. in short "PEER & I):

- Professional Excellence;
- Ethical Responsibility; &
- Innovation.

The descriptors under these three domains are different for the three groups of students in order to reflect the respective level of Graduate Attributes.

The seven GILOs are:

1. Problem Solving Skills
2. Critical Thinking Skills
3. Creative Thinking Skills
- 4a. Oral Communication Skills
- 4b. Written Communication Skills
5. Social Interaction Skills
6. Ethical Decision Making
7. Global Perspectives

1. Course Synopsis

The training of composers in the western musical tradition has been more or less an elitist practice, aimed at those “talented” individuals who demonstrate potentials to become a “composer”. In this course, musical techniques and sensitivity are considered important pre-requisitions of “all musicians as composers” both in the traditional “work-concept” sense and in the more open contemporary concept of “sound-artists” where creative composing does not necessarily confine to written “scores” and “autonomous works”. In looking at how human-beings identify and manipulate sounds as “music” and how such “musical sounds” interact with people in different capacities and socio-psychological-emotional circumstances, students are led to understand the deep inner-connectivity of all musical activities in the context of creativity. They are encouraged to manipulate and experiment sounds by themselves, turning “sounds” into “music”, through completely open and diverse means.

2. Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- CILO₁ understand holistically how “sounds” are turned to “music” through technical, social, psychological, aesthetic, and cultural considerations;
- CILO₂ manipulate sounds musically and effectively for self-expressive and/or communicative purposes through diverse techniques and means, including performance, scores, improvisation, use of IT support, etc.; and
- CILO₃ inspire and guide others to appreciate the freedom and ease of turning sounds into music by demonstrating musical creativity through their works.

3. Content, CILOs and Teaching & Learning Activities

Course Content	CILOs	Suggested Teaching & Learning Activities
Back to the Stone Age: How “sounds” were turned into “music”? Understanding the phenomenon called “music”: • Sounds are “organized” (by whom? why? & how?) • Meaningful communication: a fine balance between “novelty” and “similarity” or “change” and “repetition” • Everyone enjoys music – enjoying music is understanding music – understanding music is creating music. • Ways to make “interesting” organized sounds • The origin of “notation” – and other ways to “save” memories of beautiful sounds.	CILO ₁	• Lecture • Assigned readings • Research • Reflections

• How does “music” evolve through the ages – the socio-cultural and historical perspectives. • The ephemeral nature of “organized sounds” and the development of the “work” concept of music.		
Develop different techniques to ‘organize’ different parameters of sounds to turn them into music: • Rhythmic manipulations • Pitch manipulations – single notes, melodies (scales), harmonies (chords), etc. • Colour manipulations – use of instruments, percussive noises, vocal techniques, textures, dynamics, articulations, etc. • The vertical (polyphonic, homophonic, heterophonic) and horizontal (repetitions, imitations, expansions, contractions) properties of music	<i>CILO₁</i>	• Lecture • Exercises, workshops • Presentation & discussion
Very brief survey on the main arrays of techniques and styles accumulated by human cultures to organize sounds into “meaningful” music: • The emphasis on “pitch” and ‘tonality’ as universal features of music (?) • The linear approach – leading to heterophony and emphasis on colours (<i>e.g. Chinese music</i>) • The vertical approach – leading to western polyphony with emphasis on homogeneous colours and well-defined tonal /pitch parameters (<i>e.g. European music</i>) • The rhythmic approach – leading to complicated textural and colour expressions (<i>e.g. African music</i>) • Some contemporary experimental musical practices – atonalism, total control, total freedom, static music and minimalism, etc. • The case of “popular music” – they are by definition and by nature always popular	<i>CILO_{1, 2}</i>	• Lecture • Illustrations • Assigned readings, research • Presentation & discussion
Communicate with sounds: Try different media and channels to express with sounds: • Solo or group? • Written-out scores and performances • Improvisation • Musicking projects • Involving other media?	<i>CILO₂</i>	• Workshops • Discussion and sharing • Illustrative presentation
Inspire others to create music – at different levels and groupings • Children and young students? • People with prior musical/instrumental trainings? • Adults without prior musical training?	<i>CILO₃</i>	• Lecture • Illustrations • Workshops • Discussion and sharing

