

# MUS110V–510V: MUSIC COMPOSITION

Spring 2018

**Instructor:** Dr. Kirsten Volness

**Email:** [kvolness@uri.edu](mailto:kvolness@uri.edu)

**Office hours:** by appointment

**Room:** Fine Arts Center D206

**Phone:** 401.874.2431

**Online Resources:**

Google Group: <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/uri-composers>

Course Website: <http://www.kirstenvolness.com/compuri.htm>

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF MUSIC STANDARDS COMPOSITION AND IMPROVISATION

Students must acquire:

1. Rudimentary capacity to create derivative or original music both extemporaneously and in written form.
2. The ability to compose, improvise, or both at a basic level in one or more musical languages, for example, the imitation of various musical styles, improvisation on pre-existing materials, the creation of original compositions, experimentation with various sound sources, and manipulating the common elements in non-traditional ways.

### CREATIVE GOAL

A major purpose of this standard is to encourage the development of rudimentary skill and greater insight into creative and communicative processes of music through the formulation of musical ideas in purely musical terms. While gaining fundamental technical proficiency in composition and improvisation is important to reaching this goal, the primary intent of the standard is to help all musicians gain technical means to reach individual creative ends.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

To achieve the highest possible level of skill in the use of basic concepts, tools, techniques, and procedures to develop a composition from concept to finished product. This involves the ability to work with various media, styles and forms; to use and develop notations, and to apply principles of scoring appropriate to particular compositions. (B.M.C.2.1.)

To achieve fluency in the use of tools needed by composers such as keyboard skills, spoken and written language, conducting and rehearsal skills, analytical techniques, and applicable technologies (electronic music). (B.M.C. 2.2, B.M.5.1, B.M.5.2)

To gain successful opportunities to hear fully realized performances of one's original compositions in public presentations, with critical assessment. (B.M.C.2.3.)

To further discover and develop one's compositional voice and to enhance one's clarity of expression, both musically and verbally.

To engage in the greater new music community by attending concerts featuring contemporary art music and applying for available opportunities in the field whenever possible, such as competitions, grants, and summer programs. Composers are encouraged to collaborate with performers and other artists outside of music to expand and create opportunities to hear and promote their music. *Opportunities will be posted on the door of D104, D206, or posted to URI-Composers Google group (<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/uri-composers>).*

### POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to present new work each week and to submit assignments in a timely manner. Unexcused absences and lack of consistent progress on individual projects will result in a

lowered final grade. Students will be expected to discuss their process, intent, and compositional decisions in detail, as well as larger concepts and ideas that may inform their work. **Students are also required to attend all composition recitals and participate in the final composers' concert.** (Students having recitals this semester need not present a piece at the semester-end composers' concert, but are required to attend.)

### **GRADING**

- Attendance: 20% (2% will be removed from final grade for each unexcused absence)  
NB: This includes regularly scheduled lessons and required events.
- Creative work: 50% (quality 20%, preparation 20%, timely delivery 10%)
- Performance/Recording Review: 10%
- Short written/verbal/listening assignments: 10%
- Performance/ability to rehearse and coordinate concert: 10%

### **LATE WORK**

No late work will be accepted. Please contact me **in advance** if you need an extension or immediately upon encountering extenuating circumstances and your request will receive every consideration.

### **UNIVERSITY ANTI-BIAS STATEMENT**

Each member of the University community has the responsibility to foster an environment of acceptance, mutual respect, and understanding. If you are a target or a witness of a bias incident, you are encouraged to contact the URI Bias Response Team ([www.uri.edu/student\\_life/brt](http://www.uri.edu/student_life/brt)) where you will find people and resources to help.

### **TITLE IX PROTECTIONS**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources here: <http://web.uri.edu/womenscenter/violence-prevention-and-advocacy-services-vpas/>

### **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me as early in the semester as possible so that we may discuss reasonable accommodations. As part of this process, please be in touch with Disability Services for Students Office at 330 Memorial Union, 401-874-2098 (<http://www.uri.edu/disability/dss/>) or 239 Shepard Building, Feinstein Providence Campus, 401-277-5221.

### **THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

Please refer to the most recent edition posted to the course website.

