



School of Music

Department of Music Education

MUSE 256: String Techniques

2026 Spring Term Syllabus

T, Th 5:00-5:50 PM

Room MU 401

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Office Hours: By Appointment

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Course Description (from catalog)

Development of fundamental performance skills on two or more string instruments. Examination of performance problems, diagnostic techniques, teaching strategies, and other specialized topics related to string instruction in school settings. This course is limited to two attempts. An attempt is defined as any registration resulting in a letter grade or *W*.

Course Objectives

At the completion of the course, the students will be able to:

1. Perform grade one to grade two string literature displaying appropriate/correct technique and skill on the violin, viola, cello, and double bass including:
 - Bow Hold
 - Instrument Hold & Posture
 - Bow Technique; String Crossing; Bow Strokes
 - Tone Production/Quality
 - Left Hand Technique; Posture, Shifting, Position, Vibrato, Double Stops, etc.
 - Musicality; Dynamics, Accents, Phrasing, etc.

These skills will be acquired through classroom and outside practice, by reading various materials assigned, performing in class individually and in a chamber ensemble, viewing “on-line” materials such as www.violinmasterclass.com, www.mystringcoach.com, and www.stringtechnique.com.

2. Demonstrate appropriate care of the Instrument, care of the bow, knowledge of maintenance of stringed instruments, knowledge construction features of the stringed instruments, specifications for ordering stringed instruments and criteria for checking the purchase of instruments.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the types and levels of literature available for school ensembles, by listening to recordings from various publishing firms, and from the series “Teaching Music through Performance in Orchestra.”

Required Materials

- Spieker, M.H. (2023). *String Tech*. Available at Conway Publications
<https://conway-publications.com/product/string-tech-an-introduction-to-string-basics/>
- String Instrument (as determined in class)

Attendance/Punctuality

As a pre-service teacher, you are expected to show an exemplary commitment to education and your personal growth as a professional music educator. Attendance at all class meetings is required. Students are required to provide the instructor with **prior** notice for all absences, just as you will be required to notify your future school and/or principal of an absence. Prior notification may be done via email. Lack of prior notification will constitute an unexcused absence. Any course requirements, expectations, or assignments that are missed because of an unexcused absence will receive no credit or a score of zero.

If an absence is the result of a last-minute emergency, please contact the instructor at the earliest opportunity. If the earliest opportunity to contact the instructor occurs after the start of class, and prior notice was not possible, the nature of the absence, i.e., whether it be considered excused or unexcused, will be at the sole discretion of the instructor.

Excessive absence from class, even when excused with prior notification, is considered unprofessional. As such, three (3) absences may be excused by the instructor if prior notification is provided. The fourth and subsequent absences from class will require medical documentation. Please note, medical documentation will be required for both **physical** and **mental** health absences. Informal mental health days are not recognized by our profession.

Tardy is defined as arriving to class after its official start time, regardless of what is going on in the class. Three (3) tardies, for any reason, will result in one unexcused absence. These expectations for attendance and punctuality are outlined in the revised Music Education Disposition Rubric. Failing to meet attendance and punctuality expectations will prevent a student from earning a passing grade and will result in the need to retake the course.

Electronics Policy

Smart phones, iPads, smart watches, and laptop computers are only to be used in class when needed; otherwise, these devices are NOT permitted. If such a device is needed to meet a specific learning accommodation, please make sure this is officially documented with Disabled Student Development (see the **Disability Accommodations** sections of the syllabus). Students who cannot disconnect from technology during class time will be asked to leave, resulting in an unexcused absence.

Engagement

Students are expected to engage in all classes during the semester. Engagement means actively participating in discussions by adding insightful comments or asking thoughtful questions. Engagement also means all assignments, (e.g., readings, papers, presentations etc.) are completed on time, and presented well, according to the student's best ability. It is not appropriate to be passive either in class or when preparing for class. Students are also expected to regularly check their messages, via email or Canvas, as a variety of things may happen during the course of the semester, (e.g., adjustments to assignments, canceled class due to weather, etc.) in which electronic messaging needs to be used.

Ball State University's Statement Regarding Diversity and Inclusion

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains a diverse faculty, staff, and student body. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as expressed in our [Beneficence Pledge](#) and through university resources found at [Multicultural Center | Ball State University \(bsu.edu\)](#). Bias

Incident Response information can be found at [Report a Bias Incident | Ball State University \(bsu.edu\)](https://reporta-bias-incident.ballstate.edu) or by emailing reportbias@bsu.edu.

