

COURSE: MU311 T TN Songwriting
CREDIT: 2 Semester Hours
SEMESTER: Fall 2023
DAY/TIME/LOCATION: Tuesdays 9:30-10:50 E Ed 107
INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Ian Guthrie
Email: ian.guthrie@calvary.edu
Phone: 816-425-6203

I. DESCRIPTION

A thorough study of the important elements of planning and writing songs. Students will explore the craft of songwriting from the initial inspiration through the proper completion of a song. The final project includes a polished score ready for publishing. It is recommended that students have completed or are currently enrolled in MU213 – Music Technology.

II. OBJECTIVES

A. General competencies to be achieved. The student will:

1. Function more effectively in a music related career by developing better understanding of the power of a song to effect and inspire.
 - a. Program Objectives 3
 - b. Assignments A1, D1, E1
2. Discover learning tools and other inspirations that can be used in breaking through writer's block and rediscover deeper creativity.
 - a. Program Objectives 3
 - b. Assignments A1, E1
3. Learn and implement writing exercises to enhance songwriting.
 - a. Program Objectives 3
 - b. Assignments A1, B1, D1
4. Discover the most effective tools to capture ideas and melodies as they are first beginning to emerge.
 - a. Program Objectives 3
 - b. Assignments C1, D1
5. Explore the best ways to follow an idea or inspiration through the journey of creative writing and chord progression to become a fully realized, complete song.
 - a. Program Objectives 3
 - b. Assignments A1, B1, C1, D1

B. Specific competencies to be achieved. The student will:

Our Mission: "...to prepare Christians to live and serve in the church and in the world according to the Biblical worldview."

1. Adequately exhibit functional steps needed to know and identify the characteristics and structure of a song.
2. Adequately apply the use of journaling and songwriting exercises to achieve a richer environment out of which to write a well written, complete song.
3. Adequately exhibit functional use of songwriting tools, and reliance on inspiring activities and environments that lead to better songwriting.
4. Articulate a basic understanding of terminology related to songwriting.
5. Understand, articulate and implement how to write better lyrics and melodies.

III. REQUIREMENTS

- A. Assignments: Complete the assignments from assigned readings, in room discussions and instructor in a timely manner as specified by the instructor.
- B. Text: Complete assigned readings in the textbook, which will be assigned throughout the term.
- C. Projects: Complete the assigned projects using information from class lectures and assigned readings.
- D. Time:
 1. The student should spend some time every day honing their creative skills in lyrics and music composing.
 2. The student should expect to spend time daily exploring new creative environments, discovering what kinds of experiences and techniques actually inspire the writer to write.
 3. Additional time should be spent on reading, research and projects.
- E. Journaling/Sketching: All students should sketch or journal on a daily basis, recording any and all ideas that they cannot incorporate into their projects, at least at that time. Like any good songwriter or composer, the best ideas usually come by seeking out creativity, not by waiting for it.

IV. METHODS

- A. In-class methods will include discussion, explanation, exercises, and illustration. Student will attend MU311 24 hours over the semester.
- B. Out-of-class methods will include personal work at the computer, or other writing venues, reading, practicing, journaling, writing, researching, and completing assignments and projects.

V. MATERIALS

- A. The instructor will assign books from the CU Library and Music Resource Library; students will be expected to check out and study these materials as prescribed.
 - a. Instructor is permitted to request you to borrow materials for enhancing certain lessons. MOBIUS is a great resource!
- B. See “Bible is a required textbook” statement below. You may use your familiar Bible translation in class. My preferred translation is the NASB (1995), the ESV, or the YLT.

VI. GRADING

Class discussion and in-class work	20%
Songwriting assignments	40%
Completion of final song	40%
Total	100%

VII. TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE – Class/Lab schedule

The student will spend at least 1-3 hours per week outside of class, working on songwriting skills.

Classroom – The students are expected to attend every class for a Participation grade. Unexcused absences will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, but no one should expect to get an idea grade if they routinely skip class, avoid participating in class, or ignore assignments.

*After week 8 there will be a Fall break of a week

*Week 16 is Finals, so everything will be covered by Week 15

Week 1: Syllabus; introduction to different genres of Christian music

Week 2: Chord progressions and “retrogressions” (the rad progressions)

Week 3: Lyrics

Week 4: Song forms

Week 5: Major, minor, and emotions; music and messages

Week 6: Classical notation, Nashville Notation, chord charts, and fake books

Week 7: Intros, Instrumentals, Interludes, and Outros * no school President’s Day?

Week 8: Project no. 1 due presentation (Instrumental ideas only)

Week 9: Music and messages

Week 10: Verses

Week 11: Choruses

Week 12: Bridges and post-choruses

Week 13: Expanding and experimenting with tonality (Yes—both hymns and Rock can be atonal!)

Week 14: Final drafts

Week 15: Copyright, CCLI, and PROs

Week 16: Final projects

VII. OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Assignments are due at class time or on the date assigned. Papers and reading assignments must be completed on time. **Work not completed on time will receive a grade of 0 (thus, no late work is permitted), exceptions notwithstanding.** A song turned in unfinished, according to the definition in class, will receive no credit.

Illness and other documented emergencies are the only acceptable exceptions. If you are gone during the time frame in which something is to be submitted, please submit it early.

Attendance is expected! If you cannot participate in person, you should try to do so remotely. If you cannot attend during class time, you need to do extra homework in lieu of in-class homework. To not participate, or to play hooky, is to passively hurt your grade. Remember, 20% of your grade is based on Class Discussion and In-class Work, so realize that avoiding this will not only hurt your comprehension in the class, but it will turn your best possible grade into a B-. One excused absence allowed prior to penalty.

The Bible is a required textbook in every course at Calvary University. To facilitate academic level study, students are required to use for assignments and research an English translation or version of the Bible based on formal equivalence (*meaning that the translation is generally word-for-word from the original languages*), including any of the following: New American Standard (NASB), English Standard Version (ESV), New King James (NKJV), or King James (KJV). Other translations and versions based on dynamic equivalence (*paraphrases, and thought-for-thought translations like NLT and NIV*) may be used as supplemental sources. Please ask the professor if you have questions about a particular translation or version.

Students with disabilities have the responsibility of informing the Accommodations Support Coordinator (aso@calvary.edu) of any disabling condition that may require support.

Plagiarism is defined as copying any content without identifying the source. This also includes taking another person's or AI entity's ideas or constructs and presenting them as your own. The use of AI generated content in student work is prohibited (even if cited)

as it does not represent original work created by the student and is an unreliable aggregate of ideas from other sources. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated.

The Clark Academic Center (learning@calvary.edu) is dedicated to providing free academic assistance for Calvary University students. Student tutors aid with all facets of the writing process, tutor in various subject areas, prepare students for exams and facilitate tests. Please take advantage of this service.

All class papers must follow the Turabian style according to A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 8th edition and the Calvary Style Guide, 2019 update.

Alternatively, you may use Chicago Style (which is really the same as Turabian Style with differences irrelevant to this course). Please just be consistent.

Grading Scale: See grading scale in the university catalog.

Carnegie Units

Assignments	Hours	Assigned
“Seat Time” in class	21	21
Reading	15	No more than 300 pages
Songwriting exercises	30	Every class
Daily Journaling	Varies—the more the better	N/A—an expected part of every creative assignment
Final, completed Song	24	
Total	90	