

MUSIC 2881 A STRING INSTRUMENT TECHNIQUES

Fall 2023

Instructor Information

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Office Hours by appointment, MB 217

Course Information

For location and time of classes, please see OWL Course Site (<https://owl.uwo.ca>).

This course will focus on the fundamentals of violin, viola, cello, and double bass pedagogy, with an emphasis placed on the remediation of common performance problems experienced by beginning and intermediate level students. Salient repertoire and pedagogical resources for class instruction will be also examined.

- Extra Information
 - Course Weight: 0.50
 - Breadth: Category A
 - This course is a requirement in the Bachelor of Music with Honours in Music Education program
 - Link to Academic Calendar:
https://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/Courses.cfm?CourseAcadCalendarID=MAIN_030753_1&SelectedCalendar=Live&ArchiveID=

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Understand the basic playing technique and pedagogy of the primary bowed-string instruments: Violin, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass.
2. Be able to identify and remediate common performance problems in inexperienced string players at the beginner and intermediate level.
3. Learn the fundamentals of instrument care and maintenance for bowed string instruments (e.g. tuning, cleaning, changing strings, adjusting bridges).
4. Examine relevant repertoire and best practices relating to beginner- and intermediate-level string ensembles in primary and secondary school settings
5. Demonstrate their knowledge of string instrument bowing and fingering technique through playing, peer-teaching
6. Explore prescient issues relating to bowed-string instruction through class discussion, written assignments, score annotations, and a teaching reflection paper.

Table: String Instrument Techniques Course at a Glance

DATES	INSTRUMENTS	ACTIVITIES	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1, Sept. 7-8	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sept 7: Course Intro and instrument sign-out • Sept. 8: Instrument Care and Maintenance • OPTIONAL: Free String Instrument Care Workshop, Saturday, September 9th at 2:00-4:30 PM in MB 254* 	N/A
Weeks 2-8, Sept. 11-Oct. 27	Violin & Cello	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics to be covered in class include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Instrument set-up, tuning, maintenance ○ Left-Hand Technique (Instrument hold, 1st position finger placement) ○ Right-Hand Technique (Pizzicato, Bow-hold, exercises, detaché and martelé bow-strokes, separate vs. hooked/slurred bows) ○ KEYS: D-major, G-major, A-major 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment 1 (Due Sept. 18)* • Playing Test 1 (Due Sept. 18) • Playing Test 2 (Due Sept. 25) • Playing Test 3 (Due Oct. 2) • Playing Test 4 (Due Oct. 10) • Playing Test 5 (Due Oct. 16) • Playing Test 6 (Due Oct. 23) • Assignment 2 (Due Oct. 23)*
READING WEEK	N/A	N/A	N/A
Weeks 9-12 Nov. 6-Dec. 1	Viola & Double-Bass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics to be covered in class include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Instrument set-up, tuning, maintenance ○ Left-Hand Technique (Adapting for viola and bass, standing/stool set-up for bass, finger extensions, shifts) ○ Right-Hand Technique (Switching between bow and pizz., off-the-string bow-strokes, double-stopping) ○ KEYS: D, G, C, and F-major 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing Test 7 (Due Nov. 13) • Playing Test 8 (Due Nov. 20) • Playing Test 9 (Due Nov. 27) • Assignment 3 (Due Nov. 27)* • Playing Test 10 (Due Dec. 4)
Week 13 Dec. 3-8	Viola & Double-Bass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IN-CLASS TEACHING EXAMS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sign up for time-slots on OWL, details to be confirmed ○ Sessions will be recorded on video for students to keep for their portfolios 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Exam 1 (Viola, in class) • Teaching Exam 2 (Bass, in class) • Written Reflection (Due Dec. 11)

***Note the due-dates of written assignments**

Instrument Sign-Out Procedure

Music Resource Coordinator: Len Ingrao, lingrao@uwo.ca, (519) 661-2111 ext. 85395
Talbot College, Room TC 313, HOURS: Monday-Friday 9:00 AM – 1:30 PM

