

Course number: M-AP 0009
Course title: Applied Piano Lessons
Credits: 3

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The key goal of Applied Piano Lessons is to prepare students for a professional performing environment so that every individual student will have developed professional skills necessary for achieving personal success, happiness, and artistic contribution to the community.

The instructor of the course will collaborate with every student to design a personalized study plan that will be followed for the duration of their degree. This plan will be continuously developing throughout the degree with individual students' needs in mind, their strengths, weaknesses, and artistic goals. By the time of graduation, students will have acquired and developed performance skills, professional ethics, as confidence in their own ability to work and produce art independently.

MISSION STATEMENT (Teacher's responsibility)

The teacher is committed to providing equal learning opportunities and a positive, practical, and effective learning environment for every student. The teacher is expected to directly contribute to students' professional and artistic growth and increase student's musical curiosity. In return, students are expected to be fully dedicated to attentive work, respecting composers' will, serving the music, and improving the community around them.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES

Through 14 one-hour, one-on-one lessons with the instructor, as well as group meetings (studio class) each semester, students will be encouraged and expected to participate in competence-building and development-oriented activities. Some of the areas that will be addressed in the lessons and studio classes are listed below:

- Self-assessment questionnaire (*at the beginning of the semester and after the juries*)
- Self-accountability assignments (*practicing journal; personal study plan*)
- Self-development and self-education,
 - Curiosity, artistic growth, and professional awareness (*attending concerts*)
- Principles of efficient and effective practicing (with the goal of improving one's understanding of the composer's intentions, as well as principles of piano playing):

- Time-management and injury-prevention
- Learning about the musical background (of the piece music and composer)
- Understanding a style
- Deep interpretation - authentic expressivity and dramatic context.
- Sight Reading and awareness skill
- Score study - understanding of the structure of a piece
- Tone quality and phrasing
- Articulation and pedaling
- Memorization
- Musicianship and technique development
- Practicing in a way that improves one's stress-coping skills
- Studio Practicing Lab
- Studio Sightreading Lab
- Studio Teaching-Lab
- Studio Technique-Lab
- Individual independent-work assignments
- Repertoire development (independent programming assignments)
- Non-solo repertoire assignments (vocal and instrumental)
 - Developing collaborative skills (chamber & accompanying workshops)
- Working on contemporary music, as well as underrepresented music from various ethnicities (African-American, Asian, South-American, and many others)
- Pre-Concert Presentations (Audience engagement and education)
- Discussions on musical and performing topics in a group setting (in person or online)
- Complete monthly short writing assignments (reflection on practicing and learning).

Please keep in mind the current list is not final and can be adjusted based on the feedback and professional interests of every individual student. At any time, should you have a question or suggestion or would like to have a clarification - contact the instructor via email.

STUDENTS EXPECTATIONS AND STUDIO REQUIREMENTS

Please see the concise list of expectations at the beginning of this section. For more detailed information as well as the reasoning behind the assignments (and their applicability in the professional world after graduation), refer to the supplementary documents, read through the rest of the syllabus, or contact your instructor for clarification, suggestions, or if you have a question.

General Academic expectations:

- To attend concerts at Boston Conservatory (minimum of 8 concerts per term)
 - Attend every Piano Masters Series concert (three concerts each term)
 - Attend at least 1 (one) Chamber Series concert per term
 - Attend at least 2 other student recitals (per term, piano majors or chamber)
 - Attend at least one piano studio recital of another teacher (per academic year)
 - Attend at least one orchestra concert (per academic year)
 - Attend at least one of the student chamber concerts at the end of the term
- To regularly check your school email address (at least once per 24-48 hours), and reply within 72 hours when asked a question or asked for feedback.
- Attend every scheduled lesson and studio class
- To be punctual and be ready to start the lesson right on time

Professional Growth. Students are responsible for and expected to:

