

MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Tell School of Music

CHORAL ENSEMBLE SYLLABUS, Spring 2026

COMPLETE syllabus is posted on D2L and on my blog <https://gemmell-posts.com/>

MUSI 226, 227, 427: Applied Music in Choir

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Office Hours: MWF11-12; MW5-5:30 TTh2-2:30

Best by appointment

I. CHORAL ENSEMBLE DESCRIPTION: MU choral ensembles are dedicated to the study and performance of the highest quality choral music of all style periods. University Choir and Chorale consist of thoroughly auditioned singers from throughout the university community whose backgrounds have given them the tools necessary to function and flourish in a very select musical atmosphere. All choirs represent, and are ambassadors of, the integrity and quality of Millersville University and its Department of Music.

II. OVERALL GOALS of the ensembles include: (1) To become better singer-musicians through constructive, productive and enjoyable rehearsals; (2) To provide experiences to refine musicianship skills including sight-reading, improvisation, and analysis; (3) To give professional quality, emotionally fulfilling, successful performances; and (4) To become better people through creating choral art.

III. OFFICERS AND STUDENT LEADERSHIP: The following positions were elected in Spring 2024; office holders will be introduced during the first week of classes. Elected Officials: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Business Manager. Section Leaders are appointed by the conductor: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass

IV. GRADING: Students participating in Tell School large ensembles receive .5 academic credit per semester. Zero credit is only possible for music major/minors that have satisfied the two credits of their required ensemble or are taking choir as a secondary ensemble. Non-music majors are required to register for .5 credits. The semester grade is based upon: (1) Daily attendance; (2) Quality of daily participation; (3) Mastery of repertoire and development of vocal technique and musicianship to perform diverse vocal styles and a wide variety of choral literature.

Dr. Gemmell reserves the right to require part checks from any singer at any time throughout the semester. Announced (or unannounced part tests) can happen at any time. Students will be graded on their ability to sing the correct notes, rhythms, and texts in a musical manner. If a part check reveals a deficiency, it is the student's responsibility to address the problem(s) in a timely manner. Continuing musical problems may result in being asked not to participate in a performance. Dress rehearsals and performances cannot be "made up." The performance is a unique, one-time opportunity for singers to demonstrate their mastery of the repertoire and is therefore required to pass the course.

V. REHEARSALS AND ATTENDANCE: Strict attendance, including punctual arrival, is expected at all rehearsals and performances. Every singer should be seated, *with their music and a pencil*, ready to sing at the appointed time of rehearsal. **NO CELL PHONES are permitted on stage during rehearsals.** Please check your email regularly for choir announcements. Chronic tardiness – *defined as arriving after warm-ups have begun* – is unprofessional and disruptive; it will lead to a grade reduction. Excessive absences-- excused* or unexcused -- will not be tolerated. Lateness of more than 15 minutes will be counted as an absence. Grades will be determined as follows:

- Each tardy after three have accumulated will automatically decrease your grade incrementally (A to A-, A- to B+, etc.);
- More than two unexcused or four excused* absences during the semester will result in a lower grade (by letter grade, A to B, for each additional absence) and will jeopardize continued membership in the ensemble.

Absences during the "Red Zone" (two weeks prior to concert) must be avoided, as this is when the most intense work for the concert will take place. **Unexcused absences are not allowed during this time.** Missing classes during this period may result in a request that you not participate in the concert. Attendance during Production Week and at dress rehearsals immediately prior to concerts are required. ***An unexcused absence during Production Week or a Dress Rehearsal will prohibit performance in the concert. Failure to perform in the concert with an unexcused absence will result in failure of the course.***

* **Note:** An excused absence is one that is **put into writing via email** on (or **preferably prior to**) the day of rehearsal. Section Leaders will help to monitor attendance and keep an accurate record of each singer's daily attendance.

• **Examples of acceptable reasons to miss a rehearsal:** Institutional excuses given five or more days in advance (avoid during "Red Zone"); Personal illness (must be documented by doctor's note); Death in the immediate family (*documentation required*); Jury duty/required court appearance (*documentation required*); Military duty (*documentation required*); Religious holidays; please notify by second week of classes, not day of holiday; Milestone, includes *immediate* family events such as weddings with 3 months' notice; Auditions/Interviews for graduate programs.

VI. ILLNESS: If you're "slightly under the weather," come to rehearsal and *mark* instead of singing full voice, add rehearsal notes/markings to your score and, if necessary, sit apart from the other singers. Attending rehearsal is beneficial even in a period of illness or vocal fatigue. Only cases that are physically debilitating or contagious should be considered grounds for missing rehearsals.

VII. VOCAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS: As singers, we understand that our whole body is our instrument. As such, we also understand that whatever we put into it or put it through will have a direct effect on our speaking and singing voice. Therefore, we must make a concerted effort to care for and respect our body and voice so that it may serve us well in our careers and in our daily lives. Each voice is as unique as its owner and deserves to be heard. The following contexts are important to consider in the health and wellness of your voice.

Practice. There is a limit to vocal endurance. Know when to stop! Unfortunately, unlike many other instruments, we can't put it down, pack it up, or step away from our voice. Furthermore, instruments can take a beating, endure long practice sessions or rehearsals and keep going. Your voice cannot! Practice awareness of and sensitivity to your instrument. When your voice is tired, "mark" or rest it. Don't push through until you're hoarse or sore.