For the purposes of this course, we will be looking at two instruments at a time; one upper-string instrument and one lower-string instrument. Classes will alternate between upper- and lower-strings instrument each week; the first half of each week will focus on violin/viola and the second half of each week will focus on cello/bass. Please consult the OWL course site for further information about locations and times of classes (<https://owl.uwo.ca>)

For the first section of the course (September-October; Weeks 1-8), students will each be assigned a violin to play and practice on at home. Violins can be picked up from DWFOM Resource Coordinator Len Ingrao in Room TC 313 – we will do this on the first day of the course on September 7th. If there are any issues with your assigned instruments, please email Len directly (lingrao@uwo.ca) and cc me (jkomar2@uwo.ca) so that we can assign you a different instrument. At the same time as we sign out upper-strings instruments, each student will be assigned a key to access the cellos in MB 342/344. **Please note that, unlike the violins and violas, the lower-strings instruments (cello & bass) are not to be taken out of the music building. They must be returned to MB 342/344 when not in use. Furthermore, students may NOT take lower-strings instruments in the stairwells. They must always use the elevator to transport cellos and basses to/from the practice rooms.**

For the second section of the course (November-December; Weeks 9-13), all borrowed violins will be exchanged for violas. Again, these instruments can be picked up from Len Ingrao in Room TC 313, and we will do this first-thing in class on November 6th. Students will retain their keys to the padlocks in room MB 342/344 to access the double-basses. Currently, we do not have enough basses for each student to be assigned a particular instrument, and as such, instruments will be shared between students during class-time. **All instruments and keys must be returned to TC 313 by Friday, December 15th.**

It is important to remember that string-family instruments are extremely fragile and must be handled with care! Always wash and thoroughly dry your hands before handling any string instrument, and promptly wipe down the instrument with a clean, dry cloth before putting it away. Borrowed violins and violas must be properly stowed in their cases when not in use, with the cases placed in a cool, dry place where they are not likely to be bumped or jolted (Lockers are fine, so long as the case is upright and not squished by other instruments or books). Also please note that cases are solely for storing instruments – DO NOT store personal effects such as keys, wallets, phones, fitness trackers, or jewelry in violin/viola cases. Cellos and basses are to be carried upright and with two hands – one hand grasps the instruments neck and the other clasps the body in the C-bout. To re-iterate from above, borrowed cellos and basses should be promptly returned and pad-locked after classes/practice sessions. Bows must be handled only by touching the stick, tightened prior to use, and then loosened before storage so as to not damage the bow-hairs.

OPTIONAL: On Saturday, September 9th from 2:00-4:30 PM in MB 254, string-instrument-maker Quentin Playfair will be hosting a string instrument care workshop. This event is free to attend and open to all students in the Don Wright Faculty of Music (Link to DWFOM String Bank: <https://music.uwo.ca/about/resources/string-bank.html>). As this workshop is outside of our normal class time, attendance will not required for this course. However, students in this class are highly encouraged to attend, as this is a fantastic opportunity to listen to a professional luthier talk about their craft.

Class Attendance and Individual Practice

As this course is for building practical skills related to string instrument playing, attendance at in-person classes is mandatory (Attendance/Participation accounts for 15% of students' final marks, see below for methods of evaluation). Student attendance will be documented in-person and the instructor will follow up with students who are regularly late, or who have more than two unexcused absences on record. Absences will only be excused on the grounds of:

1. Documented illness (physical or mental), medical appointment, or injury
2. Involvement in official UWO business that has been approved by the chair or instructor, and with sufficient advance written notice (At least 24 hours)
3. An official academic accommodation as sanctioned by University policy

We will be meeting 4 days a week for an hour. While this may seem like a big commitment at first glance, once we take into account set-up and take-down, this leaves previous little time spent playing our instruments. Classes will begin promptly at the start of the hour and students are expected to arrive on-time with their instruments in hand. Students who arrive more than 10 minutes after the start of the hour should tune their instruments outside the room before entering quietly and finding their seats.

