

**MUS 294: SONGWRITING**  
**Class # 78656**  
**Fall, 2018**

**Instructor information:**

Dr. Jeffrey Libman  
email: jeffrey.libman@asu.edu

Students are encouraged to contact the course email address with any questions or concerns. Office visits or telephone conferences may sometimes be necessary, and can be arranged via email.

Course URL: <http://herbergeronline.asu.edu/mus294-songwriting>

There is no required textbook for this course.

**Course Description and Objectives:** This online course is an exploration of the craft of songwriting. After an introduction to general music terms and concepts along various song structures, students will have their first opportunity to submit a song or song fragment. After the study of five song genres (blues, folk, punk, country, and hip-hop), students will choose three of the styles and submit three corresponding songs or song fragments. The course concludes with students submitting a full-length song based on concepts discussed during the semester. Along the way, there are exams and quizzes based on lecture content, self-reflective writing assignments, and discussion board/participatory activities.

No previous formal music study is assumed for this class. However, for the purposes of this class, a song must have vocals with lyrics and some form of accompaniment. Students need not be experienced singers but must be willing to record themselves vocalizing with an accompanying instrument. It will also be necessary for students to have some facility performing on an instrument (a computer sequencer/music production program/digital instrument). Students must have the ability to record sound files to mp3.

**Learning Outcomes:** As a result of taking this course, the student will:

1. Demonstrate understanding of musical terminology and concepts related to songwriting
2. Examine and analyze songs in a variety of genres
3. Create and record five songs or song fragments
4. Evaluate songs, genres, and engage in self-reflection of the artistic process through a variety of writing assignments

**More Detail on What Counts:** Songs must be the student's original work. Though many songs have some similarities to preexisting songs, original songs have unique elements that differentiate them from all others. All songs are to be created during the timeframe of this course. If you are already an experienced songwriter and have recorded work before this class, you are not to submit that work. Keep creating new works! For the purposes of this class, a song must have vocals with lyrics and accompaniment, so you will have to

sing/vocalize and find some way to accompany yourself, whether with a physical or digital instrument. Whereas digital instruments (GarageBand loops, etc.) are acceptable, using preexisting backing tracks is not! You have to CREATE your accompaniment, not use one that already exists in full. If I believe you are using a preexisting backing track, I hold the right to lower your grade. Moreover, this is not an instrumental-only composition class. You have to vocalize (singing, rapping, speaking, etc.), with words (lyrics) and must be willing to record yourself doing so!

### Student Evaluation Breakdown

UNIT 1 - Intro and Song Elements	
Exam 1- Song Elements	80 points
UNIT 2 - Song Forms	
Exam 2 - Song Forms	80
Songwriting Experiment	80
UNIT 3 - Genre Studies	
Quiz 1 - Blues	50
Quiz 2 - Folk Music	50
Quiz 3 - Country Music	50
Quiz 4 - Punk Music	50
Quiz 5 - Hip-hop	50
Genre Studies Songwriting Projects	80
	80
	80
Participation (Discussion Board/Song Reviews)	150
Final Songwriting Project	120
TOTAL:	1000 points

Grade scale: 895-1000 = A 795-894 = B 696-794 = C 595-694 = D Below 595 = E

**Technical Minimums:** Please visit this link to see if your computer meets the technical minimums necessary to take this course:

<https://courses.hol.asu.edu/services/requirements.php> This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Herberger Online may also be helpful:

<https://courses.hol.asu.edu/services/landing/pages/faq - JavaScript> Access to a high-speed Internet connection is required to take this course. Adequate bandwidth is essential. It is your responsibility as a student to take all exams and quizzes in a location in which you have a stable Internet connection. Herberger Online strongly suggests that you use the latest version of Firefox (PC) or Safari (Mac) and that you have both Quicktime, Flash Media, and Adobe Reader installed.