- practice mindfully for 2-4 hours (every day), on solo repertoire (including weekends and holidays)
 - The objective measure of preparation - is memorization. Thus, starting from the 3rd week of each term - pieces of music that are brought to lessons are expected to be played from memory at a fluid tempo.
- apply previously obtained knowledge when working on the new pieces (thus reducing potential redundancy of instructor's feedback)
- reduce practicing time before important events, thus - careful planning regular, consistent, steady, and healthy practicing pace is crucial.
- be familiar with the music score of the piece that they are learning - that includes basic text, dynamics, articulation, and foreign language terminology (usually in Italian). When necessary, students need to prepare their scores for the lessons - by adding bar numbers. Refer to the Preparation & Repertoire document.
- use a practicing journal (practicing planner and/or practicing tracker).
- listen regularly to a number of recordings of the pieces that students are working on; These recordings should include performances, and masterclasses (on the relevant compositions - either the same piece or the other work by the same composer)
- provide regular feedback to the teacher regarding lessons and instruction.
- Students are expected and encouraged to make mistakes (while performing the piece of music or while participating in any other studio activity on campus) as long as the student exerts an honest effort to learn from such mistakes and to prevent the same mistakes from occurring in the future.

Lessons & Studio commitments. Students are expected:

- To fill out the self-assessment questionnaire, before the beginning of the term and within one week after the juries (at the end of the term)
- to write short summaries after every lesson (20 words), in order to better retain the feedback they receive during the lesson
- to submit to a teacher an audio recording of their practice once a month (up to 30minutes)
- To perform at studio class, at least once a month - a complete piece of music from memory
- to participate in studio activities and independent work projects
- to provide constructive feedback to their peers in the studio
- to share their feelings and concerns with regard to music, lessons, or environment in the studio, publicly or privately.
- to respect music, and composers and to serve the art.

Important timeline:

- The first 2 weeks of the semester - is a grace period, during which pieces of music can be played with sheet music located on the music stand. From week #3, students are required to play from memory at every lesson.

- It is recommended to finish memorizing the entire program (whether for the juries, auditions or concerts) 2 months before the important event. jury (or another performing event) - the entire program should be memorized and played through regularly
- Students are required to finish memorizing the entire program 1 month before the performance. Failure to do so may result in an “incomplete” grade for the semester.
- Dress rehearsal - not later than 1 week before the performance. Not more than 2 hours (for up to 90 minutes of music). Treat dress rehearsal professionally - to get accustomed to the hall and the piano and not to have an “ordinary practicing session”.
- Pre-jury hearing (3 weeks before the jury). Failure to present the program in a “ready-to-perform” level of preparation may result in an “incomplete” grade for the semester

STUDENTS EXPECTATIONS continued

Commitment and Preparation

Students are expected to be committed to their own personal, artistic, and pianistic development 365 days each year. No single activity offered by school will be sufficient in bringing you closer to your own definition of success without your regular self-assessment, trying and questioning what you are taught (critical thinking), and applying gained practical knowledge on a daily basis.

Thus, one of the measures of your commitment is the level of your preparation for the lessons, studio classes, rehearsals, concerts, auditions, and juries. The other marker of your commitment is your active participation in the studio activities, as well as pro-activeness and curiosity - your personal search for more practical information that can increase your understanding of a style and further develop your artistic taste. Attending concerts and masterclasses is a good way to address the above-mentioned elements of your professional development.

Please keep in mind - you carry the responsibility of being a role model of an aspiring musician at all times. Meaning - before the lesson (or a concert), at the lesson, after the lesson, while school is in session (Fall semester and Spring semester), during the Winter and Summer breaks, and - after you graduate. Be the person you dream to become now. The quality of your life in the future depends on what you do today.

Students are expected and required to work regularly on personal, musical, and pianistic improvement, including - practicing regularly during the breaks between the semesters.

A general list of expectations can be found in this syllabus. For more details on preparation for the lesson, please refer to the Guide sheet (Preparation&Repertoire), or contact the instructor.

Communication and Student Feedback

In the professional environment, it is impossible to overestimate the role that communication plays. Replying to a message in a timely manner, as opposed to ignoring or mismanaging correspondence - is similar to the difference between a successful career and an unfulfilled one, missed opportunities to present and express oneself. Furthermore, it undermines all previous efforts in building up reputation and trust - as unresponsiveness or lack of communication can be interpreted as a marker of unreliability (and unprofessionalism).

