

Composition Project: Harmonic Progressions & Form in Pop Songs

- **Purpose:** Compose a contemporary popular-style song using one standard song form and one or more standard harmonic progressions presented in class.
- **Project Components:**
 - Draft #1 Due
 - Final Draft Due
 - Project Performance
- **Instrumentation:** The song must be written for in lead sheet format: notated solo voice with lyrics, and lead sheet chord symbols above the staff.
- **Requirements:**
 - In terms of layout and instrumentation, your score must look like the sample lead sheet songs presented in class.
 - The vocal part must be fully notated in treble clef (regardless of intended vocal range/gender), with the lyrics below the staff.
 - Include lead sheet symbols above the staff to be read by the rhythm section. Do not write out separate parts for a piano, guitar, etc.
 - Form: Write your song using one of the standard song forms described in the course (Verse-Chorus, or AABA). At least two separate sections are required, so you may not use strophic form (AAA...). One the music, label the start of each section according to the form (Verse, Chorus, Bridge, etc.).
 - Harmonic Progression(s): At least one of the sections of your song must be based on one of the standard progression types presented during the course. (Label your progression types.) If using a modified version of a standard progression, separately write out the standard progression so I know you understand how it normally goes. All other progressions are up to you. In addition to your lead sheet symbols above the staff, label all chords with Roman numerals below the lyrics.
 - Harmonic Cadences: Label all standard harmonic cadences with cadence abbreviations below the lyrics. For any phrases terminating with non-standard cadences, use NS for “non-standard”.
 - Remember to include all other important information on your printed score, such as a title, composer and lyricist names, tempo markings (including metronome setting number), style (swing, rock, etc.), dynamics, tempo changes, slurs, etc.
- **Materials:** Notate your composition in a clear, legible, and complete manner, following all standards of notation. You may use notation software or a neatly handwritten score. If notation software is used, be sure you understand the program well enough to produce proper engraving. (Technology is no excuse for poor quality.)
- **Text:** Do not use copyrighted text without permission. You may write your own text, get permission from the author/publisher (perhaps a friend), or choose something in the Public Domain (*published* pre-1923) or released under an appropriate Creative Commons license.
- **Preliminary Drafts:** Though not required, you are highly encouraged to turn in preliminary drafts prior to Draft #1, and prior to the Final Draft, for feedback.



- **Draft #1:** For Draft #1, you are required to have at least two complete song sections. This can be either 1) a Verse and a Chorus, or 2.) two Verses (with the same music but different lyrics).

While not necessarily complete, Draft #1 is an official draft, and should therefore be as legible and polished as the final product. You should have the key, time signature, and tempo picked out, and all of the music and lyrics written for the portion(s) you turn in. This includes the vocal line, lyrics, lead sheet symbols, chord progressions, Roman numerals, harmonic cadence labels, form section labels, and any other required markings. The only work that should remain for the Final Draft is to incorporate revisions from your instructor, and to write the remaining sections for your song.

- **Final Draft:** This copy cannot be changed after the due date. It must be complete and legible. Bring 3 copies: one for your instructor, one for your singer, and one for yourself. Your instructor will make copies for the rhythm section.
- **Performance:** You must sing the vocal part of your own song, accompanied by a rhythm section provided by your instructor. Alternatively, you may enlist the help of another singer of your choosing for the performance of your song, but only if you sit on the rhythm section or as an instrumental soloist for one or more of your classmates' other songs on the concert.

All performers should be well prepared. This is a public concert! The day, time, and location of the concert will be confirmed later in the semester.

- **Grading:**
 - 20% – **Draft #1:** Meets description above
 - 5% – Sections: Draft includes two complete song sections (two Verses, or Verse+Chorus)
 - 10% – Content/Labels: The following elements are included and marked in the score:
 - Vocal line (fully notated), including key, time signature, tempo, dynamics, etc.
 - Lead sheet symbols (above the staff)
 - Form section labels (Verse, Chorus, etc.) (above the staff)
 - Lyrics (below the staff)
 - Roman numerals (below the staff) [at least one section follows a standard progression]
 - Harmonic cadences (below the staff)
 - 5% – Legibility
 - 60% – **Final Draft:** Meets description above
 - 10% – Sections: Draft includes all complete song sections, and follows a standard song form
 - 25% – Content/Labels: The following elements are included and marked in the score:
 - Vocal line (fully notated), including key, time signature, tempo, dynamics, etc.
 - Lead sheet symbols (above the staff)
 - Form section labels (Verse, Chorus, etc.) (above the staff)
 - Lyrics (below the staff)
 - Roman numerals (below the staff) [at least one section follows a standard progression]
 - Harmonic cadences (below the staff)
 - 20% – Originality: Draft shows creativity, design, and effort
 - 5% – Legibility
 - 20% – **Performance:** Song writer is well-rehearsed and performs the work fluently