Performance. Like your car, for your voice to run well, it must be in peak condition. Working with your teacher and practicing intelligently will help you to be prepared for all vocal demands. Understandably, there are times when we just must make it go. However, we must exercise the most caution and allow for minor malfunctions along the way. Ultimately, if there is any cause for concern regarding your vocal health, be sure to tend to it and seek professional help. Don't let a performance situation completely determine the outcome when your vocal health is at stake.

Teaching. Make sure to spend time warming up your voice each day before you begin singing and teaching. This good habit will facilitate maintenance and protection. Teachers are some of the most notorious people in terms of vocal health and abuse. Learn to teach safely and make necessary adjustments to keep your voice working well. Don't speak loudly or yell over your students. Practice good classroom management without vocal overuse.

Listen. Listen to your body! If it hurts or doesn't feel right, stop what you're doing! We need our inner instinct and ears to inform our voices. If our ears aren't fine-tuned, we lose the beautiful subtleties and timbres (colors) of the human voice. That ringing in your ears from listening through your earbuds at full volume is a warning of dire consequences. Protect your ears! Without them your voice will suffer seriously.

For more information and resources related to health and wellness, please see:

<https://www.millersville.edu/music/health-wellness-and-safety/health-wellness-and-safety-resc.php>

VIII. REQUIRED MUSIC AND MATERIALS: For every rehearsal and performance, each student should bring: a **pencil** (not pen) and use it; all **music**, which will be supplied, and a black folder (see below).

Music: The music we sing is expensive. It is expected that each copy of assigned music will be returned by the end of the semester. If the music is not returned in usable condition, a fine of up to \$50 may be imposed. The music should be housed in your black folder that we will use in each concert performance. A pencil should be always kept in the folder and used constantly to mark the music.

IX. Concert Dress: All singers must obtain their own concert attire. Please see Dr. Gemmell within the first two weeks of class if this will be a problem. Failure to dress properly will affect your grade. Attire for concerts must be complete. You are also responsible for purchasing a **PLAIN BLACK folder or binder**, without a shiny cover or any writing, school seal, etc. Please avoid wearing strong fragrances in rehearsals and performances, yet please take care of your personal hygiene.

Here are options for our performance attire. **Option #1:** Standard black choral gown for any students who would like to wear it. It has a removable belt that way it will fit all body types and is completely adjustable:

<https://formalfashionsinc.com/style-4782aa-princess-style-dress-with-empire-waist.html> **Option #2:** another option

because it would allow for students who do not necessarily wish to wear a dress or a tuxedo to feel comfortable in their performance uniform (be sure to order black!): <https://sepapparel.com/carson-jumpsuit-concert-choir.html>

Optional Pearl Necklace: <https://formalfashionsinc.com/style-1073-16-19-inch-adjustable-pearl-necklace.html>

Please be sure to secure your attire ASAP because you never know how long it takes for them to send you the product. Also, you will have to take care of the hem yourself. **Option #3:** Black tuxedo, including black bow tie, black cummerbund, black socks, and black shoes. Here at MU, we've always used Central PA Tuxedo because they sell used tuxes at very good prices: <https://www.centralpamenswear.com/>

X. SCHEDULE OF CHORAL PERFORMANCES/EXTRA REHEARSALS

Mark your calendars NOW!!!

Sunday, 3/1/26, Spring Concert #1: *American Dreams, New Beginnings*

• 12:45 Call, 2:30 Concert

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Thursday & Friday, 3/5-3/6: Chorale Tour

Saturday, 3/28/26, Spring Concert #2 with Wind Ensemble (Hanson: *Song of Democracy*)

• T.B.A. Call, 7:30 Concert

Biemesderfer

Saturday, 5/2/26, Spring Concert #3: *American Choral Classics: Stage and Screen*

• 4:00 Call, 7:30 Concert

Biemesderfer

MILLERSVILLE UNIVERSITY: ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

ADA Program (Office of Learning Services) [Americans with Disability Act](#) | Millersville University. If you have a disability that requires accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please present your letter of accommodations and meet with the Director of the Office of Learning Services at your earliest convenience. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively. If you would like to know more about the Millersville University Office of Learning Services, please contact the office at 717-871-5554.

Millersville University Policies and Links:

- Academic Honesty Policy link [Governance Manual \(millersville.edu\)](#); for additional information please see the following: [What is Academic Integrity? | Millersville University](#)
- Attendance Policy link: [Class Attendance Policy | Millersville University](#)
- Inclusion Statement: [Millersville University Inclusion Statement | Millersville University](#)
- Land Acknowledgement: [Land Acknowledgement | Millersville University](#)
- Policy on Delays and Cancellations link [Policy on Delays & Cancellations | Millersville University](#)
- Chosen Name FAQs link [Preferred Name FAQs | Millersville University](#)
- Privacy Rights under FERPA link [Annual Notification of Student Rights Under FERPA | Millersville University](#)
- Student Conduct and Community Standards Handbook link [studentcodeofconduct.pdf \(millersville.edu\)](#)

Millersville University and its faculty are committed to assuring a safe and productive educational environment for all students. In order to meet this commitment and to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, the University requires faculty members to report incidents of sexual violence shared by students to the University's Title IX Coordinator. The only exceptions to the faculty member's reporting obligation are when incidents of sexual violence are communicated by a student during a classroom discussion, in a writing assignment for a class, or as part of a University-approved research project.

Faculty members are obligated to report sexual violence or any other abuse of a student who was, or is, a child (a person under 18 years of age) when the abuse allegedly occurred, to the person designated in the [University Protection of Minors policy](#).

Information regarding the reporting of sexual violence and the resources that are available to victims of sexual violence is set forth at: www.millersville.edu/titleix