This is why communication (digital correspondence via school email, as well as in-person or in-studio communication) will be evaluated at the end of each term as a fraction of the final grade.

- Students are expected to notify their teacher about the reliable method of communication that students can use on a regular basis (without technical restrictions). While school email is the preferred method, other platforms may be used as well for convenience (such as WeChat).
- Students are required to check school emails regularly (at least once a day) at times when they are not practicing the piano, participating in a rehearsal, or engaged in any other school/work-related activity.
- It is recommended, from time to time, to check the “spam” folder of the email address, especially at the beginning of the term, in case any of the school-sent correspondence ended up in that folder.
- Students are expected to reply back to a teacher within 72 hours (3 days). At times when the teacher contacts students on short notice - students are not expected to modify their schedules to reply immediately. However, reasonable flexibility and accommodation to provide a timely response would be greatly appreciated.
- In case there is no response from the student, a second email will be sent without affecting a grade, after which the grace period is over - any repeated mismanagement of communication will result in a reduction of a grade. Please keep in mind though - no more than 2 repeated emails (with repeated questions) will be sent out per thread (topic).

Feedback from students

Learning during the lesson is a two-way process. While the student is expecting the teacher to evaluate the student's performance and provide constructive feedback, it is important to keep in mind that every student perceives, interprets, and applies information differently. Therefore it is important for students to provide regular feedback back to the teacher on how the student is learning, as well as the student's expectations of teachers.

Such communication would allow for a dynamic and student-centered (rather than just performance-centered) learning environment, where student's concerns and immediate musical needs (as they develop and change) would always be in focus and addressed as they arise.

At the end of each term, students are encouraged to take the opportunity that the school provides and give anonymous feedback by filling out a course evaluation survey. However, as learning performing skills is a continuous process, it is important to provide regular feedback throughout the term.

- Students are expected to (regularly) express their goals, concerns, and feelings that they may have with regard to music-making and their lives in the academic world.
- Students are encouraged to provide written feedback as regularly as they feel (at least 2 times per term), whether using their personal school email address or anonymous studio email address (credentials will be provided at the beginning of the term).
- Students are required to submit a short writing assignment - one paragraph, self-reflection (50 words minimum) on their practicing and learning (what is working well, what needs

more improvement - including methods of instruction). These reflection paragraphs must be submitted once a month (by the end of the last day of the month).

Attendance

Lessons, Concerts & Cancellations

Students are expected to come prepared for every scheduled lesson and studio class. In case a cancellation is unavoidable - the student needs to send a note to the teacher stating the reason behind the need for a reschedule.

→ The 48-hour note is required in order to reschedule a lesson

It is understandable that some events, other conflicts, or health-related emergencies may occur at the last minute. Each situation will be evaluated based on the severity of the circumstances, and students are encouraged to communicate the issue they are experiencing honestly.

In case of a health emergency - in case of one (single) cancellation per term - no doctor's notice is required.

If a student cancels for the 2nd and any subsequent time due to a health-related situation - a doctor's notice will be required (failure to provide one may result in a lowered grade)

→ Lessons should not be canceled because of a lack of practice; moreover, lack of practice should never be "covered" up with some untruthful reasoning or a made-up excuse. It is always obvious to a teacher when a student comes unprepared, even one lesson later due to a lack of diligent work, and such miscommunication undermines previous effort, future progress, and present trust. Within the studio - honesty, direct feedback, and communication will always gain more respect and lead to more effective collaboration between student and teacher.

Students are required to attend a certain number of school concerts each term. This activity is graded and evaluated by short written assignments or verbal presentations (at the time of the studio class). It is imperative to cultivate one's own taste and sense of professional awareness within the field and community. And it is equally important to create strong collegial connections with your peers and instructors - by supporting each other at the time of the concert (as a member of the audience), and backstage.

For information regarding grading and evaluation mechanics concerning attendance of the concerts and cancellations of lessons - please refer to the relevant section of this syllabus down below ("evaluation and grading").

