

**SINGER'S DICTION**  
*English/MUS 2211*  
**Fall 2024**

**Instructor:** Dr. Brenda Smith, DMA  
302 Music Building  
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**Student Office Hours**

Student office hours are posted outside Room 302 and are available by appointment as well. Feel free to communicate by e-mail or phone, if needed.

**Class Meetings**

The class meets Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 5th period (11:45 a.m.) in Room 142 of the Music Building. The course ends Friday, October 11, 2024, with a capstone activity.

**Course Description**

The course is an interactive workshop that develops lyric diction skills in the English language. The International Phonetic Alphabet, the standard tool for proper pronunciation in all languages, serves as the basis for our study. The principles shall be applied to the delivery of text in vocal repertoire (including song, musical theater, opera, and oratorio) of the British Isles and America. Classroom activities provide students practical procedures for achieving a confident performance of texts to be sung in English. Aspects of vocal health will be discussed throughout the seven-week term.

**Textbook and Materials**

The required textbook for the course is *Diction in Context: Singing in English, Italian, German, and French* by Brenda Smith, (San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing 2021). A copy of the textbook is always available on the reference shelf of the Architecture and Fine Arts library. The textbook can be purchased in the campus bookstore or online. (*Diction in Context* is the textbook for the entire year's course.) Another English diction book entitled *Communicating in English: A Singer's Guide to English Diction* by Kathryn LaBouff (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 2008) is recommended as a reference but not required for purchase.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of course, students will be able to recognize the phonemes for the English language and to transcribe the symbols for them, using the International Phonetic Alphabet. Students will be able to enunciate clearly in English both in speech and song. Students will have skills to evaluate poetic meaning and historical context for texts set by British and American composers. The acquired skills are applicable for further study of vocal repertoire in foreign languages.

### **Measurement Tools**

Attendance, initiative, and progress are the main criteria for grading. The measurement tools for these criteria are a.) attendance/class participation b.) quizzes/class activities and homework assignments, c.) class presentations, d.) final exercise and e.) self-reflection assignments.

### **Quizzes, Class Activities, Final Exercise, and Self-Reflection Assignments**

Quizzes, class activities and homework assignments are intended to assess a student's command of newly introduced material. The final exercise is comprehensive in scope, demanding knowledge of the International Phonetic Alphabet and its application to written and oral texts in English. The exercise includes dictation, a survey of rules, and recall of historical data. Prompt attendance for any quiz and the final exercise is required. Under extenuating circumstances, please notify the instructor of anticipated absences and provide documentation for verification. Throughout the course, the class will engage in comparative listening. Please note the names of performers and any biographical information. Self-reflection assignments are posted on Canvas one week before the due date. Your responses should derive from your class notes and personal reflections. For the completion of self-reflection assignments, outside sources are neither required nor recommended.

### **Attendance and Class Participation**

Singer's diction helps to prepare students for a professional life in music. Because of the brevity of the course (7 weeks) and its importance to students in limited access majors such as music or musical theatre, prompt class attendance is expected. Lateness is at times unavoidable. Please text or call the instructor's cellphone before 11:30 am on the day of class. Be careful to deal with anticipated absence or lateness in the manner described above. There are no discretionary absences from the course. Excused absences are those officially sanctioned by the University of Florida. <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academicregulations/attendance-policies>.

### **Class Presentations**

Each student will investigate poetic texts in British and American English to be spoken, sung, and presented in class. There are two class presentations during the term. The first presentation is a pass/fail exercise that will prepare each student for the graded final class presentation. A template for both presentations will be distributed during the first week of the course. Each student will prepare and perform the presentation repertoire with the course accompanist. Students should perform on the assigned day. In case of extenuating circumstances, please notify the instructor at least 24 hours prior to the day of the scheduled presentation. The grading criteria for class presentations are musical and textual preparation, International Phonetic Alphabet transcription and diction accuracy, poetic, and historical score study. An assessment sheet will be distributed early in the term. Each student will receive constructive feedback from peers and the instructor.

### **Dates for Class Presentations**

First Class Presentations (graded S/U): September 16, 18, 20, 2024 (Rehearsals TBA)

Final Class Presentations (25% of final grade): October 4, 7, and 9, 2024 (Rehearsals TBA)

The class accompanist will schedule a rehearsal with you prior to your presentation date.

## **Grading**

Using the plus/minus scale, the course grade will be calculated in the following way:

|                             |       |   |
|-----------------------------|-------|---|
| Attendance*/Participation*  | 20%   | (20 points) 20 class periods                |
| Quizzes                     | 15%   | (15 points)                                 |
| Final Exercise              | 20%   | (20 points)                                 |
| Class Presentations         | 25%   | (25 points)                                 |
| Self-Reflection Assignments | 20%   | (20 points: 4 assignments/5 questions each) |
|                             | ===== |   |
| Total                       | 100%  | (100 points)                                |

\* English Diction is a 7-week course with essential material for success as a voice major at UF. Attendance is taken through a daily roll call. As stated above, there are **no discretionary, unexcused** absences. Should extenuating circumstances arise that prevent your prompt attendance, please notify the instructor by email or phone as indicated above. Given prior notice, accommodation can be arranged. As a courtesy to others, please notify the instructor or a classmate prior to class if you anticipate arriving late.