It is the students' responsibility to provide written, advance notice of known conflicts with classes, particularly as this pertains to in-person evaluations during the last week of the course (December 4-8, 2023). In regard to academic accommodation for illness, disability, religious observance, etc., please see the sections below outlining the relevant University policies. **I'll highlight here that students seeking accommodation must submit written documentation directly to the Faculty of Music Undergraduate Academic Counsellor Diane Mills (pdmills@uwo.ca) no later than 48 hours after a period of absence.**

Students are encouraged to practice their string instruments for 20-30 minutes every day to review concepts covered in class, build muscle memory, and solidify playing technique. There will be weekly playing assignments for students to complete individually during this practice-time; short video recordings of pieces or exercises from the material covered in class. Please contact the instructor by email (jkomar2@uwo.ca) if you have any questions or concerns about these playing tests.

Required Materials

Students are expected to bring the following to in-person classes:

- Their instruments
 - **Upper Strings on Mondays/Tuesdays (violin/viola)**
 - **Lower Strings on Thursdays/Fridays (cello/bass)**
- A folding music-stand
- A sharpened pencil and eraser for writing, blank notebook for taking notes
- Metronome and digital tuner (Smartphone Apps will suffice!)
- A mobile, tablet, laptop, or other device capable of recording video for playing tests and attending Zoom classes online

I will provide hand-outs, photocopies, and score scans of all material to be covered in classes. This material will also be uploaded to the OWL course-site.

Here are some pointers to keep in mind for making playing test recordings:

- Video is required in order to assess technique and posture (e.g. .mov, .mp4, .wmv, and .avi file formats). Audio-only recordings will not be accepted.
- Make sure that your device's microphone is turned on before you hit record!!!
- You need not invest in an expensive USB mic or audio interface; your phones internal microphone will be just fine
- Record in a well-lit room, with the light source placed behind the camera (i.e. no backlighting, turn the camera away from sunny windows)
- Plant your feet facing the camera, and make sure the shot is wide-enough to fit your upper body and the entire instrument in the frame.
 - **For cello/bass recording, place the phone/camera on the music stand** at the level of your collar-bone.
 - **For violin/viola recording, place the phone/camera to the right of the music stand** at the level of the instrument (In the Music Building's practice rooms, you could place your phone on top of the piano with your music stand to the side). When you are playing, turn the scroll/fingerboard of your instrument towards the music stand so that there is a clear shot of your bow on the strings.

Resources and Readings

There is no required textbook for this course. All course materials will be uploaded to the OWL course site under the "Resources" Tab (<https://owl.uwo.ca>). Several readings will be taken from the following text, which I will put on reserve in the Music Library:

Hamann, Donald L., and Gillespie, Robert. *Strategies for Teaching Strings: Building a Successful String and Orchestra Program, Third Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

(Link to Library Catalogue: https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_UWO/r0c2m8/alma991043490259705163)

The most recent edition of this text is available to be purchased online, if you are interested in owning a copy. Again, this is not required for the course (<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/strategies-for-teaching-strings-9780190643850?cc=ca&lang=en&>). We will be utilizing various video resources associated with this text, all of which are free to view via the Oxford University Press' Learning Link website: https://learninglink.oup.com/access/hamann-4e-student-resources#all_resources.