Artistic initiative & curiosity

It is students' responsibility, in addition to receiving regular constructive feedback from the teacher, to take proactive steps towards expanding their knowledge of:

- composer's lives (historical and biographical events)
- repertoire (including other genres by the same composer or others)
- underrepresented music
- various performing styles and interpretation tendencies (traditions, whether good or bad)

- teaching viewpoints (by observing masterclasses, live or online)
- various interpretations of the pieces they are learning (by observing a number of recordings)

Students will be presented with a number of projects, assignments, and presentations that will be centered around these areas. The goal of these activities is to show the methods of self-education that students should use while doing their degree and certainly continue enriching their competence and taste after graduation.

In addition to the above-mentioned required attendance at conservatory-presented concerts, students are encouraged to visit other venues and experience as much live music as it may be possible for them. Students are encouraged to expose themselves to many full-length concerts online (on YouTube), as well as masterclasses - from which it is possible to obtain an invaluable amount of knowledge and diverse perspectives on interpretation, musicianship and technique.

A detailed list of specific assignments and due dates will be presented at the beginning of the term. More information can be obtained in the following section of this syllabus (“Studio activities and independent study projects”).

Individual Lessons Policy and Teaching Philosophy

Individual lessons with an instructor should be approached as a mini-performance opportunity without the need to be nervous about the audience. Students must exert a diligent effort to prepare for a lesson, as the quality and depth of the instruction (the feedback that the student expects to receive from a teacher) are 100% dependent on the student’s commitment to regular work. In a school setting, where the available time is very limited, such work must be very efficient. Through instruction, students will learn about various methods of how to use their one-on-one time with the piano efficiently and effectively.

It is not expected of any student to memorize, copy, or mimic in any other way what they are told by the instructor without questioning and, more importantly - tailoring it to their own physical capabilities and understanding of music at the time when instruction is given. Such personal adjustments will make all the teacher’s feedback much more useful, practical, and applicable to students' own hands and learning methods. Any feedback that is accepted by the student should go through a “naturalization” process via practicing sessions and become the “student’s own idea and method.” No performance of a student (even at a lesson) should sound like a replica of a teacher’s suggestion or an imitation of a teacher's (or anybody else’s) illustration.

If a student prepares more repertoire than it is possible to cover using 14 one-on-one lessons each semester effectively, then additional lessons can be offered to all students in the studio without additional credit or cost to the student. As students are encouraged (and expected) to work on self-improvement (practicing on the piano regularly, among the other profession-related activities) during the breaks between the semesters - additional lessons can be offered during those months as well, without any cost to a student.

It is important to keep in mind - no additional lessons can be offered to a student who may be systematically coming underprepared for regular lessons. The purpose of additional instruction is to facilitate accelerated artistic growth of a musically curious student and not to accommodate a

student who lacks commitment to improvement and professional work ethic.

In addition to working on the main solo repertoire (and in addition to students' assignments in the other performance-oriented classes), students will be assigned additional pieces of music to improve sight-reading, technical fluency, memorization, and core musicianship skills (style awareness and score analysis).

In addition to the traditional format of lessons, students are expected to participate in the following activities as well:

- Students are expected to take short summary notes after each lesson (20 words minimum), writing down general comments or key elements for students to remember. These notes will serve as a reminder of what to focus on when practicing in the present or in the future, as well as a progress tracker. These notes will be taken into account when creating an individual plan for every subsequent semester.
- Students are expected to submit an audio recording of their practicing, up to 30 minutes, at least once every month (4-5 times per Semester). These recordings are to be sent via email for the teacher's review; in return, additional feedback on effective and efficient practice will be provided.
- Students will be encouraged to collaborate with the teacher and participate in one-on-one self-critique sessions, analyzing and discussing students' own recordings from a self-instructional perspective.
 - Among some of the questions would be - What do you like about your playing? What are you considering changing or doing differently?

Every lesson can be audio-recorded - to be used by every individual student for their own improvement (and analysis of their music-making).

Studio activities and Independent study projects

In addition to regular one-on-one instruction, students will participate in group activities - a studio class. While primarily serving a role of another performing environment in front of their peers (thus, inflicting more anxiety and creating a better foundation for a more solid stage presence at the time of real stressful situations - concert or an audition), studio class offers a number of other activities (that have not been previously described in detail). Some of these activities will take place in person, while the virtual environment may be sufficient for some others:

Practicing Lab - 1-2 times each month, students will submit their practicing presentations (3-5 minute videos) to be digitally shared with their peers in the studio. This activity allows students to exchange with each other their findings, struggles, and practical successes.