Because this course is entirely delivered via the Internet, you are responsible for making sure that the computer you use to access all course materials meets or exceeds the specified computer minimums. Also, due to the high media content of this course, you will be required to set up and configure a media player that will consistently play the .mp3 files and the .mp4 digital clips delivered via the course website.

PLEASE NOTE: you are highly encouraged not to enroll, or to drop immediately, if you do not have computer experience, if you are not willing or prepared to assume the added responsibility of a computer-based course, or if you plan to be away from a computer site for an extended period of time during the semester. Necessary required skills may include downloading .mp3 audio files as well as digital video clips, surfing the net, conferring via email, submitting assignments, posting on discussion boards, and other intermediate computer knowledge.

Access to a high-speed Internet connection is required to take this course. Access to a non-wireless, high-speed Internet connection is required for exams and quizzes in this course. Adequate bandwidth is essential. Because this course is entirely delivered via the Internet, you are responsible for making sure that the computer you use to access all course materials meets or exceeds the specified computer minimum qualifications as listed on the following site <https://herbergeronline.asu.edu/services/requirements.php>.

**Technical Support:** Please do not contact your instructor with technical questions. Herberger Online handles all technical questions and issues that may arise in this course. Please contact the support team immediately if you encounter technical issues while completing an assignment and you are unable to resolve the problem and reset your work. The Herberger Online support team is available to assist you 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You may reach them anytime at:

- [holsupport@asu.edu](mailto:holsupport@asu.edu)
- 1-888-298-4117
- 480-965-3057 (International)

When contacting support, please provide:

- The full name of this course (ABC 123: Long Name)
- The title(s) of any assignment(s) you're having trouble with
- A brief description of the problem
- Detailed, step-by-step instructions to reproduce the problem

**Student Conduct:** All students are expected to abide by the ASU code of student conduct, which is available at <https://eoss.asu.edu/dos/srr/codeofconduct>.

**Student Academic Integrity Policy:** Students are also expected to abide by the ASU Student Academic Integrity Policy, which is available at: <https://provost.asu.edu/sites/default/files/AcademicIntegrityPolicyPDF.pdf>.

Each student must act with honesty and integrity, and must respect the rights of others in

carrying out all academic assignments. This policy also defines academic dishonesty and sets a process for faculty members and colleges to sanction dishonesty. Violations of this policy fall into five broad areas that include but are not limited to:

1. Cheating on an academic evaluation or assignments
2. Plagiarizing
3. Academic deceit, such as fabricating data or information
4. Aiding Academic Integrity Policy violations and inappropriately collaborating
5. Falsifying academic records

I sanction any incidents of academic dishonesty in my courses using University and HIDA guidelines. Should you have any question about whether or not something falls subject to this clause, feel free to contact me or review the university policy on academic integrity at the above link.

In this course, **the exams and quizzes are not open-book or open-note**. Accessing, or trying to access course lessons or any other course page while you are taking an exam or opening new browsers is in violation of academic honesty. No collaboration or use of outside sources of any kind is allowed on any exams, assignments, assessments, etc. This includes viewing the course website while taking the exam, listening to audio excerpts on another student's exam, discussing the exam with another student who has taken the exam before you take it, and other such behavior. Do NOT navigate away from an exam once you've opened it for any reason! No other Web pages or computers should be open while taking an exam. If you open a browser window from the course website immediately before the exam or open another browser window with the course website while taking the exam, you may be prevented from submitting the exam. The Herberger Online staff may be able to access records indicating that you opened up a browser window from the course website during your exam, which may result in you receiving no credit for your assignment and receiving additional disciplinary action.

Any violation of this policy will result in sanctions and may result in further disciplinary action. Sanctions may include failure of the course (E), failure by reason of academic dishonesty (XE), and others as outlined by the ASU policy. All violations of the Code detected during the term will be sanctioned, even if the assessment has already been graded and points assigned.

Do not share your course ID and password with anyone. Log out of the course website when you are finished with it. Do not allow another student to use the course website under your password, even if s/he is also in the course. Each student is fully responsible for all activity that takes place on the course website under his/her password.

