Nashville State Community College  
Business & Applied Arts Division  
Music Technology  

Master Course Syllabus

This master course syllabus is meant simply as a guide and overview of the course. Each instructor will further clarify their criteria for grading, classroom procedures, attendance, exams and dates, etc. on his/her course syllabus.

Course Title: MST-1220 Songwriting I  
Credits: 3  
Class Hours: 3  
Course description from catalog including prerequisites and co-requisites. An introduction to basic songwriting. Topics include lyric and melody construction, working with music publishers and performance rights organizations. Professionally written songs and students' songs are analyzed in class.  
Not part of a Tennessee Transfer Pathway

Instructor Information:  
Name:  
Email:  
Office Phone:  
Office Location:  
Office Hours:

Textbook and Other Materials:  

Reference Materials: TBD

Supplies: TBD

Course Outcomes:  
Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:  
1. Identify and analyze basic song form and structure.
2. Apply appropriate lyric techniques in the development of plot and storyline.
3. Identify and apply musical elements in composing original melodies.
4. Use creative problem solving skills in completing original song ideas.

Course Competencies:
The following are detailed course competencies intended to support the course outcomes:
1. Identify common song forms.
2. Maintain and organize a collection of original song ideas.
3. Describe the attributes of a professional songwriter.
4. Demonstrate the ability to record a simple song demo.
5. Demonstrate the ability to create and develop original song ideas.
6. Identify different song market requirements.
7. Write an appropriate lyric, given an emotional context.
8. Identify common songwriting pitfalls and how to avoid them.
9. Utilize common songwriting tools and resources in the creation of original songs.
10. Define the characteristics of a great melody.
11. Create an original melody with or without instruments.
12. Explain common songwriting royalty arrangements.
13. Calculate the cost of producing song demos.
14. Describe the factors that help a songwriter develop leverage when negotiating a publishing deal.
15. List commonly agreed to songwriting royalty rates.
16. List the contractual protections a songwriter should request when negotiating a publishing deal.
17. Describe the impact of new technologies on the songwriting industry.

The following are general education competencies intended to support the course outcomes:
1. Write clear, well-organized lyric sheets in common industry formats.
2. Locate, evaluate, and use multiple sources of information to avoid potential copyright infringement.
3. Participate as co-writers in the creation of original compositions that meet assigned requirements.

Topics to Be Covered:

1. What is a song?
   A. Introduction to class
   B. Components of the song
   C. Different song forms

2. Being ready to write
   A. Be prepared and organized (recorder and "hook book")
B. Developing great ideas and titles
C. Routine, Working at it, Open your mind, find the time
D. Believe in your own creativity

3. Successful lyric writing, Part 1
   A. Successful to who?
      1. Writing from your emotional experience
      2. Don't force it. Integrity of the song
      3. Who are you trying to impress?
      4. On the other hand, give it a wide audience
      5. Why bother?

   B. Three subjects: life, love and death.
      1. Write a strong title
      2. Some title tricks

4. Successful lyric writing, Part 2
   A. The "three step method"
      1. Start with a great title or hook
      2. Discuss and outline the story/meaning
      3. Write/sing the lyrics

   B. Focusing the lyric
      1. The whole brain
      2. Focus points
      3. Know what/who the song is for

   C. Things to look out for/common mistakes
      1. Too obscure? Intentionally mysterious?
      2. Singer with negative persona (hard to pitch)
      3. Don't bore us, get to the chorus.
      4. Phrases that hangover
      5. Tongue twisters
      6. No one can hear punctuation
      7. Present, past or future?

   D. Things to look out for/common mistakes (Continued)
      8. Pictures instead of plain words
      9. How long is too long?
     10. Poetry doesn't always translate to lyrics
     11. Do your rhymes rhyme?
E. Tools for successful lyric writing

5. Writing a great melody
   A. What makes a melody great?
      1. Ascending (up) or descending (down).
      2. Steps and leaps
      3. Contour and shape
      4. Climax and resolution
      5. Static or chants
      6. Prosody (matching of melody to lyric)
   
   B. Writing with or without instruments
      1. A Capella: more freedom
      2. With instruments: more structure
   
   C. Keeping it singable, uncomplicated, MEMORABLE
   
   D. Helpful Hints

6. Putting it all together
   A. Why do we love a song we love?
   
   B. Does my song do that?
   
   C. Can I accept criticism?
   
   D. Re-writing and re-writing ‘til it’s right

7. Collaboration
   A. Sometimes two heads are better than one.
   
   B. Agree on the splits before you start
   
   C. Getting on the same page
   
   D. Give and take

8. Demoing your song
   A. Get feedback first
B. Work tape or full blown demo  
   1. Is your production "part of the song"?  
   2. Guitar or piano and vocal demos

C. In the studio  
   1. Producing vs. overproducing  
   2. Let the musicians play  
   3. Who is the right singer?  
   4. Keep it short and sweet  
   5. Time for more feedback