Student Academic Ethics Policy

Honesty, trust, and personal responsibility are fundamental attributes of the university community. Academic dishonesty and other forms of academic misconduct threaten the foundation of an institution dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and will not be tolerated. To maintain its credibility and reputation, and to equitably assign evaluations of scholastic and creative performance, Ball State University is committed to maintaining a climate that upholds and values the highest standards of academic integrity. Visit the Vice President for Academic Affairs' [academic integrity website](#) (Students tab) for resources on understanding academic integrity, citing sources properly, and avoiding inadvertent academic dishonesty. The website also includes information on Title IX and the University Grade Appeal Policy. To learn about Ball State University's academic integrity expectations and students' rights, please read the University [Student Academic Ethics Policy](#).

Academic integrity violations include giving or receiving an unfair academic advantage (cheating), presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own (plagiarism), and falsifying academic records. Unless otherwise indicated, you must work independently by yourself. Check with the instructor if you are unsure whether something constitutes academic dishonesty. Examples of academic integrity violations include, but are not limited to:

- Using resources not authorized by the faculty member (including devices, AI tools, hidden notes, and open books).
- Using commercial study websites to find answers to graded assignments (Chegg, Course Hero, StudyPool, OneClass, etc.).
- Without the instructor's written permission, giving away, buying, or selling graded assignments, class notes, exams, study guides, or other course materials to other students or to third-party vendors (Course Hero, Chegg, 24HourAnswers, etc.).
- Working with another person on any assignment other than authorized group projects.
- Sharing or allowing others to access your files, whether done with permission or not.
- Reusing your own work from another semester, course, or section.
- Sharing answers with others during exams (passing notes, texting, whispering, gesturing).
- Discussing exam questions and answers with students who have not taken the exam.
- Soliciting others to complete work for you.

Degree Progress and Licensure

All music education students should know and understand current program and licensure requirements, suggested 4-year plans, course sequencing options and limitations, and Decision Point criteria. To do so, students should regularly meet with advisors, particularly the School of Music academic advisor, and review information provided by the [Office of Teacher Education Services and Clinical Practice](#) and [Teachers College](#). Specifically, in addition to university requirements, MUSE students must:

1. Successfully complete Decision Point 1: Admission to Teacher Candidacy and qualify for applying for student teaching and registering for 300- and 400-level MUSE and Professional Education courses by:
 - Earning grades of C or better and satisfying all course and assessment requirements in COMM 210, MUSE 100, MUSE 150, EDMU 205, EDPS 250, MUSE 291, and MUSE 293;
 - Earning and maintaining an overall GPA of at least 2.50; and
 - Exhibiting the Dispositions expected of and by the teaching profession.
- ⇒ Decision Point 1 can and should be completed by the end of the sophomore year (4 semesters) to ensure on-time program completion and graduation.

2. Successfully complete Decision Point 2: Admission to Student Teaching, by:

- Earning grades of C or better and satisfying all course and assessment requirements in MUSE 356, MUSE 376, MUSE 457, EDPS 390, EDFO 420, and MUSE 350 (V&G majors);
- Earning grades of C or better and satisfying all course and assessment requirements in MUSE 355, MUSE 375, EDPS 390, EDFO 420, and MUSE 350 (I&G majors);
- Earning and maintaining a GPA of at least 2.50 in all Professional Education courses;
- Earning and maintaining a GPA of at least 2.50 in all Music Education major courses;
- Earning and maintaining an overall GPA of at least 2.50;
- Exhibiting the Dispositions expected of and by the teaching profession; and
- Submit an application for student teaching and have your eligibility confirmed by passing a student teaching interview with the MUSE faculty.

⇒ Decision Point 2 can and should be completed by the end of the Fall semester of the senior year (7 semesters) to ensure on-time program completion and graduation.

3. Successfully complete Decision Point 3: Recommendation for Graduation and Licensure.

⇒ It is important to note that students SHOULD complete all [Decision Point 3 requirements](#) to become licensed in the State of Indiana, regardless of whether they plan to teach out of State or not at all. Choosing to bypass an Indiana Teaching license drastically reduces the likelihood of achieving licensure in other states and limits future possibilities.

MUSE Two-Attempt Policy

All MUSE courses are subject to a two-attempt limit. This policy applies to all current Music Education majors and any students participating in MUSE courses with the intent of gaining admission to the Music Education major. Students who do not successfully complete a MUSE course within 2 attempts will become ineligible to complete the Music Education program at Ball State. **An attempt is defined as any registration resulting in a letter grade less than "C"**. A copy of the complete policy, as well as the appeal process for a third attempt and program continuation, can be obtained from the Coordinator of Music Education.