Sight Reading Lab - students will be assigned music to sightread at the time of the studio class. Musical excerpts will include various genres of music that students haven't played before (therefore, no preparation is expected). Students may participate in synchronous sightreading - while playing music written for 4 hands (2 pianists).

Teaching Lab - students will be encouraged (and expected) to provide feedback

(alongside with their teacher) to their peers who are performing in front of them. Thus, it provides an opportunity to improve critical listening skills, as well as pedagogically oriented communication skills. Lastly, listening critically to others sharpens self-analytical skills.

Technique Lab - in substitution of scales & arpeggios drills, students will be assigned technique-oriented compositions. Memorization of these is not required, nor is it expected, although students will find that memorization comes naturally when working on these. The progress will be evaluated by the individually assigned metronome markings (speed is one of three goals, the other two are - quality and musicality). Each semester, every student is expected to work on this combination of pieces:

- Brahms exercise (one)
- Hanon exercises (two)
- Czerny etude op.740 (one)

Presentations (pre-concert)- students will be asked to prepare a number of verbal presentations (up to 5 minutes each, no PowerPoint), on the pieces of music that they are working on. Students will need to research the background of the piece and composer and share their personal connection to the piece of music that they are discussing. Students will be presenting to imaginary audiences (in the form of a pre-concert lecture), thus improving their communication and audience-engaging skills.

Listening quizzes - students may participate in occasional listening quizzes, covering the other pieces of the composers that they are already studying, as well as the other ones, to expand student's comprehension of style and composers' means of expression.

Repertoire building and programming (and presentations) - as one of the independent-work projects, students will be asked to come up with hypothetical concert programs that they would be interested in (hypothetically) performing or the pieces that they would like the audience members to discover. Students will need to research new music (online, sheet music, articles, YouTube recordings), think about themes, anniversaries, or other ways to compile a concert program; students must include pieces of underrepresented classical-music ethnicities (African American, Spanish, Asian, Eastern European and others) and consider cohesive way to blend it together with a more traditional or otherwise more known piano repertoire. Some lists of composers can be found in supplemental materials, but students are encouraged to make more discoveries and share them with studio members and their peers at the conservatory.

Students must be comfortable discussing their findings, logic, and reasoning behind any particular compilation in such a way that can engage their peers strongly enough to start learning some of the discovered pieces in the upcoming semesters and include them in the actual concert. Through this activity, students will greatly expand their awareness of piano literature and enrich their musical taste by discovering more music, thus becoming more well-rounded artists and competent advocates for the music of various styles and compositional techniques. Students are expected to participate in this activity two times every term. The teacher will also participate in this activity.

Independent Work - along with the key goal of applied piano lessons - developing professional skills, and, essentially, for all students to become their own teachers (upon graduation) - students will be offered opportunities to take on some independent work to practice

such independent skills. Such independent work will consist of the preparation of a segment of a piece of music (phrase/section or entire piece of music) without the teacher's instruction. The goal of such assignments is to encourage students to use the knowledge they gain from working on the other pieces and effectively apply it to other music that they study. Independent assignments will not be graded at the beginning of the program but will be included in the evaluation later on (refer to the evaluation section of the syllabus for clarification).

Every student will receive a full-sized (complete piece) independent work assignment for the Winter and Summer break.

Every studio class can be audio-recorded - to be used by every individual student for their own improvement (and analysis of their music-making).

REPERTOIRE REQUIREMENT, JURIES, AND SOLO RECITALS

At the end of each semester, students are required to perform at the juries (final exam, in December and May). Students are expected to play from memory some of the pieces that would have been studied during the semester. It is expected to prepare and flawlessly perform three of the following styles of classical music:

- Baroque (pieces written between 1600-1750)
- Classical (1750-1816)
- Romantic (1816-1915)
- Contemporary (1915-...)