Exercises and repertoire that we will be working on in class are taken from the *Essential Elements for Strings* book series. These are a widely-used resource in primary and secondary school music programs. If you are interested in getting your own copies of these books, they are available for purchase from Long and McQuade (purchase link below, priced at \$17.95 each; teacher's manual with orchestral scores priced at \$80.95)

- Link to purchase *Essential Elements For Strings Book 1* series: <https://www.long-mcquade.com/5056/Print/Orchestral-Strings/Hal-Leonard/Essential-Elements-for-Strings-Book-1---Violin---Book-Media-Online--EEi.htm>

Assignments

- **Playing Tests Nos. 1-10:** These Tests will assess practical skills related to playing string instruments. Students will record themselves playing specific exercises or pieces from the *Essential Elements for Strings* books, as prescribed by the instructor during class time (Test Requirements will also be posted online week by week). Video recordings should be approximately 30 seconds to 2 minutes in length and be uploaded to the "Dropbox" Tab of the OWL site before the due dates listed below. **NOTE: Please Label your files using the following format: LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, PLAYING TEST X**

PLAYING TEST No.	INSTRUMENT	DUE DATE (upload to OWL)
1	Violin	Monday, September 18, 2023 @ 11:59 PM
2	Cello	Monday, September 25, 2023 @ 11:59 PM
3	Violin	Monday, October 2, 2023 @ 11:59 PM
4	Cello	Tuesday, October 10, 2023 @ 11:59 PM
5	Violin	Monday, October 16, 2023 @ 11:59 PM
6	Cello	Monday, October 23, 2023 @ 11:59 PM
7	Viola	Monday, November 13, 2023 @ 11:59 PM
8	Double Bass	Monday, November 20, 2023 @ 11:59 PM
9	Viola	Monday, November 27, 2023 @ 11:59 PM
10	Double Bass	Monday, December 4, 2023 @ 11:59 PM

- **Written Assignments:** There will be three written assignments to be submitted via OWL Dropbox. Relevant readings and hand-outs will be posted in the “Resources” Tab of the OWL site.

ASSIGNMENT No.	DESCRIPTION	DUE DATE (upload to OWL)
1	This assignment will test your knowledge of the parts of the instruments, as well as the differences in the construction and set-up of the violin, viola, cello, and double bass	Monday, September 18, 2023 @ 11:59 PM
2	This assignment will assess your understanding of finger and bow patterns for violin and cello music through annotating parts for a short string duet	Monday, October 23, 2023 @11:59 PM
3	This assignment will further assess your understanding of finger and bow patterns for all four string instruments through annotating the score for a short string orchestra movement	Monday, November 27, 2023 @11:59 PM

- **Teaching Exams:** During the final week of classes, December 4-8, 2023, students will sign up to take turns conducting the class in the manner of a string orchestra rehearsal. Students will select two 7-minute time-slots, one during class-time on Monday/Tuesday and the other on Thursday/Friday, during which time they will direct the group in playing a short piece for string ensemble, the scores for which will be provided in-class the week prior. Students will be assessed based on their knowledge of string instrument playing technique, the clarity of their feedback to their peers, and their ability to lead the ensemble at the front of the class (Students may choose either to conduct the group or play their instrument while leading). Proceedings will be recorded on video for evaluation, and then forwarded to the students for their own use.
- **Teaching Reflection:** Students will write a short paper, ~500 words in length (2 pages double-spaced, 12-point font), in which they reflect on what they have learned in the course, and how they see themselves applying these skills in the future as music educators. Their papers should address the following questions:
 - What challenges did you face in learning to play and teach on these instruments?
 - What skills or knowledge have you applied in trying to overcome these challenges?
 - How has this course touched on skills/knowledge that have come up in your other university courses?
 - Due Date: Monday, December 11, 2023 @ 11:59 PM.