Disposition Assessment

Becoming an effective teacher includes demonstrating professional dispositions, which include attitudes, habits of action, and commitments that foster student learning and assist in elevating the education profession, as well as in interacting with families, community members, and colleagues. The Ball State Disposition Assessment System is a systematic, consistent approach to assessing and supporting teacher candidates' disposition growth throughout their preparation. This system has two components: (1) a disposition rubric system, and (2) a disposition alert system, which provide opportunities for deliberate feedback and guidance regarding teacher candidates' disposition development. Information about the rubric, procedures, and alert policy are available on the Student Teaching page of the OTES website, found [HERE](#).

Professional Membership

It is expected that all Music Education students at Ball State University be members of at least one professional music education organization: NAFME/IMEA, ASTA, ACDA, MTNA, NBA, AOSA, OAKE, etc. To ensure appropriate credit for professional membership, students should pay all registration dues and be listed on the chosen organization's membership roster by midterm. It is recommended that students strongly consider national membership in NAFME/IMEA, not just local membership in NAFME @ Ball State. Included in national NAFME/IMEA membership is access to three journals that are sources for continued professional development, i.e., Teaching Music, Music Educators Journal, and Inform, access to live and archived webinars on a variety of topics, and special collegiate pricing for conference registrations and merchandise. Membership in a professional organization remains an expectation for students' professional dispositions.

University Statement

We are committed to ensuring that all members of the community are welcome, through valuing the various experiences and worldviews represented at Ball State and among those we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact the instructor of record as soon as possible. Ball State's [Disability Services Office](#) coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Freedom of Expression

In this course, we are committed to fostering a learning environment that values intellectual diversity, encourages free expression, and promotes open inquiry. As members of the Ball State Community, we treat each person in the Ball State community with civility, courtesy, compassion, and dignity and respect and learn from differences in people, ideas, and opinions. Please review Ball State University's [Statement on Freedom of Expression](#), the resources on Ball State's [Freedom of Expression webpage](#), and [Ball State's Beneficence Pledge](#).

The Learning Center

The Learning Center offers free Tutoring and Academic Coaching for many courses at Ball State. Students can make appointments for online (Zoom) or in-person (NQ 350) appointments. To make an appointment, visit myballstate.bsu.edu and click on "Navigate" in the Academic Tools section, or go directly to bsu.navigate.eab.com

Testing accommodations for students with disabilities are available for students who have received the appropriate documentation from Disability Services. Tests may be administered in the Learning Center.

Supplemental Instruction is available in select courses. If you have a student instructor (SI) for your course, that person will provide you with information the first week of school regarding weekly study sessions. For more information about Learning Center programming, call 765-285-1006, or visit bsu.edu/learningcenter

The Writing Center

All writers improve with practice and feedback, so as a student in this course, you are encouraged to use the Writing Center (in Robert Bell 295 during weekdays, Bracken Library First Floor West in the evenings, or online during any of our regularly scheduled hours) to get additional feedback on your writing.

The Writing Center offers free planning, feedback, and accountability sessions (in person and online) to all students composing essays, reports, reflections, research projects, web content, lesson plans, slideshows, poster presentations, resumes, and other digital or print texts. To schedule a free appointment to discuss your writing, go to bsu.edu/writingcenter. Online and in-person appointments are available; however, plan ahead because appointments book quickly.

The Speaking Center

The [Speaking Center](#) is a free resource available to all members of the BSU community wanting to improve their public speaking abilities. We offer personalized coaching designed to help you become a more confident and effective speaker. Our trained coaches provide constructive feedback and support throughout the entire speech preparation process, whether you are in the early stages of brainstorming ideas and organizing your thoughts, or you need to practice your delivery and refine your message.

The Center is in the David Letterman Communication and Media Building, room 302. To schedule an appointment, please access us through your Navigate app or use this [direct link](#) to sign up for a time. Appointments are available both in person and on Zoom. Appointments are available in person, on

Zoom, and in virtual reality (VR) for those interested in practicing in an immersive speaking environment.

The Basic Needs Hub

If you are having difficulty affording enough food, do not have a safe and reliable place to sleep, and/or experiencing an emergency or crisis, help is available through the [Basic Needs Hub](#). The Basic Needs Hub has information and resources and provides individualized support to students. To talk with a supportive staff member about your experience, receive one on one assistance, or learn more about resources, you can submit a [Basic Needs Assistance Form](#).

The Counseling Center

The Ball State University Counseling Center offers free and confidential services to all students. The Counseling Center is located in Lucina Hall, Room 320. To schedule an appointment, you can contact us at 765-285-1736. Ball State also offers a 24/7 Crisis Line, which can be reached at 765-285-HOPE (4673). The Crisis Line is a mental health resource for those who are struggling with any mental health concerns, including thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide.