### **COURSE SCHEDULE**

JAN 23 / 25: Introductions—please bring in scores and recordings of your completed works and ideas about your semester goals

JAN 29 / 31: Creative Project/Listening

FEB 5 / 7: Creative Project/Listening

FEB 12 / 14: Creative Project/Listening

FEB 21: Creative Project/Listening (no class FEB 19)

FEB 26 / 28: Creative Project/Listening

MAR 5 / 7: Creative Project/Listening

**MAR 12 / 14: SPRING BREAK**

MAR 19 / 21: Creative Project/Listening

MAR 26 / 28: Creative Project/Listening

**APR 2/ 4: Creative Project/Listening—Finalize performers, deliver parts, confirm rehearsal schedule for Composers' Concert**

APR 9 / 11: Creative Project/Listening

**APR 16 / 18: Creative Project/Listening— Program information and concert hall form due**

**APR 23 / 25: Creative Project/Listening— Final Portfolio due:** PDFs of scores (all works) and parts (for complete works), mp3s/patches if relevant via email

**APR 30: Performance/Recording Review and Self-Evaluation due** via email

**MAY 6 from 3–9 pm — (with possible setup/soundcheck time before) — New Music Festival —**  
Please be available that day to volunteer and I will try to narrow down your performance time.

## ASSIGNMENTS

- **Creative projects of the student's own design — to be included in final portfolio**

Quantity of work may vary based on the projects at hand and one's individual creative process, but must reflect a consistent and reasonable effort. The goal is to complete three works this semester.

- **Short compositional exercises and analytical listening assignments**

These will address specific techniques and concepts in relation to the student's individual creative project and experience (at the discretion of the instructor). Students should be prepared to discuss recordings and scores as assigned.

- **Performance/recording review (250-500 words) – Due DEC 11 via email**

Attend a new music concert or webcast (50% or more of the program should have been written within the last 50 years) outside of URI, or listen to a contemporary classical music album released in the past year, and write a review that includes a description and evaluation of the music performed as well as other pertinent observations. Write as though it were being published, with attention to detail in describing your ideas.

How stylistically diverse was the program and what elements of the music presented were you drawn to or averse to? What kind of audience was in attendance/would this be marketed to? What did you find successful or lacking about the concert presentation/album? What ideas were sparked from your experience that may inform your own future work? *Events will be posted to URI-Composers Google group*  
(<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/uri-composers>).

- **Written self-evaluation and goals for the future – Due DEC 11 via email**

How have your strengths as a composer changed and what elements of craft, style, or practice do you feel you could continue to improve upon? What goals do you have for your future progress in relation to these observations? What specific creative projects or other activities do you plan to pursue in the short term in light of these goals?

## **NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL: Sunday, MAY 6, 2017 at 3 pm**

All students are required to present a finished piece (written during the semester or completed previously) or a work in progress at the final composers' concert (except those who are having a recital this semester for whom participation is optional). The experience of preparing professional performance materials, recruiting performers, scheduling and participating in rehearsals, writing program notes, and publicizing your event are essential skills for success as a composer. **A completed Concert Hall Event Request form detailing needs for the production of your piece is due APR 18.**

## URI COMPOSITION CONCERTS — SPRING 2018

**Attendance is mandatory at composition department recitals and concerts** (marked in bold below); attendance at other concerts is recommended. Concerts take place at B101 Concert Hall unless otherwise noted. Check URI-Composers Google group for any updates, additions or further details.

- **JAN 28 at 3 pm — University Artists Series: New Music Ensemble**
- FEB 3 at 7 pm — Verdant Vibes Benefit Concert @ Music Mansion, 88 Meeting St., Providence, \$25 suggested donation (if that's prohibitive, pay what you can)
- MAR 15 at 7:30 pm — Transient Canvas performs an electroacoustic program including KV's *Year Without a Summer*, BEAMS Fest, Slosberg Music Center, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA
- MAR 16 at 7:30 pm — Keaton Nelson's Album Release Party, Sosico, West Warwick, \$10 (includes album)
- APR 7 at 8 pm — Verdant Vibes & Audrey Harrer @ Columbus Theatre, Providence, \$15
- **APR 15 at 7 pm — Rebecca Jackson's Graduate Composition Recital**
- **APR 22 at 7:30 pm — Lucas Tarantino's Senior Composition Recital**
- **MAY 6 from 3–9 pm — URI New Music Festival (we will need your volunteer help throughout and possibly earlier for setup)**

If you are performing or are having your compositions performed, please email me so that I might share it with the rest of the composers. **Support your colleagues and go listen to live music!**