

Instructors: Brian Dokko, Tom Terrell, Dennis Feinland

Location: Room 216 (Choir Room) – conference period Room 025 (Band room)

Email: tterrell@lbschools.net (or Canvas mail), dfeinland@lbschools.net

Office Phone: 562-591-0581 x.5129



INTRODUCTION TO SONGWRITING

PERIOD 5 – SYLLABUS AND NOTES

2023-2024

BE HERE NOW

Welcome to Poly’s elite-level music program. It is in this ground-breaking songwriting class that you will take your first steps in your journey into the constantly evolving and wonderfully expansive world of music-making. You are expected to make the most of this learning opportunity, as you are provided hands-on instruction that is curtailed to your musical and artistic interests. All forms of music are given validity and represent an opportunity to teach music through, as we honor the vast cultural experiences our students bring to the classroom. In this course, not only will you get instruction and experience composing your own music, but you will be exposed to the instruments, song forms and lyrical poetry of various music genres, ranging from Pop, Hip Hop, Rock, RnB, Bachata, Mariachi, and Bossa Nova, among many others. The course utilizes computer and cell phone technologies for composing/producing music, as well as training you on piano keyboards with written music notation/chords in order to play/perform your music.

This year's goals will be centered around preparing students for a lifetime of musical expression. The entire aim of music is to connect and share profound moments as you reflect on yourself and the world around you. An excerpt from Mr. Terrell's teaching philosophy:

In my opinion, the ultimate experience for a creative individual is to be completely and utterly in the moment, free of doubt or reservation. As someone who has felt such a state of transcendence through music, my goal as an educator is to illuminate and guide that experience to future generations. Thus, my teaching philosophy is to empower my students to achieve creative fulfillment, to service their identity, and to be able to collaborate flexibly in the extensive scope of music throughout their lifetime.

Music and Mental Health

There are numerous scientific studies that support the opinion that learning music makes you smarter. And we hope everyone agrees music is certainly good for the soul. But practicing and performing music can be psychologically taxing and cause some people various levels of stress that result in lowered self-esteem and self-confidence. Demanding professional-level musicianship ensures the continued quality and success this school has become known for, however, it must not come at the expense of your mental health. We as staff know that your workload can be quite heavy and your academic courses rigorous; we acknowledge that mental and physical health comes first. Proper time management, sleep, and eating right is essential to being your best self. However, if you ever feel downtrodden, depressed, or ailing for any reason, know that you can have a conversation with either myself and/or our campus support services to work towards understanding what needs you have. You have at your disposal your Counselor, the Care Center, the School Psychologist, your Pathway Administrator, the Intervention Counselors, and your Teachers to call on at any time. Professionalism and confidentiality is assumed at all times. That being said, music can be a wonderful tool to lift you out of a haze, and also boost endorphins!

Conference Periods

Periods 7 & 8 (2:01-3:35pm)

We hold daily open conference periods to give students opportunities to seek out help or tutoring on anything they are working on. Parents can visit or call our office phone at this time to discuss anything (though email is generally more reliable as we are sometimes away from my desk).

Course Description

This course is designed as an introduction to the creative craft of songwriting. Students learn the basic tools and techniques necessary to write commercially successful songs, including writing effective lyrics, melodies, accompaniments, arrangements, song forms, and basic music theory. The course also emphasizes the importance and awareness of the business side of songwriting. Students will perform their songs in class and receive immediate feedback from the teacher and other students to refine the effectiveness of their songs. Using appropriate equipment and software, students will learn how to orchestrate and record their songs via MIDI and digital recording technology.

Course Objectives

Students will continue to develop their ability to recognize, understand, describe, and perform the basic materials and processes of pop music, including but not limited to:

- How to create music on BandLab (or other DAWs)
- Display knowledge of keyboard notes and basic harmonies
- Thorough understanding of function of rhythm, meter, and subdivision
- Learn prominent artists and producers in various genres
- Knowledge of correct historical periods and styles
- History and progression of the development of recorded music.

Grading

The semester grade book is kept up to date and is available in Canvas under GRADES.

The category breakdown is:

1. Participation: Attendance, punctuality and participation in class lessons	50%
2. Canvas Assignments	30%
3. Unit Projects	20%

All school behavior and attendance policies will be enforced.

Students who are quarantined due to COVID-19 exposure will be provided work and asynchronous learning opportunities through the teacher's Canvas Course. Lessons and work will be posted in Canvas within twenty-four (24) hours of when the lesson was taught.

Further Expectations

- Be prepared and ready to learn at your highest level every day. Expect this from yourself and your classmates at all times.
- Understand that using self-discipline while actively working in a focused manner toward clear goals is the key to excellence.
- Treat all equipment (chromebooks, headphones, recording booth gear, etc.)
- Treat all of your fellow classmates with respect.
- Seek out musical role models, especially producers or writers of genres you like.
- Work constructively and cooperatively at all times with other students.
- Demonstrate respect for the space. No food or gum, talking or playing out of turn, packing up before class is finished.
- Always show courtesy and respect to the teacher, or any person addressing the group at any time.

School Support Services

Counseling Staff and contact information [here](#)

Michael Gray, CARE Center x5898, Room 701W

Carla Galvez, Care Center Annex, 5137, Room 124