Students are required to participate in the studio recitals (at any year of their degree) as well as their own solo recitals (for undergraduate students during their 3rd and 4th years; for graduate students - during their 1st and 2nd years). At the studio recital, every student is expected to prepare a complete solo work and perform it from memory at the highest level of artistic mastery (that is achieved by the student at the time of the concert).

For students' solo recitals - a minimum of 70 minutes of solo music must be prepared and performed from memory in a professional artistic manner. Poor preparation resulting in a "casual" playing attitude while being on stage with the audience present (with repetitive, frequently careless, or self-confusing mistakes) may lead to a significant grade reduction, up to a non-passing grade. Chamber works or other musical collaborations are welcome and acceptable, but only as an addition to 70 minutes of solo music

Choosing repertoire is a collaborative work between a student and a teacher. After agreeing to one - the student is expected to commit to the chosen and mutually approved repertoire fully. Careful consideration will be given to ensure a gradual increase in technical complexity and dramatic depth from one program to another over the course of the student's studies. While the choice of repertoire is relatively free, a few repertoire-related requirements for the studio are worth noting:

- One virtuosic etude per year (required for every student)

Below is the list of pieces (minimum requirement) that must be worked on during the entire degree:

- Piano concertos (*2 for undergraduate, 1 for graduate students*)
- Polyphonic work from the Baroque period (*2 for undergraduate, 1 for graduate*)
- Classical Sonata (*2 for undergraduate, 1 for graduate*)
- Substantial Romantic work (*3 for undergraduate, 2 for graduate*)
- Substantial Impressionistic work or a few shorter pieces (*1 for any student*)
- Contemporary work (*1 for any student*)
- Work by American composer (*1 for any student*)*
- Work by underrepresented composer (*1 for any student*)*
- Work by the composer of the country of student's origin (*1 for any student, 5 minutes minimum*)*
- Large chamber work from a standard repertoire (piano trio, quartet or quintet) or a complete song cycle (*2 for undergraduate students, 1 for graduate*)**

a graduate student (2-year program), may be allowed to choose just one piece from the three categories marked with “” (American, underrepresented, or composer from the student’s homeland), instead of learning 3 different pieces (one from each category). This decision will be based on students' professional goals upon graduation and if there is a need to manage practicing time differently. Please talk to your teacher at any time about this matter if you have a concern.

** The last category is required regardless of the student's participation in the chamber class with another faculty member at the school.

NB. Underrepresented composers are (but are not limited to): African American, Latinx, Asian, Eastern European, and Indigenous.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT and SELF-ACCOUNTABILITY (Supplemental materials)

In addition to above mentioned, some of the other key skills to develop and master before graduation are self-awareness, students’ ability to track their own progress and maintain it (during the academic year and during the breaks), as well as a clearer understanding of how students learn - acquire and apply information obtained from self-analysis or feedback from instructor.

Students are provided with supplementary materials, the use of some of them is recommended (optional), and the use of others is required (whether temporarily or over the course of the entire program). In addition, students will be directed to other resources that can increase their productivity.

Practicing Journal

(required for the first 2 terms for a graduate student, first 3 terms for an undergraduate)

Students are advised to come up with their own system of notating and tracking down their daily activities at the piano. The teacher will provide an individual group discussion about various methods and templates that can be used in order to increase the benefit of using such a journal. In the end, every practicing journal may be different from another, depending on the ways how student learns and practices. The key function of a practicing journal is to nurture self-awareness

(not self-criticism), and how every minute of practicing is used. Students are recommended to use pen & paper rather than digital media.

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

This document must be filled out by the student before the beginning of the term and after the juries (in other words, twice per semester). As this syllabus has a detailed list of what the teacher expects students to do, the self-assessment document provides an opportunity for students to express what are their expectations of a teacher as well as their lessons.

Preparation guide & Repertoire list

The second important document after self-assessment. The preparation guide clarifies for students which areas should be covered when working on a piece of music before the first lesson and between the lessons. Take a look at the timeline of some of the individual activities and expectations - and take it into account when planning your practicing sessions. Another value of this document is some of the practicing recommendations. The repertoire list is to be added at a later time, but students are advised to refer to the composers' spreadsheet when working on a programming project or other self-improvement activities.

