

**SINGER'S DICTION**  
***English/MUS 2211***  
**Fall 2025**

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**Student/Office Hours**

Student/Office hours, listed on the schedule posted by the door of Room 302 MUB, are opportunities to meet with your instructor outside of lesson times. If you are unavailable at the times listed, individual appointments are readily available. Student/Office hours allow you the chance to review assignments, discuss concepts, or ask questions. Feel free to communicate by e-mail, text, or phone, as 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 Wednesday, October 15, 2025, 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 and class participation b.) quizzes, class activities, and homework assignments, c.) class presentations and 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 evaluate a student's command of newly introduced material. The final exercise is comprehensive in scope, demanding knowledge of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) 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 quizzes 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 your study of singing at UF, plan on prompt, consistent class attendance. 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 in 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 and assessment sheet 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, Dr. Nansi Carroll. 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 (IPA) transcription and diction accuracy, poetic, and historical score study. Each student will receive constructive feedback from peers and the instructor.

### **Dates for Class Presentations (Note: Dates are subject to change.)**

First Class Presentations (graded S/U): September 19 and 22, 2025 (Rehearsals TBA)

Final Class Presentations (25% of final grade): October 10 and 13, 2025 (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: 7 for weekly attendance and 13 for regular participation)
Quiz	15%	(15 points)
Final Exercise	20%	(20 points)
Class Presentations	25%	(25 points)
Self-Reflection Assignments	20%	(20 points: 4 assignments/5 questions each)
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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. Please note: There are **no discretionary, unexcused** absences. Should extenuating circumstances arise that prevent your prompt attendance, please notify the instructor by email, text, 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 to “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:

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. Practice the symbols to gain confidence and familiarity. 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.

## **Weekly Plan**

August 22	<b>Friday:</b> Introductions 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 25-29	<b>Monday:</b> Review of Syllabus Discussion and Practice of Diction Tools Introduction to IPA Discussion: How is Poetry Defined? Who writes poetry, why and how?  <b>Wednesday:</b> Review IPA and English Vowels (Announcement of first quiz) Discussion: How does a poem become a song? Why is important for a singer to understand the parts of speech?  <b>Friday:</b> Prevention is the Cure Anatomy and Physiology of the Singing Voice, Vocal Hygiene	<b>For Monday:</b> Read p. xi-xiv Introduction and Message to Students Read p. 1 – 15 "Gathering the Tools"  <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)  <b>For Friday:</b> Develop a Plan for being enthusiastic without sacrificing vocal health.

September 1-5	<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) Discussion: Early English Ayres and Lute songs Comparative Listening: Dowland “Come Again” among others.</p>	<p>(Prepare for IPA Vowel Symbol Quiz)</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> First Quiz: You will be given the IPA English vowel symbols, and you will provide one word that contains the sound for each symbol. Prepare two discussion questions about vocal health and hygiene.</p>
September 8-12	<p><b>Monday:</b> IPA Diphthongs and Triphthongs (p. 48-49) and Consonants and Clusters (p. 50) “Sleep” Comparative Listening Activity</p> <p><b>Wednesday:</b> Symbolism in Poetry and Song/ Review of Consonants/Letter “r” Practice In Class Vowel Dictation Practice</p> <p><b>Friday/September 12:</b> Rehearsal Day</p>	<p><b>For Monday:</b> Read p. 23-26 and prepare the Discussion questions on pg. 26. Begin the text and IPA transcription for your class presentation selection. Please be sure your work is legible.</p> <p><b>For Wednesday:</b> Review p. 48-49 and read p. 56-59 (Shakespeare and Early English Song)</p> <p><b>Friday’s Class Period will be used for individual rehearsals with Dr. Nansi Carroll</b></p>
September 15-19	<p><b>Monday, AFA Library Experiential Learning/Jacob Mauldwin, AFA Music Librarian</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday: Discussion of the term: Diction in Context &amp; Preparation for first class presentations.</b></p> <p><b>Friday: First Class Presentations S/U</b> <i>The instructor provides program notes regarding poet, composer, and musical style.</i> <i>Student completes and reads the poem as it will be sung using the IPA transcription, gives a brief poetic analysis and sings the selection.</i></p>	<p><b>Class will take place in the AFA Library in Fine Arts A.</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday:</b> Review of Library Resources.</p> <p><b>For First Presentations:</b> Prepare to recite the text as you intend to sing it, and to share with the class 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.</p>

September 22-26	<p><b>Monday: First Class Presentations (cont'd)</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday:</b> English Poetry and Music in the 19 Century: Hume and Quilter/Works by William Blake, The Brownings, and the Rossettis.</p> <p><b>Friday:</b> Ivor Gurney, poet/composer and A. E. Housman, the singer's poet In Class Graded Dictation Practice</p>	<p><b>Monday: Class Presentations (cont'd)</b> <b>Attendance is mandatory</b></p> <p><b>For Wednesday:</b> Review the textbook regarding the British poets (p. 77-87, Blake, the Brownings, and the Rossettis. Be prepared to answer the discussion questions on 87.</p> <p><b>For Friday:</b> Read p. 87-93. Be prepared to answer Discussion Questions 1, 2, and 5 on p. 93. <b>Expect a graded dictation practice</b></p>
September 29 – October 3	<p><b>Monday:</b> Dickinson and Whitman, American Song in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries/Forem and Persichetti</p> <p><b>Wednesday:</b> Dictation Practice. Poetry of James Joyce and James Stephens/Samuel Barber.</p> <p><b>Friday:</b> Works of Leonard Bernstein and Aaron Copland/Influence of Nadia Boulanger</p>	<p><b>For Monday:</b> Read p. 94-101 Prepare an answer for Question 1 and 2, p. 101.</p> <p><b>For Wednesday:</b> Be prepared to answer Discussion Question 3 and 5 on p. 101.</p> <p><b>For Friday: Prepare and bring the materials for your Final Presentation. Work is Due in Class (Text/IPA legible) Late work compromises final presentation grade.</b></p>
October 6-10	<p><b>Monday: Punctuation and Performance/Graded Dictation in Class</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday: Final Review</b></p> <p><b>Friday: Final Presentations</b> <b>FINAL CLASS PRESENTATIONS:</b> <i>Student presents program note 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: Dictation in class</b> <b>For Wednesday: Expect a poetic analysis exercise in class</b> <b>Friday: For Final Presentations:</b> Attendance is expected. Plan to take notes and respond to class performers. <b>Presenters:</b> <i>Be prepared to share with the class essential information about the composer, poet, and musical setting.</i> <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> <b>Attendance is mandatory.</b></p>

<p>October 13-15</p>	<p><b>Monday: Final Class Presentations (cont'd)</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday: Final Exercise</b> An Open Book, In-Class Event with graded dictation</p> <p><b>Final Version of Printed Program due. <i>Be sure to cite all sources.</i></b></p>	<p><b>Attendance is mandatory for performers and listeners.</b></p> <p><b>For Wednesday:</b> Bring Textbook and all Class Notes to assist you in completing the exercise.</p> <p><b>Printed version of Program Notes (4-5 concise, meaningful sentences) with appropriate sources cited is due in Class, on paper.</b></p>
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<https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>