At the Ball State Counseling Center, we see students for a variety of reasons, some of which include homesickness, relationship concerns, anxiety, and depression. At your first appointment, you will work with a therapist to create a plan that will connect you with resources that best fit your needs. We assist students with getting connected to therapy at our Center as well as connecting students to self-help resources, other on-campus resources, and community-based resources. All Ball State students also have access to several on-demand, self-help resources through a variety of different platforms. All of these resources, including a direct link to our website, can be found [here](#).

Class Schedule

The instructor reserves the right to modify the following schedule as needed. If this occurs, it will be done in a timely manner giving students ample opportunity to adjust.

Application for Student Teaching

Application for student teaching occurs in the academic year prior to the student teaching year. Students must attend the Application for Student Teaching in Music Education Orientation Meeting held in October. At this meeting, students will receive important information about student teaching, the application process, and the required interview with the music education faculty. Students must have achieved [Admission to Teacher Candidacy](#) (passed Decision Point 1) to be eligible to apply; there are no exceptions.

Engagement Expectations

To support a respectful and engaging classroom environment that encourages the free exchange of ideas and civil discourse, we will follow these ground rules:

1. Respect different perspectives. Share your ideas and let others share theirs.
2. Challenge ideas, not people. Disagree respectfully. No personal attacks or put-downs. Focus on exploring ideas critically and constructively.
3. Listen to understand. Stay curious, ask questions, and give others space to speak.
4. Assume good intentions. Approach discussions with curiosity and compassion.
5. Keep it private. What is shared in class should stay in class. Do not share others' words or work without their permission.
6. Be respectful. Avoid hurtful language, stereotypes, or content that may demean others. Keep feedback constructive.

Course Grade Qualifier

Because effective music teaching is the baseline requirement for being an effective music educator, students' performance with regard to teaching will have an increased effect on students' final grades. Students can only earn a grade of:

- A: if they earn at least 90% of the total points possible in the teaching components listed in the syllabus.
- B: if they earn at least 80% of the total points possible in the teaching components listed in the syllabus.
- C: if they earn at least 70% of the total points possible in the teaching components listed in the syllabus.

In addition, a minimum of a C is needed on all assignments indicated by an asterisk in order to earn a course grade of C or higher. Failure to complete all assignments will result in an automatic grade of C- or lower. See course calendar for final deadline for all course assignments to be submitted to be eligible to pass the course.

Grading

Grades are based on these percentages in accordance with the university's + and - system.

	B+	87-89.9%	C+	77-79.9%	D+	67-69.9%		
A	94-100%	B	84-86.9%	C	74-76.9%	D	64-66.9%	F 0-59.9%
A-	90-93.9%	B-	80-83.9%	C-	70-73.9%	D-	60-63.9%	

Grades will be earned by completing the following:

- Performance/Pedagogy Exams: 50% of the final grade
- Final Exam - Written: 20% of the final grade
- String Lesson: 15% of the final grade
- Workbook Exercises: 10% of the final grade
- Music Education Professional Disposition: 5% of the final grade

Performance/Pedagogy Exams: (50% of the Final Grade)*

Each student will be tested on their performance skills on the Violin, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. Chamber groups are formed at the end of the semester and each ensemble will do a small performance for the class.

Written Final Exam: (20% of the Final Grade)

The final for the course consists of a written exam, given during the scheduled time in finals week. No student will be allowed to take the written exam early and if a student does not attend class to take the final, they will fail the exam.

String Lesson: (15% of the Final Grade)

Each student will submit a string lesson. The lesson must be at least 10 minutes in length and must contain at least three string pedagogical elements. A lesson plan (template provided) and a video must be uploaded into Canvas near the end of the semester. More information will be provided on Canvas.

Workbook Exercises: (10% of the Final Grade)

Each student will complete workbook exercises found in the text. These will be periodically checked in class as the class progresses through the key signatures.

Professional Development and Disposition: (5% of the Final Grade)

Continual growth and development as a musician and teacher throughout a career are essential so during each term of study, as a music education major, you will exhibit a commitment to professional growth and development by completing professional development hours through several activities. Complete details of this assignment will be discussed in class and will be posted in Canvas along with a rubric to determine the grade, you may also visit the music education webpage for details as well as upcoming events. <https://bsucnafme.weebly.com/pd-events.html>

Note: membership in a professional organization is mandatory to achieve a basic level of professionalism.

You will also be evaluated in the area of professional disposition. Please review the rubric (posted on Canvas and the Music Education website) for more information. You must achieve at least a Basic level of professionalism on the disposition rubric to pass the course. **An Unsatisfactory in any category will automatically cause a maximum of a C- grade which means you must retake the course.** Note: membership in a professional organization is mandatory to achieve a basic level of professionalism.