\*Participation is defined as prepared for class and active in-class discussion. Because the class is interactive, please set all cell phones and other comparable devices on “off.” In case of an emergency, please inform the instructor prior to class and adjust your equipment to “vibrate.”

Grading Scale by Points & GPA equivalent:

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|----|-------------|
| A  | 93.4 - 100  |
| A- | 90.0 - 93.3 |
| B+ | 86.7 – 89.9 |
| B  | 83.4 – 86.6 |
| B- | 80.0 – 83.3 |
| C+ | 76.7 – 79.9 |
| C  | 73.4 – 76.6 |
| C- | 70.0 – 73.3 |
| D+ | 66.7 – 69.9 |
| D  | 63.4 – 66.6 |
| D- | 60.0 – 63.3 |
| E  | 0 – 59.9    |

More information on grades and grading policies is here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Please feel free to consult with the instructor at any time regarding your status in the course.

**Note: The syllabus is subject to change. Stay in touch with the progress of our course by reading email (ufl.edu) and checking in Canvas.**

## **Keys to Success**

### ***Phonetic Transcriptions***

Because many symbols have similar shapes, it is important to be distinct in your IPA penmanship. Make phonetic transcriptions that are neat and clearly legible **in pencil**. Phonetic transcription assignments are intended to help you hone your skills. Such assignments should be original work from your hand. It is acceptable to consult published sources (online or print) as you create your phonetic transcriptions. If you do so, be sure to cite those sources. **Do not submit** the published source as your own work.

### ***Poetic Interpretations***

Poetic interpretations should be presented in your own words.

Research Citations: Please cite your sources for all class presentations requiring research. A field trip to the Architecture and Fine Arts Library will provide you with the tools for research sources and citations.

### ***Quizzes***

Quizzes are announced one week ahead. Flashcards and/or group study may be useful.

### ***Final Exercise***

The final exercise is an in-class, open book activity requiring access to a textbook and your class notes. Prepare accordingly.

## **PROPOSED WEEKLY PLAN**

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| August<br>22-23 | <b>Friday:</b> Introductions<br>Discussion of Singer’s “Diction in Context” concept, Syllabus and Class Procedures   | Acquire the Textbook: <i>Diction in Context: Singing in English, Italian, German, and French</i>   |
| August<br>26-30 | <b>Monday:</b> Quiz on Syllabus<br>Discussion and Practice of Diction Tools and Introduction to IPA<br>Discussion: How is Poetry Defined? Who writes poetry, why and how?<br><br><b>Wednesday:</b> Review IPA and English Vowels (Announcement of first quiz)<br>Discussion: How does a poem become a song? Why is it important for a singer to understand the parts of speech?<br><br><b>Friday:</b> Prevention is the Cure<br>Anatomy and Physiology of the Singing Voice, Vocal Hygiene | <b>For Monday:</b> Read p. xi-xiv (Introduction and Message to Students) and p. 1 – 15 “Gathering the Tools”<br><br><b>For Wednesday:</b> Read 26-27 (IPA History and Use) and p. 45-47 (The Sounds of English and English Vowels: The Cornerstones of Singer’s Diction)<br><br><b>For Friday:</b> Develop a Plan for being enthusiastic without sacrificing vocal health. |

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| <p>September<br/>2 - 6</p> | <p><b>No Class on Monday (Labor Day)</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday:</b> Review of IPA vowel symbols. Discussion of Symbolism in Poetry and Strategies for Poetic Analysis</p> <p><b>Friday:</b> First Quiz (IPA for English vowels)<br/>Discussion: Early English Ayres and Lute songs<br/>Comparative Listening:<br/>Dowland “Come Again” among others.</p>   | <p>Prepare for IPA Vowel Symbol Quiz (on Friday)</p> <p><b>For Wednesday:</b> Review p. 8-10 “Drink to me only with thine eyes” and p. 15-23 (Singer’s Diction: Poetry in Song through “Come again, sweet love”)</p> <p><b>For Friday:</b> For Friday: Prepare two discussion questions about vocal health and hygiene.</p> <p><b>First Self-Reflection Assignment Due on Canvas by 5 pm.</b></p>   |
| <p>September<br/>9-13</p>  | <p><b>Monday:</b> IPA Diphthongs and Triphthongs (p. 48-49) and Consonants and Clusters (p. 50)<br/>“Sleep” Comparative Listening Activity</p> <p><b>Wednesday:</b> Symbolism in Poetry and Song/ Review of Consonants/Letter “r” Practice<br/>In Class Vowel Dictation Practice</p> <p><b>Friday:</b> Comparative Text Settings: Hume “Fain would I change” and Quilter “Fair House of Joy.”</p> <p><b>First Class Presentations Paperwork due in Class</b></p> | <p><b>For Monday:</b> Read p. 23-26 and prepare the Discussion Questions on p. 26. Begin the text and IPA transcription for your class presentation selection. <i>IPA Symbols should be written in pencil and be large enough to read clearly.</i></p> <p><b>For Wednesday:</b> Review p. 48-49 and read p. 56-59 (Shakespeare and Early English Song)</p> <p><b>For Friday: REMEMBER TO BRING TEXT and IPA for First Presentation TO CLASS/ 9/13/24</b></p> <p><b>Second Self-Reflection Assignment Due on Canvas by 5 pm.</b></p> |
| <p>September<br/>16-20</p> | <p><b>Monday, Wednesday, and Friday: First Class Presentations S/U</b><br/><i>The instructor provides program notes regarding poet, composer, and musical style.</i><br/><i>Student reads the poem aloud as it will be sung using the IPA transcription, gives a brief poetic analysis and sings the selection.</i></p>  | <p><b>For First Presentations:</b> Recite the text as it will be sung. Share your reflections on the poetry and musical settings. Be sure to rehearse with class accompanist. Listen attentively to the performances of your peers. You will be asked to respond with constructive feedback.<br/><b>Attendance is mandatory.</b></p>  |

