

## ET 441 POPULAR SONG TRANSCRIPTION

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**Course Chairs:**

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**Course Description:** Designed to teach the student how to transcribe songs and arrangements in current popular music. Most projects are chosen by the student in his/her area of musical interest. Project presentation in class.

**Course Objective:** Using progressive exercises and music examples, you will develop techniques, which will facilitate the isolation and aural recognition of the salient features (melody, harmony, bass line) of popular music, and upon satisfactory completion of this course you will have completed several transcription assignments, including playing/singing instrumental solos.

**Homework, Projects, Out-of-class Preparation:** Several popular song transcriptions will be required for this course. A final project will also be assigned. In order to maintain satisfactory standing in this class, approximately two hours per week of out-of-class preparation are recommended.

**Final Exams:** December 14-18

**Grading Criteria:**

A (90-100) Superior, Exceptional; control of course material enables excellent production.  
B (80-89) Good; grasp of material enables above-average production.  
C (70-79) Average; assimilation of material enables acceptable production.  
D (60-69) Below Average; exposure to material enables poor, but passable production.  
F (below 60) Not Passing; assimilation of material insufficient to demonstrate acceptable productive capacity.

**Final Grade Determination:** Your final grade will be determined by considering the following components at the indicated weights:

20% Attendance and class participation  
20% Final project  
20% Mid Term  
25% homework assignments

**Attendance and Participation:** Consistent attendance, punctuality, preparation, and participation are expected and will be reflected in your grade. Attendance will be recorded beginning on the first day you are registered for the class and checked in. Two absences are allowed with no penalty; beginning with the third absence, the course grade you have earned will be lowered by 10% for each absence.

Because there is no substitute for participation in the classroom experience, the Ear Training department does not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences.

If exceptional circumstances arise due to a medical, personal, or family emergency, you should notify the Counseling Center and your instructor as soon as possible to discuss your options. If you have conflicting college obligations, discuss them with your teacher as far in advance as possible.

Missing an exam may result in a grade of zero for the exam. If you will be absent from an exam due to a medical, personal, or family emergency, you must notify the instructor in advance if possible, or as soon as possible under the circumstances. Exams will be made up only in extraordinary cases, at the discretion of the instructor.

Arriving late to class two times is equivalent to one absence from class.

Your full attention and participation during class are expected and required. Use of cell phones, computers, or other electronic devices, reading or writing that is unrelated to the class, eating a meal, or other distractions are not allowed because they diminish your learning and are disruptive to the class. If there are special circumstances, please discuss them in advance with the instructor.

If you have excessive absences, you may initiate withdrawal from the class before the deadline, receiving a grade of W, or you may receive the grade of F at the end of the semester.

**Deadline for Course Withdrawal: 4:00 pm Friday, November 6.**

**New college policy on course withdrawal:**

You may withdraw from this class by completing a *Student-Initiated Withdrawal from a Class* form at the Office of the Registrar. The withdrawal form must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar before the end of the 9th week of classes in Fall and Spring semesters, or the end of the 8th week in the 12-week Summer Session. If you submit the withdrawal form by the deadline, you will receive a grade of “W” for the class. Withdrawing from a class cannot be done after the deadline.

The instructor will **not** withdraw you from the class for any reason (including absence) or submit the form for you. It is your responsibility to withdraw from the course.

If you withdraw from this class, you continue to be financially responsible for the class and are not eligible for a tuition refund or replacement course. Please be aware that withdrawing from a class may affect scholarship, financial aid, and/or international student visa status. If you receive financial aid or veterans’ benefits, your eligibility for aid may be reduced by withdrawing. If you are an international student, you may jeopardize your F-1 visa status.

In case of doubt about your status and options, ask the instructor, department chair and/or the Counseling & Advising Center.

## ET 441 POPULAR SONG TRANSCRIPTION Topical Outline

**Unit 1:** Singing Bass Lines- Getting acquainted with pop bass lines; tricks for hearing chord qualities.

*Assignment #1:* Solfege, from memory, the bass line for the verse and chorus of a tune of your choosing. Outline the chords using solfege or numbers. Bring in the recording and sing for me individually.

**Unit 2 :** Lead Sheets- Determining the bass line and chord quality. Song form analysis.

*Assignment #2:* Make a lead sheet of a current pop tune of your choosing that has a minimum of 4 chord changes and an intricate form. Bring in a recording and present the lead sheet in class. (Melody is optional but recommended.) Either present using an overhead transparency or make enough copies for others.

**Unit 3:** Vocal Transcription- Modern day melismas-an expressive vocal passage sung to one syllable. The use of slurs, phrase marks and dashes to notate the vocal line. Notating vocal ranges.

*Assignment #3:* Transcribe the vocal lead line from a pop song of your choosing. Transcribe all lyrics, corresponding to their notes, in a given measure. (Chord changes optional but recommended.) Present your work in class as in assignment#2.

**Unit 4:** Drum Notation- Live drum set playing in class, use of drum loops, and extensive overview of current drum and percussion notation. Analysis of scores and transcribing typical patterns in pop music.

*Assignment #4:* Transcribe the drums/patterns in your choice of contemporary pop music. Transcribe basic drum grooves for the different sections of the tune. (Approx. 2-4 bars per section.) Present work in class.

**Midterm Project: Individual meetings** with students to discuss: **Midterm Transcription Project. Provide recordings, analyse the form, determine instrumentation, and compare/contrast the two versions.**

**Pop Song Covers- Comparison between an original song and a cover version.**

**Assignment:** Transcribe the main features that distinguish the cover from the original.(ie: chord changes for both tunes, drum grooves for each, or vocals.) Play both versions of the song and present your transcriptions.

**Unit 5: Performing Transcriptions:** Play/Sing a transcription of a soloist of your choosing. Play the solo (and comp) for at least one chorus from memory.

**Individual meetings to hear the progress of the Transcription Playing assignment.**

**Final Presentations:** Back up a thesis statement (of your calling) with 3 transcribed examples that support your point. The transcriptions may be single instruments and/or

lead sheets. Students will be allotted 20 minutes to present and may use videos, CDs, and professionally transcribed materials in addition to their own transcriptions.

*Hand-written projects must be clear. Notation software must be checked for glitches. Present your transcriptions in class by either making a transparency or making enough copies for the people in the class. Remember to provide a recording (ie: CD).*

*Absolutely No: Beatles, Stevie, Sting, Steely Dan, Earth Wind & Fire, songs in fake books, or other professionally transcribed songs.*

*Choose to work at your own level, and attend office hours for help. Everything in music is "Results Based." You put in the work and you get better!*