Individual plan

This document will be filled out by a teacher and will consist of the repertoire of every student, some of the goals, feedback from the juries, and other information that will help to track and manage the trajectory of the personal, artistic, and performing growth of every student.

Structural Interpretative Chart.

Students are required to fill it out (for every piece of music) and refer to it frequently when practicing. The purpose of this document (which can be done with pen and paper, like a practicing journal) is to provide clarity and a deeper understanding of the dramatic content of the piece and its development from the beginning till the last note.

EVALUATION AND GRADING

Students' overall progress is assessed objectively by the teacher. based on the level of their preparation for lessons and performances and their participation in every assigned studio activity each term; what also plays a major role in evaluation is students' overall commitment to personal growth (professional growth, increased pianistic mastery, and musicianship) and passionate dedication to music that they are studying.

Given the number of activities, the grading system is complex too. Just like in a single piece of music - every smallest thing that the musician does contributes to the final outcome. Similarly - students are expected to show a genuine commitment and effort to learning and improving - all of which can contribute to a top grade at the end of the term, as well as a student's maximum growth.

As stated earlier, students are expected to make mistakes, and as long as those mistakes are analyzed and worked on (independently between the lessons or in collaboration with the teacher during the lesson) - there will be no grade reduction for making a single error, whether when performing the piece of music, making a presentation or being engaged in any of the studio-related activities listed above(making a mistake = learning). The grading system is only

designed to penalize a systemic lack of - honest effort, regular work (personal practicing), academic dishonesty (insufficient preparation for studio activities and assignments), and poor professional ethics (inappropriate conduct that puts other students at a disadvantage).

Grades

The final grade is based on three categories below. Individual lessons and studio activities (adding up to 75% of a final grade) are assigned by the primary instructor (Alex Polyakov), while the remaining 25% are provided by the other piano faculty members at the juries (at the end of each term).

A short clarification - reduction of 1/3 (one-third) of a letter grade means - a grade reduction from A to A-, or from A- to B+, and so on. Please take note - overall grade per category (Individual lessons or Studio activities) will be calculated based on every single evaluated activity as listed below. Grades for every activity will be converted into numeric scores (A = 100, A- =94, etc.), from which the average score will be posted.

Bonus activities (as listed below) - provide an opportunity for a student to increase an overall grade, thus they can be very impactful on the final grade. Take note - there is no penalty for not completing bonus activities, but completion can lead to a full letter grade increase of the overall grade.

The following four items can lead to an “incomplete” or a “fail” grade at the end of the term (resulting in students either having to complete additional work over the break between the semesters or having to retake the semester again).

- Systemic lack of preparation for the lessons and commitment to studying;
- Systemic lack of preparation and participation in studio-related activities;
- Failure to finish memorizing the program in an established time frame;
- Inability to present the program for a “pre-jury” hearing during one of the studio classes.

The following grade reductions will be implemented if academically justified by a teacher:

Individual lessons & learning (45% of a final grade)

- Lesson attendance and punctuality - see below:

Cancellations - 24 hours to make up the missed lesson. Health emergency - once per term, without a note. If more, a doctor’s notice may be requested by a teacher.

1. Students may have up to two excused absences per term.
2. One unexcused attendance (no communication) - automatic reduction of 1/3 of a grade
3. Second and any subsequent unexcused absences - full grade (per absence)
4. Systemic lateness (more than 2 occasions) - 1/3 of a letter (per occurrence)

- Regular practicing and preparation - from 1/3 of a grade up to “I” or “F”

If for more than 2 lessons in a row - the teacher is required to provide repeated feedback, or the student continues to show unfamiliarity with anything related to the score (sheet, music), such as but not limited to - notes, rhythm, dynamics, articulation, composer’s markings (in foreign

language), e.t.c.). Other signs of underpreparedness usually include - repeated small errors (careless playing) or lack of memorization.

Each lesson is evaluated based on several elements - Preparation, improvement, musicianship, technical control, artistic curiosity, and expression.

