

# COUNTERPOINT

website: [hansenmedia.net](https://hansenmedia.net)

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

Laptop or other device with the capacity to participate in audio/video remote meetings;  
Smart phone or scanner to create an Acrobat file (pdf); Access to a printer;  
Course content at <https://hansenmedia.net/courses/counterpoint/>

Recommended text:

Owen, Harold. *Modal and Tonal Counterpoint*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1992.

ISBN: 0-02-872145-4 (Available to download with subscription to Scribd.com)

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Students will develop an understanding of the principles of polyphony as applied by composers from the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Students will develop skills in writing counterpoint in various styles. Through analysis and writing, students will gain a deeper appreciation of the art of counterpoint, and the ability to demonstrate their understanding in performance.

## COURSE ACTIVITIES

We will have participatory class sessions discussing and analyzing contrapuntal techniques, distinguishing the unique features of each style, including modal counterpoint in the various species (Fux). Some pieces will be assigned for analysis outside of class, but most compositions will be analyzed as a group. Students will compose brief examples of contrapuntal music from various stylistic periods and share their work with the class.

## ATTENDANCE AND GRADING POLICIES

Attendance is required at every class. Participation is evaluated by attendance and engaged discussion in class. The final grade will be computed by averaging these four components, including daily participation in class:

In-class Analysis and Participation:	20%
Assignments:	40%
Modal Worksheets (10%)	
Canon (10%)	
Invention (10%)	
Bass lines, Counterlines (10%)	
Tests and Projects	20%
Final Exam:	20%

## **COURSE OUTLINE (Weekly Topics)**

### **UNIT I: MODAL POLYPHONY IN THE 16<sup>TH</sup> AND 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES**

- Week 1: Overview of Polyphony and Modes  
First Species Counterpoint
- Week 2: Second Species Guidelines  
Third Species Guidelines
- Week 3: Fourth Species Guidelines  
Two Part Motets and Secular Instrumental Counterpoint  
Counterpoint in 3 and 4 Parts
- Week 4: Dance Variations, Motets, Madrigals  
Basso Continuo, Figured Bass, Tonality, Chromaticism  
**Exam 1: Modal Counterpoint**

### **UNIT II: TONAL POLYPHONY IN THE 18 AND 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES**

- Week 5: Continuous Variations: Ground Bass, Chaconne, Passacaglia  
18<sup>th</sup> Century Polyphony, Non-Chord Tones  
Chorale Prelude
- Week 6: Bach Two-Part and Three-Part Inventions - Composition 1: Two-Part Invention  
Overview of the Fugue, Subjects and Developmental Techniques  
Fugue Analysis
- Week 7: The Canon - Composition 2: Two-Part Canon at the Octave  
Classical and Romantic Period Polyphony

### **UNIT III: POLYPHONY IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURIES**

- Week 8: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Polyphony  
Hindemith, Bartok
- Week 9: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Popular Styles  
Polyphony in Jazz and Blues  
Composition 3: Bass Lines and Counterlines
- Week 10: Recent Developments and Technologies  
Minimalist Counterpoint  
Review

### **Final Exam: Analysis**

## RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND REFERENCES

Owen, Harold. *Modal and Tonal Counterpoint*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1992.  
ISBN: 0-02-872145-4

Mann, Alfred. *The Study of Counterpoint*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1965. Translation of *Gradus ad Parnassum* by Johann Joseph Fux. ISBN: 0-393-00277-2

Salzer, Felix and Schacter, Carl. *Counterpoint in Composition*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969.

Jeppesen, Knud. *Counterpoint: The Polyphonic Vocal Style of the Sixteenth Century*.  
Translated by Glen Haydon. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1939.

Benjamin, Thomas. *The Craft of Modal Counterpoint: A Practical Approach*. New York:  
Schirmer, 1979.

Morris, Reginald O. *Contrapuntal Technique in the Sixteenth Century*. New York: Oxford  
University Press, 1922.