Beginning Class Voice (MPVA 141)
Insert info: Day of week, time, Room #
Instructor Name:
Instructor USC email: ---@usc.edu
Mailbox # in Ramo Hall (RHM):
Office Hours: by Appointment

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description
An exploration of the physiology and acoustics of the human singing voice in a group setting. Vocal techniques are taught in a group format as a healthy foundation for solo performance in both classical and non-classical singing styles.

Learning Objectives: The aims of this course are to help students:
- Learn basic voice anatomy.
- Establish a healthy vocal technique for singing that is applicable to many different singing styles.
- Understand voice health and hygiene.
- Learn effective practice techniques.
- Learn basic vocal and musical vocabulary.
- Unlock the communicative and expressive power of their own voices.
- Develop critical listening skills apropos to one’s own singing, as well as the singing of others.
- Develop techniques to address performance anxiety.
- Develop the ability to give and take critique about one’s own performance and the performance of others.

Course Format
- This course meets once a week throughout the semester for a one hour and fifty minute session for 2 units.
- The student will utilize online resources for this course.
- It is a course requirement for enrolled students to frequently check their USC email and the course website site for course announcements, updates and assignments.
- This is a performance-based class: full participation is expected! Students will move from group singing to individual, prepared singing, in front of the group.
- The instructor will provide specific vocal exercises, methods and ideas with which to practice individual repertoire. The instructor will lead interactive discussions about the assigned readings, as well as present information from the text and other sources.
- Students are expected to complete all assigned readings, quizzes and journal entries, complete writing assignments, concert reviews as assigned, and practice and perform regularly as encouraged by the instructor.
- The midterm exam is a performance-based exam. The final exam includes both a written and a performance component.
Required Course Materials & Equipment
   *PLEASE NOTE: Having this textbook is critical to your success in the course.
   If you do not have your book by the second week of class, your weekly participation
   and/or preparation grade may suffer as a result.
2. Card access to the University Gateway building to utilize practice rooms.
3. Notebook for class notes, handouts and music.
4. A pencil (or erasable writing utensil) to mark music.
5. A recording device such as a smart phone, digital voice recorder, or "Garage Band" (etc.) on
   your laptop.
6. It is expected that students have the text and any supplementary handouts with them for
   each class meeting.

Repertoire: Midterm Recital and Final Exam
Each student will need to learn and memorize two songs, one to be sung at the midterm recital,
the other at the final exam. What you sing will be a collaborative decision between the student
and instructor. For the midterm recital, the student is required to choose from one of the songs listed on the *Midterm Recital Song Selection Sheet, posted on the class Blackboard site.*
These songs will be prepared with the instructor during class. The song to be performed at the
midterm must be chosen by the student by the fourth week of class.

Final Exam Song
The song for the final exam will be of the student’s choosing, with approval from the instructor.
The student should begin thinking about this selection right away, and start working on it as
soon as possible. If you are uncomfortable and/or unsure about how to learn a song on your
own, please speak to the instructor. *Instructors insert instructions here re: where/how to obtain
and/or purchase music.* Note the following:

- The music (actual score) for the Final Exam Song must be handed in on the day of the
  midterm.
- Timing: Song length should be between 1 ½ - 3 minutes, but no longer than 3 minutes.
- Song selections must be approved by the instructor, and must be appropriate for a class
  setting; no vulgar language, sexual innuendo, or lyrics that could be considered
  insulting or demeaning to any demographic groups.
- Regarding accompaniment: All performances will be accompanied by the assigned class
  pianist, therefore, all music must have a both a vocal and a written-out piano part; no
  chord charts, please.

Keep in mind that songs can be used as tools to build technique, singing strength, and
confidence. This is not necessarily the time to pick the hardest song possible, but rather choose
a song that you think will help you grow as a singer-actor. Be mindful and realistic about the
amount of time you will have with the pianist to put your song together. The student needs to
make two extra copies of their music; three hole punched, and double sided to give to the
instructor the day of the midterm. Be sure to bring your own personal copy to work from in
class.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

Ethics & Respect
Because this is an interactive, performance-based class, showing respect for your colleagues, instructor, and any possible special guests is paramount. The most important component in this endeavor is attention. Therefore, all electronic devices must be turned off and put away during class. You may use your phone/laptop to record your own performance, but otherwise these types of devices will not be permitted for use in class. Students who text, use Facebook, etc. during class, risk being asked to leave class and if dismissed, would earn a zero class grade for the day. This is particularly important during solo performance days. Respect also includes embracing different learning styles and learning rates, appreciating different voice types and abilities, showing open-mindedness toward techniques and concepts presented in class, being open to different styles of music, and interacting with colleagues in a constructive and positive way.

Preparation/Progress
This is a musical performance class. You will be expected to learn your music in a timely manner, and to demonstrate progress in vocal development and performance skills. Lack of preparation will be evident in your own presentations, and grades will reflect this. Your progress will be assessed on an individual basis.

Attendance & Active Participation
Attendance and Active Participation at all classes is a course expectation. This is an experiential learning course - there is no way to learn the course material other than being physically present and actively participating. Participation in class involves contributing thoughtful and constructive discussion, making a concerted effort to carry out suggestions given by the instructor, and coming prepared for class. Be prepared to sing, by yourself, in front of the class! Participation and attendance will be noted every class and figures into the final semester grade. (See "Grading & Attendance," below).

Practicing
Practice Rooms are available in the Gateway Building on campus. You may gain card access to the Gateway practice facility after you have gone to the Music Operations Office in Booth Hall 100 and received the proper clearance.

You will be expected to practice a minimum of 20 to 30 minutes four times per week for this course. Productive practicing is the key to achieving vocal success. You should practice the vocal exercises assigned by the instructor as well as work on your music the way the instructor recommends. Be smart about practicing – do not try to cram a week’s worth of work into one practice session. Plan practice sessions and write them into your schedule.

