

MUCO 499 • Percussion for Composers

Course Syllabus

Class Date/Time: Friday/9:00-10:50am • Location: BMH 100 • Brian Shepard & Erik Forrester, Instructors

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Forrester Office: BMH 101 • **Phone:** 213.740-7416 • **Email:** lisrik@earthlink.net • **Hours:** by appointment

Prerequisite: 1 semester of Orchestration (MUCO 236 or 338x or the equivalent)

Goal: It is the goal of Percussion for Composers that each student—upon successful completion—gains a working knowledge of practical, idiomatic writing for percussion instruments, percussion ensembles and percussion sections. The course will focus on three primary types of percussion writing: solo percussion, percussion ensemble, and the orchestral/wind ensemble percussion section. Subjects to be learned include the range, nomenclature, timbral palette and technical idiosyncrasies of all the standard percussion instruments, as well as proper notational techniques for solo, ensemble and section writing. To reach this goal, each student must successfully accomplish the objectives described below. Accomplishment will be measured by quizzes, evaluation of student assignments, and projects.

Objectives:

- Demonstrate the correct range and transposition for each standard percussion instrument
- Demonstrate an understanding of physical and timbral differences of various sticks and mallets
- Demonstrate an understanding of the various playing techniques and rudiments as they apply to idiomatic writing
- Use correct notational techniques when writing musical manuscripts for percussion instruments
- Properly write for the various percussion instruments—both singularly and in combination with other percussion instruments as well as with orchestral and wind ensemble instruments
- Properly distribute parts and instruments within a percussion section or ensemble

Required Text and Materials: There is no required text, but the student will find it helpful to have a good orchestration text available such as *The Study of Orchestration, Third Edition* by Samuel Adler. Each student will be required to purchase one pair of snare drum sticks (Vic Firth model SD1) and two pair (4 mallets) of medium rubber marimba mallets (Mike Balter model 4B)

Online Access and Materials: In-class handouts, audio examples as well as other supplemental materials and readings may be accessed in Blackboard (<https://blackboard.usc.edu/>). We will only use your USC email to contact you and send any notifications, so please check that account regularly.

Grade Breakdown:	Quizzes and Homework Assignments	20%
	Playing Evaluations	10%
	Snare Drum Project	15%
	Multi-Percussion Project	15%
	Percussion Ensemble Project	15%
	Part Assignment Project	10%
	Orchestra Section Project	15%

Attendance: Because so much of this course will be practical in nature, attendance is extremely important. Each student will be allowed two (2) unexcused absences without any direct effect on his/her grade. After the 2nd unexcused absence, the student's grade will be lowered 5% for each additional unexcused absence. **The only excused absences are for university sanctioned events and must be approved by one of us IN ADVANCE of the date to be missed.**

Due Dates: Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated in the course outline. Assignments turned in after that time will be considered late and will be penalized 10% for each additional day or portion of a day that they are late.

Academic Dishonesty will not be tolerated in any part of this course (assignments, quizzes, projects, etc.) If you are not sure what violates the University code, please read the pertinent sections of *SCampus* or see one of us. Ignorance of the rules will not be an excuse.

Disabilities Policy: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP (213-740-0776) is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 am-5:00 pm, Monday through Friday.