**Copyright Infringement:** Students must refrain from uploading to any course shell, discussion board, or website used by the course instructor or other course forum, material that is not the student's original work, unless the students first comply with all applicable copyright laws; faculty members reserve the right to delete materials on the grounds of suspected copyright infringement.

**Disability Resource Center:** To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the ASU Disability Resource Center (DRC) at <https://eoss.asu.edu/drc>;

Phone: (480) 965-1234; TDD: (480) 965-9000). This is a very important step as accommodations may be difficult to make retroactively. If you have a letter from their office indicating that you have a disability which requires academic accommodations, in order to assure that you receive your accommodations in a timely manner, please present this documentation to me no later than the end of the first week of the class so that your needs can be addressed effectively. Students who feel they will need disability accommodations in this class but have not registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) should contact DRC immediately. Check the DRC website at <https://eoss.asu.edu/drc> for eligibility and documentation policies. Disability information is confidential.

**Religious Holidays:** A list of recognized religious holidays may be found at: <https://eoss.asu.edu/cora/holidays>. Students may be excused for the observance of religious holidays. Students should notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester about the need to be absent from class due to religious observances. Students will be responsible for materials covered during their absence and should consult with the instructor to arrange reasonable accommodation for missed exams or other required assignments.

**Missed Classes Due to University-Sanctioned Activities:** Students required to miss exam and quiz open/close periods due to university sanctioned activities will not be counted absent. However, absence from examinations/quizzes or course work due to university-sanctioned activities does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of the absence. Students should inform the instructor early in the semester of upcoming scheduled absences and immediately upon learning of unscheduled required class absences. Reasonable accommodation to make up missed exams or other required assignments will be made. Consult the instructor BEFORE the absence to arrange for this accommodation.

**Offensive Content:** Some course content may be deemed offensive by some students. If you are uncomfortable with any of the content, it is your responsibility to bring this to the attention of the instructor to request an alternative assignment.

**Title IX:** Title IX is a federal law that provides that no person be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited. An individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at <http://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs/students>. As an employee of ASU, I am a mandated reporter and obligated to report instances of reported or suspected incidences of sexual harassment.

**Threatening Behavior:** Self-discipline and a respect for the rights of others in the classroom (even an online classroom) or studio and university community are necessary for a conducive learning and teaching environment. Threatening or violent behavior will result in the administrative withdrawal of the student from the class. Disruptive behavior may result in the removal of the student from the class.

**Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation:** Arizona State University is committed to providing an environment free of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation for the entire university community, including all students, faculty members, staff employees, and guests. ASU expressly prohibits discrimination, harassment, and retaliation by employees, students, contractors, or agents of the university based on any protected status: race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, and genetic information.

As an employee of ASU, I am a mandated reporter and obligated to report instances of reported or suspected incidences of sexual harassment.

*No exceptions will be made to any of the policies as outlined above, under any circumstances.*

### **Adding, Dropping, and Withdrawing**

The following dates have been established by Arizona State University and the Herberger Institute of Design and the Arts; your professor cannot make exceptions to them or change them.

August 16	1 <sup>st</sup> Day of classes
August 22	Last day to drop a course without college approval
August 29	Tuition & Fees 100% Refund Deadline
<b>September 3</b>	<b>Labor Day Observed – no classes</b>
September 5	Herberger Institute Extended Registration Add/Withdraw Deadline
<b>October 6-9</b>	<b>FALL BREAK – No classes</b>
October 31	Course Withdrawal Deadline
<b>November 12</b>	<b>Veterans Day Observed – no classes</b>
<b>November 22-23</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Holiday Observed – no classes</b>
November 30	Complete Session Withdrawal Deadline
November 30	Last Day of Classes
December 10	Final Grades Due

Course registration changes are processed through MyASU: <http://my.asu.edu>.

