MUSIC 31 (Spring ’09):
TONAL HARMONY AND COUNTERPOINT I

Raphael Atlas
301 Sage Hall, Smith College (585-3188)
RiphRaph@smith.edu
Office hours by appointment

Todd Fruth, Graduate Assistant
3 Arms Music Building (542-8505)
tfruth08@amherst.edu

The text for the course is available online, soon to be linked from the course webpage on Blackboard. You may also wish to consult the following books on reserve:

- Tonal Harmony, with an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music by Stefan Kostka and Dorothy Payne [MT50 .K85 2004]
- Harmony and Voice Leading by Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter [MT50 .A444 2003]
- Counterpoint in Composition by Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter [x MT55 .S217 1989]

I regret that I cannot accept exercises on staff paper other than 8½"x11". You can download and print staff paper in various formats from the links below.

- portrait format: 12 staves — 10 staves — 5 grand staves
- landscape format: 12 staves — 10 staves — 4 grand staves

While I encourage you to reuse paper, please leave enough space on the page for me to respond to your work.

SYLLABUS

The course is designed for music majors and those with a serious interest in music. It will focus on the so-called common-practice tradition of Western music (from the late 17th through late 19th centuries). Because the best method for getting “inside” a style is to write in it, most assignments will require that you write music according to strict guidelines presented in class.

Proficiency in reading music is required and you are expected to be proficient either on an instrument or vocally. Piano skills are not required, but they are extremely helpful.

The course will cover the following:

- Introduction to bass/soprano counterpoint
- Introduction to four-part writing and harmonic function:
  - Root-position triads
  - Cadences
  - Root-position seventh chords
- Bass/soprano counterpoint: passing tones, neighbor tones
- Four-part writing: first-inversion triads; seventh chords in inversion
- Bass/soprano counterpoint: suspensions
Four-part writing:
  Six-four chords
  Modulation

Two 50-minute ear-training sections weekly are required.

Submitted work will include regular exercises and final take-home comprehensive exercises in counterpoint and four-part writing. All exercises should be checked at the piano to the best of your ability.

I will grade exercises as follows:

- ✫ means that the work is superior
- ✔ means that you grasp the principles of the exercise
- ☐ means that I’m not sure you’ve sufficiently grasped the principles of the exercise, and I encourage you to speak with me and redo it as soon as possible

I will determine the course grade as follows:

- Ear-training sections: 20%
- Regular exercises: 50%
- Two final exercises: 15% each

Should you choose to miss a class, I expect that you will stay abreast of the material covered and assignments through contact with classmates. I must decline to entertain questions about what was covered in that class, or to present to individuals material that I already introduced in class. By the same token, I must decline to entertain requests to summarize what will be covered in a class about to be missed.

I will accept all late exercises up to one week after the date due, until April 24, but I will go over them only if my schedule permits; in short, they will become my lowest priority. I’ll deduct 10% from their total point-value when I calculate the final grade.

For office hours at Amherst, I can be available by appointment on many Mondays and Wednesdays directly before and/or after class. If you’re able to come across the river, a vaster world of scheduling possibilities opens.

As you work on your exercises, should you run into an intractable problem or otherwise get confused, feel free to email. In the best case, I’ll be able to help you work out the knot before you submit the exercise. In the worst case, it will simply wait until class, and I’ll come prepared to address it.