ASSIGNMENTS
In addition to in-class contact hours, all courses at USC must also meet a minimum standard for out-of-class time, which accounts for time students spend on homework, readings, writing, and other course-related activities. For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects two hours of “out of class” student work per week over a semester.

For this class, the breakdown = 4 hours total per week “out of class” time to achieve a minimum grade of “average” (C).
Weekly assignments are listed in the “Course Schedule.” They include:

**Online Journal**
Throughout the semester, you will be required to keep a weekly journal on your singing journey using the class Website; prompt questions will be posted there. This is a way to reflect on your practicing and progress, and to actively think through concepts related to singing. Journals are due on a weekly basis (one entry per week), and journal entry due dates are listed on the “Course Schedule” (see below). Blackboard support # 213- 740-5555.

You should compose at least two full paragraphs of text in response to the questions supplied by the instructor. Writing should be reflective and engaged, yet informal. Topics will include your thoughts on what was discussed or experienced in class, comments on class performances (journals will only be seen by instructor, but please keep comments constructive), your own performances in class, how your own practice sessions are going, and your progress or challenges.

**Other weekly Assignments**
Your instructor may assign additional homework throughout the semester.

**Concert Reviews**
You must attend two live performances of solo vocal music performances and write a concert review of each (total of two Concert Reviews are due). See the following guidelines:

- **Solo**: The performance must feature, or be mostly comprised of solo, (not group or choral) vocal music.
- **Professional**: Singers must either be professional themselves, or in training with a professional; ex: USC Thornton School Voice Majors’ degree recitals.
- **Repertoire**: Students should attend concerts which feature music out of their comfort zone. One of the concerts must be of a “classical” nature. For example: student voice recitals, USC Thornton School opera productions (both are free to students) or a symphonic/choral work features solo singing. On campus concerts are listed at: [insert link here]; this link should also be posted on the class Blackboard website. The instructor will indicate which concerts count as “classical.”
  - The second concert may be any live vocal performance in any vocal genre of your choosing, as long as it adheres to the above guidelines. For example: USC Musical Theatre productions.
  - Repertoire that will not count toward concert attendance credit: Student run groups, student *a cappella* groups, rock groups. If in doubt, ask your teacher.
- **Credit**: To earn course credit, turn in a written review of both performances, along with a ticket stub or printed program.
- **Written Reviews**: Concert reviews must follow the *Concert Review Rubric* (posted on the class website. Reviews must
  - Be typed (not hand written) using a 12pt font 1.5 spaced.
  - Use terminology as discussed in class
  - Be objective and not framed by "I liked/I didn’t like“ statements.
  - Be proofread and free of spelling and grammatical errors. Grammar, spelling, and composition will be taken into consideration during grading.
Due Dates: The first concert review is due on the day of the midterm, and the second is due on the day of the final exam. In order to receive credit, concert reviews must be handed in as hard copy (printed). Electronic submissions will not be accepted.

PERFORMANCE PROJECTS AND EXAMS

Midterm Recital
The midterm recital will be a performance in which you will sing one of the songs listed on the Midterm Recital Song Selections Sheet from memory. You will be assessed by the instructor on your individual progress from the beginning of the semester until the midpoint, and receive a graded comment sheet on your performance. Please note that the midterm performance builds and depends upon previous in-class performances. (Note: the midterm performance day is the same day that your final song selection is due.)

Student Critiques: Students will listen to each other in the midterm recital and complete a performance critique for each classmate. Critiques will follow a specified rubric, posted on the class Blackboard. The instructor will discuss the spirit of these critiques in class, and methods for writing critiques that are honest, thorough, yet positive.

Due Dates for Student Critiques: Insert here; make these dates so that you can complete students’ midterm grades by the time midterm grades are due.

Final Exam
The final exam will take place on the assigned final exam date for this class and will be comprised of a short written exam on key components and performance of your final exam selection.

COURSE EVALUATION

Final grades will be calculated as follows:
• 15%: Class Participation
• 40%: Weekly Journal and weekly homework
• 10%: Midterm Recital performance
• 10%: Midterm Recital Student Critiques
• 10%: Concert Reviews (5 points each)
• 15%: Final Exam (5 points each written)
Total: 100 pts (100%)

Grading Scale
Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
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<td>Below 60 = Failing</td>
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ATTENDANCE POLICY

• Due to the amount of required in-class participation, there are no minimum number of absences listed as acceptable.
• Students should only miss class due to illness, illness, emergency or death in the family, and therefore absences can be considered excused due to these circumstances only.
• Please notify the instructor (via insert preferred method) before class of your absence. If notification is not received before class, it will be considered an unexcused absence.
• Emergencies may require documentation in order to be considered excused.
• Excessive absences (whether excused or unexcused) will affect your final grade negatively.
• Excessive tardiness will affect your final grade negatively.
• Classes last 1 hour and 50 minutes; students should not leave class early (except, of course, in case of illness or emergency). Early departure for reasons other than these will affect your final grade negatively.

REQUIRED CLAUSES – updated July 2016

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct
Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” https://policy.usc.edu/student/scampus/part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Discrimination, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and harassment are prohibited by the university. You are encouraged to report all incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity/Title IX Office http://equity.usc.edu and/or to the Department of Public Safety http://dps.usc.edu. This is important for the health and safety of the whole USC community. Faculty and staff must report any information regarding an incident to the Title IX Coordinator who will provide outreach and information to the affected party. The sexual assault resource center webpage http://sarc.usc.edu fully describes reporting options. Relationship and Sexual Violence Services https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp provides 24/7 confidential support.

Support Systems
A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://ali.usc.edu, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://dsp.usc.edu provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.