## Assignment Descriptions

**Exams and Quizzes:** All exams and quizzes are based on lecture content, including the listening examples found within the lectures. They are comprised of multiple choice and true/false questions. Exams are 80 points and quizzes are 50 points. The total number of points for the three exams and the five quizzes is 410 points.

All exams and quizzes will be taken online through the course website. Use the “practice test” immediately before each exam and quiz to verify that your computer is properly configured. ***Once the exam/quiz period begins, the related course content will not be accessible until after that exam/quiz is completed. Therefore, it will be necessary for students to review online lecture content in advance of the opening of each exam/quiz period.***

If you are surprised or concerned about your exam or quiz grade, please contact me at the course email address. We will examine the questions that you got wrong and reply with study suggestions for the next exam or quiz. Students are encouraged to contact the course email address with any concerns or questions about study strategies or other aspects of this course.

If you experience computer or technical problems during an exam or quiz, DO NOT SUBMIT IT! Exams/quizzes that have been submitted can NOT be reset, and those grades will stand as posted. Instead, exit the browser, and take appropriate steps to identify and solve the problem with your computer (by using the practice test, moving to a different computer, or contacting technical support). Once you have resolved the problem, then return to the exam/quiz page on your course web site to reset your exam/quiz. Use the practice test again before taking the reset. The system will allow you to reset your own exam if you have not already submitted or reset that exam/quiz. NOTE: only one online reset per exam/quiz is allowed, so you must take all reasonable steps to resolve any technical difficulties before attempting the reset. Two total resets are allowed for the semester. No resets will be allowed outside of the exam/quiz period.

Make up exams/quizzes will only be allowed in documented cases of bereavement or hospitalization. If one of these unfortunate circumstances befalls you, please notify your professor within 1 week (7 days) of the exam and be prepared to present documentation of your reason for missing the exam. No make-up exams will be given to students who “miss” or “forget to take” an exam, encounter work or transportation conflicts, do not follow the technical support guidelines outlined above, or do not notify the instructor of an illness or bereavement within 1 week of the exam or quiz. Do not submit false documentation.

**Songwriting Experiment:** Please review the section above entitled More Detail on What Counts. Remember, you must vocalize and accompany yourself on all songwriting projects. Digital instruments are acceptable as well as physical instruments, but preexisting backing tracks are not.

This is your first songwriting assignment for this class. Being that some of you are likely

experienced songwriters while others may be just getting started, I am allowing you to tailor this assignment to your experience. For the songwriting experiment, you will have the option to write either a part of a song, which I will call a song fragment, or you can write a complete song. Should you choose to write a song fragment, it should be at least two sections long -- i.e., a verse and a chorus, or two verses, a chorus and a bridge, etc.

The song/song fragment should be an original work. Though many songs have some similarities to preexisting songs, original songs have unique elements that differentiate them from all others. Song fragments will be eligible for full credit. Challenge yourself if you would like to complete a full song. Though your later genre studies songwriting projects will receive feedback from other students, this project will only be evaluated by the instructor. Since this may be your first ever songwriting experiment, you get a little more privacy to start with. You will need to save your songwriting assignments as mp3 files and upload them as instructed.

The audio recording of your song experiment (or other future songs) does not have to be studio quality. If you do not have any designated recording equipment, use the microphone on your computer or phone. As long as I can hear your vocals (lyrics) and accompaniment clearly, it is eligible for full credit. Before you submit your assignment, listen to it. Are the different parts balanced appropriately? Can you hear everything you want to? Could it be improved without too much work, perhaps by adjusting the position of the microphone? If you want to experiment with multitrack audio recording, consider using the free open source audio editing program Audacity or GarageBand if you have a Mac. Keep this in mind for this project and all subsequent songwriting projects.