Methods of Evaluation

Students' final marks for this course will be calculated according to the following:

CATEGORY	WEIGHTING (%)	COMMENTS
Attendance/Participation	15	Full marks will be awarded to students with no unexcused absences and who enthusiastically participate in class discussions
Playing Tests 1-10	50	There are ten playing tests, each accounting for 5% of final mark. Video recordings are to be uploaded to OWL Dropbox
Written Assignments 1-3	15	There are three written assignments, each accounting for 5% of final mark. .pdf or .docx files are to be uploaded to OWL Dropbox
Teaching Exams 1-2	10	There will be two in-class teaching exams, each accounting for 5% of final mark. Exams will be recorded on video
Teaching Reflection Paper	10	Papers are to be ~500 words in length (2 pages double-spaced, 12-point font). PDF or DOCX files are to be uploaded to OWL Dropbox.
TOTAL	100	

University Policies

i) **Course Prerequisites:** None. ANTIREQUISITES – The former Music 2885Q/R/S/T (Violin/Viola) and Music 2886Q/R/S/T (Cello/Bass) courses. Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

ii) **Grading scale:** A+=90-100%, A=80-89%, B=70-79%, C=60-69%, D=50-59%, F=0-49%.

iii) **Academic Consideration for Student Absence & Missing Work (≥10%):** Students are responsible for making up any missed classes or assignments as soon as possible. The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. Academic Consideration provides students with consistent, fair, and pedagogically appropriate consideration, without compromising the academic integrity of the course or program, when they have been unable to complete some component of a course due to short-term extenuating circumstances. Students who have long-term or chronic medical conditions (physical or mental) that may impede their ability to complete academic responsibilities are directed to seek Academic Accommodation through Accessible Education ([Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)).

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the end of the period of absence covered, to the Academic Counselling unit (Diane Mills, pdmills@uwo.ca) or Office of the Associate Dean, Undergraduate (TC210), of the student's Home Faculty together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the academic consideration being requested. Students are directed to read the Senate Policy on Academic Consideration for Medical Illness at the following website for further details regarding various requirements and procedures for the supporting documentation: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration.pdf

Whenever possible, students who require academic consideration should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and their Academic Counselling office in a timely manner.

iv) **Academic Consideration for Missing Work (<10%):** In cases where students miss work that is worth less than 10% of the total course grade due to medical illness or compassionate grounds, if documentation is voluntarily submitted to the Associate Dean's Office and the Associate Dean grants an accommodation, then the missed playing test(s) or written assignments

will be discounted in the calculation of the final grade for the course. If documentation is not voluntarily submitted then the missed assignment(s) will receive a grade of zero. Students who have been denied accommodation by an instructor may appeal this decision to the Associate Dean's office but will be required to present appropriate documentation.

v) **Academic Offences:** Submission of work with which you have received help from someone else (other than the course instructor or TA) is an example of plagiarism, which is considered a major academic offence. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found at:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

vi) **Mental Health & Wellness:** Students that are in emotional/mental distress should refer to the Health and Wellness at Western page (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help or to go to the Wellness Education Centre located in Thames Hall room 2170. **Students in crisis in need of immediate care are directed to go directly to Student Health Services in Thames Hall 2170 or to click on the big green "I Need Help Now" button on the Health and Wellness page above.**

vii) **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:** Students work with Accessible Education which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation abilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation%20abilities.pdf)

viii) **Religious Accommodation:** Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays (other than statutory holidays), and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. The Diversity Calendar from the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion provides information on multifaith, multicultural and diversity related holidays and observances and links to resources for more information. <https://www.edi.uwo.ca/resources/2816-2023-Diversity-Calendar-PDF.pdf>

ix) **Contingency Plan:** Although the intent is for this course to be delivered in-person, should any university-declared emergency require some or all of the course to be delivered online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience), the course will adapt accordingly.

The grading scheme will **not** change. Any assessments affected will be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.

x) **Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:** Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, either recently or in the past, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca or call 519 661-3568.

xi) **Examinations & Attendance:** Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

xii) **Electronic Devices in Classrooms:** The in-class use of electronic devices (other than for instructor-approved in-class uses) is expressly prohibited. Students found guilty of disrupting the class with electronic devices will be asked to leave the class and may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.

xiii) **Plagiarism Detection Software Usage:** All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism, which includes AI writing detection tools. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).

xiv) **Computer-marked Multiple-choice Tests or Exams:** These may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.