4. Assessment

Assessment Tasks	Weighting (%)	CILOs
(a) Progressive practical assignments including: scoring, rhythmic and melodic writing, two-part writing as well as self-research to cultivate their skills and techniques in composing music during class and as assignments.	40%	CILO _{1,3}
(b) Complete one original composition or two separate works (total no less than 4 minutes in duration); or musicking/ improvisatory project using any techniques as appropriate. If the project is of an ephemeral nature, audio-visual recording of the musicking/ improvisation act should be available for assessment.	60%	CILO ₂

5. Use of Generative AI in Course Assessments

Please select one option only that applies to this course:

☐ **Not Permitted:** In this course, the use of generative AI tools is not allowed for any assessment tasks.

☒ **Permitted:** In this course, generative AI tools may be used in some or all assessment tasks. Instructors will provide specific instructions, including any restrictions or additional requirements (e.g., proper acknowledgment, reflective reports), during the first lesson and in relevant assessment briefs.

6. Required Text(s)

Nil

7. Recommended Readings

- Atanacković, D. (2024). Artificial Intelligence: Duality in Applications of Generative AI and Assistive AI in Music. *INSAM Journal of Contemporary Music, Art and Technology*, 12–31. <https://doi.org/10.51191/issn.2637-1898.2024.7.12.12>.
- Burkhart, C. (2004). *Anthology for musical analysis* (6th ed.). Orlando: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- Cheng, L. (2025). The impact of generative AI on school music education: Challenges and recommendations. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2025.2451373>.
- Clarke, E. F., & Doffman, M. (Eds.). (2017). *Distributed creativity: Collaboration and improvisation in contemporary music*. Oxford University Press.
- Cope, D. (1977). *New music composition*. New York: Schirmer Books.
- Cope, D. (1997). *Techniques of the contemporary composer*. Belmont, CA: Schirmer Books.
- Cope, D. (2000). *New directions in music* (7th ed.). Dubuque: Wm. C. Brown Communications, Inc.
- Hepworth-Sawyer, R., Hodgson, J., Paterson, J., & Toulson, R. (Eds.). (2019). *Innovation in music: Performance, production, technology, and business*. Routledge.

- Kostka, S. M. (2006). *Materials and techniques of twentieth-century music* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, N. J.: Prentice Hall.
- Lerdahl, F. (2020). *Composition and cognition: Reflections on contemporary music and the musical mind*. University of California Press.
- Lehman, F. (2018). *Hollywood harmony: Musical wonder and the sound of cinema*. Oxford University Press.
- Leung, C. H. (2016). How to Develop a Music Idea. In A. Lai (Eds.), *Music Composition Training Programme with Cultural Exploration Teaching Manual* (33-38). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Composers' Guild
- Persichetti, V. (1978). *Twentieth century harmony: Creative aspects and practice*. London: Faber.
- Schwartz, E., & Childs, B. (Eds.). (1998). *Contemporary composers on contemporary music*. New York: Da Capo Press.
- Schwartz, E. and Godfrey, D. (1993). *Music since 1945: Issues, materials and literature*. New York: Schirmer Books.
- Stone, K. (1980). *Music Notation in the Twentieth Century: A Practical Guidebook*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Sullivan, P. S. (2012). *Experimental writing in composition: Aesthetics and pedagogies*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Temperley, D. (2007). *Music and probability*. The MIT Press.
- Terefenko, D. (2014). *Jazz theory: From basic to advanced study*. Routledge.
- Wade, B. C. (2012). *Thinking musically: Experiencing music, expressing culture*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

8. Related Web Resources

Oxford Music Online

<https://www.lib.eduhk.hk/permalink/record/alma991000960559703410>

Composer's Notebook 1990

http://www.rhyschatham.net/nintiesRCwebsite/Essay_1970-90.html

9. Related Journals

Nil

10. Academic Honesty

The University upholds the principles of honesty in all areas of academic work. We expect our students to carry out all academic activities honestly and in good faith. Please refer to the *Policy on Academic Honesty, Responsibility and Integrity* (<https://www.eduhk.hk/re/uploads/docs/000000000016336798924548BbN5>). Students should familiarize themselves with the Policy.

11. Others

Nil

Last update: 26 March 2026