When you upload a song or song fragment, you will also be asked to submit it with a description of the process you went through to write your music. These are called process papers, and they can be relatively brief (one page double-spaced, 12-point font; it can be longer if you wish). How did you record your project? What equipment/software did you use? How did you create your accompaniment? What style did you write in? What musical elements and/or forms that we discussed were utilized? Did you stick with the conventions of a particular style, or did you bend them somewhat? What came easily in the composition process? What was difficult? How could you complete this song or make it better? Is this song supposed to sound similar to a particular artist (or artists) that inspires you? These are the kinds of questions you can write about in your process paper. *Also, you are required to submit the lyrics to each song as part of each process paper.*

The recorded songwriting experiment itself is worth 60 points, and the process paper is worth 20 points, for a total of 80 points.

**Genre Studies Songwriting Projects:** For these three songwriting projects, you will compose songs/song fragments in three different styles chosen from the five genres discussed in the class: blues, punk, folk, country, and hip-hop. The same general rules of the songwriting experiment apply: submissions are to be updated in mp3 format, song fragments should be at least two sections long, the submissions should be your own original material, and process papers are also due. Again, song fragments are eligible for full credit, but feel free to challenge yourself and write more. These projects, however,



will receive song reviews, or constructive commentary, from other members of the class. See the Participation description below.

I understand that the Genre Studies projects will likely force you to write songs in different styles than you have explored before as songwriters. That is the point! Part of the point of this class is that you experiment with songwriting in new ways and see what you have learned in the end. Expand your horizons and get out of your comfort zone, if only for a few weeks. I do accept Genre Studies projects that are hybrids of different styles, including one of the aforementioned styles required in the project. For example, are you a hip hop artist who has never experiment with country music before? You can still rap in your submission. Perhaps the country music elements could include country music style storytelling, or subtle elements of country music style accompaniment. So there is some flexibility here. *What you don't get to do is do what you already do three times for these projects.* You have to think and modify your musical sensibilities for this unit.

Each recorded genre studies song/song fragment is worth 60 points, while each corresponding process paper is worth 20 points. Therefore, each of the three projects is worth 80 points, bringing the total to 240 for all three projects.

**Participation (Discussion Board/Song Reviews):** Throughout the course on Fridays, I will be posting discussion questions related to songwriting. Your assignment will be to post a response by the following Friday at 2:00pm. When you do so, you can either respond to the question itself, or you can respond to another student. Full credit for this participation will be determined by whether your comments are substantive. Also, it's fine to disagree with another member of the class, just do it cordially and defend your point. There will be twelve questions over the course of the semester on the discussion board. These questions can be found under the Discussion Board forum called Discussion Questions.

You will also be asked to write song reviews. These are comments on other students' songs/song fragments from the genre studies projects. After you've uploaded your own songs/song fragments, you'll be assigned three others at random, and you'll be asked to make comments for your fellow students. Please make these comments constructive and substantive.

The twelve discussion questions responses and the three song reviews are all 10 points for a maximum total of 150 points.

Please note there is also a Discussion Board forum called Student Topics, where you can create either your own discussion threads and/or respond to other members of the class. There is no grade related to this portion of the course website, but it provides a forum for class members to communicate with each other, where groupthink can occur for the benefit of everyone's songwriting development or related skills.

**Final Songwriting Project:** Like the previous songwriting projects, the final project is comprised of an mp3 submission and a process paper. The original song for your final

project may be of any style of your choosing. It does NOT have to be in any of the styles mentioned in class, but if you opt to go a different route, you should briefly discuss the characteristics of that style in your process paper. The song may be of any style, instrumentation, subject, tempo, mood (etc!) that you like. There is no time minimum or limit, but the song must be a complete song, with a beginning, middle, and end. Most submissions will be between two and six minutes long.

The song portion of the final project is worth 100 points, and the process paper is worth 20 points, for a total of 120 points.