9. Pitching your song
A. How to approach a publisher  
   1. First steps  
   2. Picking your best three songs  
   3. How to package and present your song

B. Building relationships

C. What's good "deal"?

D. Going directly to the artist/producer

10. Politics, TV and Film, and rest of it
A. The politics of getting a song cut

B. TV and Film, etc.  
   1. Commercials  
   2. Video games  
   3. Other uses

C. Exploit your own copyrights  
   1. Developing artists  
   2. Starting a label

D. NSAI, ASCAP, BMI, SESAC, SGA. etc.

Course Assessments:
The following performance assessments will be used to demonstrate students' understanding, knowledge and skills:
Students’ songwriting projects, class participation, attendance, and exams will be used to calculate final grades.

**Grading Policy:**

**Grading Scale:**

A =
B =
C =
D =
F =
FA (see below)
FN (see below)

Per TBR policy, a student who does not officially drop or withdraw from a course, but receives a failing grade, will receive an “FA” if the last day of attendance was earlier than two-thirds into the part-of-term. That date equates to the last day to withdraw from the course.

An FN is awarded to students who never attended class.

**Late Work Policy & Make-up Procedures for Missed Assignments and Work:**
Each instructor will provide policy.

**Attendance Policy**
A student is expected to attend all scheduled classes and laboratories. Absences in a course may affect a student’s final grade. The student is responsible for all assigned work in the course regardless of excused or unexcused absences. Tardiness may also affect a student's final grade.

**D2L Brightspace/NSOnline and myNSCC email**
It is the student's responsibility to check D2L and MyNSCC email on a regular basis. These are the official communication channels between the college and students. Students are responsible for the information communicated through those channels. D2L contains specific course information and MyNSCC contains information important for other purposes.

**Technology Statement**
Nashville State’s classes are considered to be web-enhanced. Faculty have an expectation that students will use a computer and the Internet to complete assignments, engage in online discussions, and access various course materials through Desire2Learn (D2L) course shells. Computers are available for student use at each campus during campus open hours.

**ADA Compliance Statement**
Nashville State complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you wish to request any special accommodations for any courses in which you are enrolled, contact the Access Center at 615.353.3741 or 615.353.3721.

**Classroom Misconduct**
Nashville State Community College has a zero tolerance policy for disruptive conduct in the classroom. Students whose behavior disrupts the classroom will be subject to disciplinary

Please be aware that children are not allowed in class or unattended on campus.

**Academic Misconduct**

Any form of academic dishonesty, cheating, plagiarizing, or other academic misconduct is prohibited. Students are responsible for understanding and aiding by the Academic Misconduct Policy in the Nashville State Student Code of Conduct that can be found at https://s3.amazonaws.com/nscc.edu/PDFs/dean-students/Student_Code_of_Conduct_Policy.pdf

In addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed through regular college procedures as a result of academic dishonesty the instructor has the authority to assign an “F” or a “Zero” for the exercise, paper, or examination or to assign an “F” for the course. Students may appeal through the appropriate college grade appeal procedures.

**Academic Early Warning System**

Nashville State Community College has implemented an Early Warning System to notify students via e-mail about academic problems such as poor classroom attendance, poor performance on assignments/tests, poor communication skills, late/missing assignments, and/or lack of classroom participation. *Please note that Early Warning Alerts do not affect a student's academic standing.*

**RAVE Emergency Alert System**

Emergency events can happen at any time and Nashville State Community College wants to be able notify students if and when they occur. For this reason, all students have been enrolled in the free RAVE alert system. If you have not already done so, please log in at https://getrave.com/login/nscc to confirm and update your contact information and notification preferences. It is critical that your information be correct so that you will receive any emergency notifications. Your RAVE Username is your NSCC email address. If you've never received an email from RAVE with your password, or if you need to reset your password, select “Forgot your password?” and a new password will be emailed to you. Should the RAVE system indicate “user not found”, select Register and create your own RAVE account.

**Inclement Weather Policy**

Nashville State will use the RAVE alert system to send a text message to students, staff, and faculty about adjusted hours of operation and/or closings at individual campuses. All students should check the Nashville State web site home page at www.nscc.edu for announcements on campus closures, which may vary from campus to campus. Campus closures will also be announced on local television stations.

When classes are cancelled, an online assignment will be posted in NS Online. Check NS Online for a message from your instructor regarding your online assignment requirements.
Students should use their own best judgment in determining whether to report to campus during inclement weather when classes are not cancelled.

**Class Cancellation Policy**
If the class is cancelled, the instructor will notify all students by posting in the NSOnline/D2L course, e-mailing through NSOnline/D2L, and/or by posting a sign on the classroom door. In the event of class cancellation, students must access NSOnline/D2L to complete classwork and the assignment that will be posted in the course D2L site.