- After-lesson Summaries - failure to complete the assignment, up to 2/3 of a grade reduction.
- Reflection paragraph at the end of each month - failure to complete this assignment can result in 1/3 reduction of a letter grade.
- Communication - Failure to respond to email within 72 hours - 1/3 of a grade per occurrence
- Practicing Recordings - failure to submit to teacher once a month - 2/3 of a grade per occurrence
- Practicing Planner (journal or tracker) - up to 1 full grade

Students are required to regularly use practicing journals to increase the efficiency of their work and self-accountability. Requirement is temporary - first 3 terms for an undergraduate student and first 2 terms for a graduate student.

- Structural-Interpretive chart - 1/3 of a grade reduction up to 2 full grade letters

Students are expected to acquire a clear understanding of the structure of every piece of music that they are playing, as well as establish a personal connection with the piece by utilizing their imagination and fantasy (and thus creating a detailed personal “story” behind each piece of music). The structural-Interpretive chart is to be completed by the end of the 4th week of each semester.

Bonus activities:

- Artistic Initiative and Curiosity - increase up to 2/3 of the overall grade.

These activities include additional independent work on repertoire, listening to more recordings, attending masterclasses, and participating in school-related activities (beyond the degree requirement). These activities can be counted towards Studio (bonus) grade by preparing more presentations.

- Regular feedback to the teacher (in addition to reflection paragraph) - an increase of up to 1/3 of a grade.

Studio and academic activities (30% of a final grade for the class; assigned by teacher)

- Studio attendance and punctuality - see below:

1. Students are expected to attend every studio class (excused absence may be approved in case of an emergency or other severe set of circumstances)
2. One unexcused attendance (no communication) - automatic reduction of 1/3 of a grade
3. Second and any subsequent unexcused absences - full grade (per absence)
4. Systemic lateness (more than 2 occasions) - 1/3 of a letter (per occurrence)
5. Submitting assignments via email - 1/3 of a grade per late submission

- Concert attendance - 1/3 per missed concert.

Students will be asked to provide a list of attended performances, as well as to provide a short summary of their experience. Students will also be invited to participate in a short discussion over the attended performances, as well as to share their impressions on the performer or the repertoire - highlights, as well as possible constructive criticism.

- Performing in studio class - 2/3 per under-prepared performance, up to “i” or “F”
- Studio labs
 - Lack of participation in Practicing Lab - up to 2/3 of a grade

- Lack of participation in Sight Reading Lab - up to 2/3 of a grade
- Lack of providing feedback (Teaching lab) - up to 1/3 of a grade
- Lack of preparation for Technique lab - up to a full grade
- Presentations (pre-concert lectures) - up to 2/3 per poor presentation

Presentations are evaluated by the content and the student's genuine interest in what they are talking about. Students do not need to memorize their speech but should refrain from obsessively looking "down" into their notes. Students are expected to prepare a collection of personal statements and express their own feelings towards the piece of music and why the audience is going to enjoy it just as much. Students are discouraged from using generic biographical information from public sources (like Wikipedia and similar). Powerpoint presentations are not necessary and are discouraged (due to the excessive use of time).

- Repertoire building and programming - up to 2/3 of a grade per assignment
- Independent work

Gradually, students will be presented with more opportunities to work independently (on a phrase, movements of a piece, or a complete piece of music). This activity will be graded only starting from a certain time frame in every student's degree:

- Undergraduate - starting from Winter break (between 3rd and 4th term); actual academic evaluation and grade starting from the beginning of the 3rd year (5th term)
- Graduate - starting from Summer break (between 2nd and 3rd term); actual academic evaluation and grade starting from the beginning of the 2nd year (3rd term)

Bonus Activities

- Listening quiz - an increase of 2/3 of an overall grade;
- Independent work - an increase of 1/3 of an overall grade;
- Artistic Initiative and Curiosity (presentations) - an increase of up to 2/3 of an overall grade:

Some of the things students - after listening to a masterclass/recording - are encouraged to describe the most valuable or interesting points or discuss anything else that they find to be useful for their peers in the studio (up to 2-3 minutes presentations); Students Can provide a list of 3-5 other recordings that they listened to (of the same piece that they are studying), and describe their impression from the performer, interpretation, or composition).

- Additional programming presentation, or a project of student's choosing, or presenting additional pieces of underrepresented music. Up to a 2/3 increase of an overall grade.