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**\*\*LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.\*\***

**Please note that make-up exams and quizzes will NOT be offered in the case of "forgetting" or "missing" the exam windows, so be aware of these dates!**  
**Important Course Dates and Windows**



UNIT 1

Opens Thu, Aug 16 at 8:00am  
Exam 1 Thu, Aug 30 at 10:00am - Fri, Aug 31 at 11:59pm

UNIT 2

Opens Saturday, Sep 1 at 12:00am (*immediately following Unit 1 exam*)  
Exam 2 Thu, Sep 13 at 10:00am - Fri, Sep 14 at 11:59pm  
Song Experiment (*students have two weeks to upload this project*)  
Sat, Sep 15 at 12:00am - Fri, Sep 28 at 11:59pm

UNIT 3

Opens Sat, Sep 29 at 12:00am (*immediately following song experiment deadline*)  
Quiz 1 Thu, Oct 4 at 10:00am - Fri, Oct 5 at 11:59pm  
Quiz 2 Thu, Oct 11 at 10:00am - Mon, Oct 15 at 11:59pm (*extended for fall break - the previous week is a short week*)  
Quiz 3 Thu, Oct 18 at 10:00am - Fri, Oct 19 at 11:59pm  
Quiz 4 Thu, Oct 25 at 10:00am - Fri, Oct 26 at 11:59pm  
Quiz 5 Thu, Nov 1 at 10:00am - Fri, Nov 2 at 11:59pm

(*students have a week to upload each genre studies songwriting project*)

Upload 1: Mon, Nov 5 at 10:00am - Sun, Nov 11 at 11:59 pm  
Upload 2: Mon, Nov 12 at 10:00am - Sun, Nov 18 at 11:59 pm  
Upload 3: Mon, Nov 19 at 10:00am - Tue, Nov 27 at 11:59 pm (*extended for Thanksgiving*)

Song Review 1: Mon, Nov 12 at 10:00am - Fri, Nov 16 at 11:59pm  
Song Review 2: Mon, Nov 19 at 10:00am - Tues, Nov 27 at 11:59pm (*extended for Thanksgiving*)  
Song Review 3: Wed, Nov 28 at 10:00am - Sun, Dec 2 at 11:59pm

UNIT 4

Opens Wed, Nov 28 at 12:00am (*immediately following Genre Studies Upload #3*)  
Final Project Wed, Nov 28 at 10:00am - Fri, Dec 7 at 11:59pm

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### **Schedule of Discussion Board Questions:**

Question 1: opens Thu, Aug 16 @ 8:00am, closes Fri, Aug 24 @ 11:59pm  
Question 2: opens Sat, Aug 25 @ 12:00am, closes Fri, Aug 31 @ 11:59pm  
Question 3: opens Sat, Sep 1 @ 12:00pm, closes Fri, Sep 7 @ 11:59pm  
Question 4: opens Sat, Sep 8 @ 12:00am, closes Fri, Sep 14 @ 11:59pm  
Question 5: opens Sat, Sep 15 @ 12:00am, closes Fri, Sep 21 @ 11:59pm  
Question 6: opens Sat, Sep 22 @ 12:00am, closes Fri, Sep 28 @ 11:59pm  
Question 7: opens Sat Sep 29 @ 12:00am, closes Fri, Oct 5 @ 11:59pm  
Question 8: opens Sat, Oct 6 @ 12:00am, closes Fri, Oct 12 @ 11:59pm  
Question 9: opens Sat Oct 13 @ 12:00am, closes Fri, Oct 19 @ 11:59pm  
Question 10: opens Sat, Oct 20 @ 12:00am, closes Fri, Oct 26 @ 11:59pm  
Question 11: opens Sat, Oct 27 @ 12:00am, closes Fri, Nov 2 @ 11:59pm  
Question 12: opens Sat, Nov 3 @ 12:00am, closes Friday, Nov 9 @ 11:59pm

Answers to discussion board questions will be due Fridays at the end of the day (11:59pm) starting the first full week of the semester. There will be discussion questions for 12 consecutive weeks.

**Disclaimer: The instructor reserves the right to adjust this syllabus as necessary to meet the needs of the class. Any changes made by the instructor or staff will be posted on the course homepage.**