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| <p>September 23-27</p>          | <p><b>Monday: AFA Library Experiential Learning Event with Jacob Mauldwin, AFA Music Librarian</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday:</b> English Poetry and Music in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Works by William Blake, The Brownings, and the Rossettis. In Class Graded Dictation Practice</p> <p><b>Friday:</b> Ivor Gurney, poet/composer and A. E. Housman, the singer's poet</p> <p><b>Rehearsals for Final Presentations will occur TBD outside of class.</b></p>   | <p><b>Monday's class will meet in the Conference Room of the AFA Library, Fine Arts A Building 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.</b></p> <p><b>For Wednesday:</b> Read p. 76-86<br/>Be prepared to respond in class to Discussion Question 1 on p. 80.</p> <p><b>For Friday:</b> Read p. 86 -93.</p> <p><b>Third Self-Reflection Assignment Due on Canvas by 5 pm.</b></p>   |
| <p>September 30 – October 4</p> | <p><b>Monday:</b> Dickinson and Whitman, American Song in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries/Rorem and Persichetti</p> <p><b>Wednesday:</b> Dictation Practice. Poetry of James Joyce, James Stephens, Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, and Samuel Barber. Influence of Nadia Boulanger</p> <p><b>Friday: FINAL CLASS PRESENTATIONS/Also Monday and Wednesday of the following week</b><br/><i>Students present program notes regarding poet, composer, and musical style. Please read the poem as you will sing it using the IPA transcription. Sing the selection, accompanied by class accompanist. Sources should be cited fully.</i></p> | <p><b>For Monday:</b> Read p. 94-101<br/><b>Materials for Final Presentations Due in Class (Text/IPA legible)</b><br/><b>Late work compromises final presentation grade.</b></p> <p><b>For Wednesday:</b> Be prepared to answer Discussion Question 3 on p. 101.</p> <p><b>For Final Presentations:</b><br/><b>Presenters:</b> <i>Be prepared to share essential information about the composer, poet, and musical setting. Feel free to reflect on the poetry and your experience as a singer of it. Read the poem aloud using the IPA transcription and sing the text in its musical context.</i><br/><b>Listeners:</b> <i>Be mindful of the information given in the presentations and take notes. Listen attentively to the performances of your peers. You will be asked to respond with constructive feedback.</i><br/><b>Attendance is mandatory.</b></p> |

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| <p>October<br/>7-11</p> | <p><b>Monday and Wednesday: Final Presentations (Cont'd)</b></p> <p><b>Friday: Final Exercise</b><br/>An Open Book, In-Class Event with graded dictation</p> <p><b>Final Version of Printed Program due by 5 pm on Friday, October 11.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Be sure to cite all sources.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Final Self-Reflection is due on Canvas on the same day.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>PLEASE NOTE: Program Notes are due as EMAIL attachment to <a href="mailto:bsmith@arts.ufl.edu">bsmith@arts.ufl.edu</a> .</b></li> <li>• <b>Self-Reflection is due on CANVAS.</b></li> </ul> | <p><b>For Monday and Wednesday:</b><br/>Attendance and Engagement are expected. Plan to take notes and respond to class performers.</p> <p><b>For Friday:</b> Bring Textbook and all Class Notes to assist you in completing the exercise. <b>Printed version of Program Notes (4-5 concise, meaningful sentences) with appropriate sources cited is due in Class, on paper.</b></p> <p><b>Final Self-Reflection is due on Canvas by 5 pm on Friday, October 11.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Late work will compromise course grade. PLEASE PLAN AHEAD!</b></li> </ul> |
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### Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities requesting accommodation should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email, they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/publicresults/>.

### University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conducthonor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

### Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

### The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations.



