



ST. PATRICK'S SEMINARY & UNIVERSITY

MENLO PARK, CALIFORNIA
ESTABLISHED 1898

Catholic Institute of Sacred Music

SM-4301

Fall 2026

As arranged

1 credit

Instructor: Jennifer Donelson-Nowicka, and your voice teacher
Contact: jennifer.donelson@stpsu.edu
Office Hours: By arrangement

I. Course Description

Students will make arrangements for 15 weekly 50-minute lessons with a local voice teacher who is approved by the program director after review of the instructor's CV and academic transcripts. Students are also responsible for finding an accompanist as needed. The ordering of topics covered in lessons will be at the discretion of the teacher, including posture and alignment, breath management, onset of tone, resonance, articulation, phrasing, tuning, and style and expressivity appropriate for the sacred choral repertory of polyphony and chant. Repertoire will include art songs and arias for the development of vocal technique, and time will be devoted to the study of individual vocal technique as applied to the sacred choral repertory. For final exams each semester (juries), students will prepare a complete formulary of chant propers (Introit, Gradual/Lesser Alleluia, Alleluia/Tract, [Sequence], Offertory, and Communion), their line in 3 motets, and 2 art songs or arias.

II. Course Overview

The content and style of your lessons will be arranged with your chosen teacher.

III. Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand and employ good vocal technique in sacred music repertory;
2. Present a juried program of prepared vocal works;
3. Rehearse vocal music with excellence and efficiency.

IV. Credit Hour Statement

St. Patrick's has adopted the Carnegie Unit as its definition of a credit hour. One credit hour entails one hour of classroom time and two hours of outside-of-class preparation (including reading, homework, examination study) per week over a 15-week semester. More information

can be found in the Academic Catalog. If an instructor needs to miss a scheduled class day, the class will either have a guest lecturer or it will need to be made up later in the semester.

V. Attendance

Academic success depends on regular class attendance and participation.

Punctual attendance at all Saint Patrick's Seminary classes is mandatory. All absences must be communicated by the student to the professor before the class session takes place. If a student is ill and cannot attend class or notify the instructor before the class session, the student must inform the instructor as soon as possible.

If a student misses 20% or more of the required class sessions, they will not be permitted to complete the course. Thus, students under these circumstances will receive a failing grade for the course. Exceptions to this policy due to very extraordinary circumstances must be submitted as a request in writing to the Program Director, Dr. Jennifer Donelson-Nowicka, who will evaluate whether an accommodation is feasible or possible.

Instructors will not be expected to record classes to send archived versions to students who were absent, and students should not feel entitled to this courtesy.

Attendance via Zoom/video conferencing is not permitted.

VI. Course Requirements and Assignments

Attendance, preparation, and progress – 60% of final grade - Weekly, beginning August 24, 2026

Students are required to attend 14 lessons. The jury counts as the 15th lesson. Failure to attend 12 or more lessons will result in automatic failure of the class. Each lesson is to be properly prepared and students must show progress over the course of the semester. Grades in this area will be given by the studio teacher. Students are expected to make arrangements for accompaniments as necessary, including payment.

Students may not compact lessons in their schedule fewer than four days apart; time is needed for development and schedules should be built to complete all 15 lessons with a separation of at least four days between lessons.

In addition to the assignment of a grade by the studio teacher, students must turn in a Word/Google doc or scan of a hand-written log of lessons. The log should include the following information for each lesson:

- Date and time of lesson
- Repertoire covered
- A very brief synopsis of the content of the lesson.

This log will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Failure to turn in the log will result in failure of this portion of the class. **Logs are due on Monday, December 7th.**

Please note that the final jury counts for one of the 15 sessions. This leaves freedom to take one week off, such as the week of Thanksgiving.

Studio teachers will grade the student's progress throughout the semester using the following rubric:

20–19 points: Exemplary

Student demonstrates perfect or near-perfect attendance (all 15 lessons attended on time, with rare excused absences proactively rescheduled). Lessons show thorough preparation: all assigned technical exercises, repertoire (including chant propers, motets, and art songs/arias), and accompanist coordination completed at a high level. Progress is outstanding—clear, consistent improvement in posture/alignment, breath management, onset, resonance, articulation, tuning, phrasing, and expressive style. Student is fully on track for a strong jury performance and exhibits professional rehearsal efficiency.

18–17 points: Excellent

Student demonstrates perfect or near-perfect attendance (all 15 lessons attended on time, with rare excused absences proactively rescheduled). Preparation is consistently strong; student arrives ready with polished assignments and shows initiative in applying technique to sacred choral and solo repertoire. Progress is strong and steady across all technical areas, with noticeable gains in vocal freedom, musicality, and efficiency. Minor lapses in preparation or consistency do not impede overall advancement toward jury requirements.

16–15 points: Very Good

Student demonstrates perfect or near-perfect attendance (all 15 lessons attended on time, with rare excused absences proactively rescheduled). Preparation is generally solid, with most assignments completed, though occasional reminders may be needed for full accompanist integration or detailed work on chant/motets. Progress is evident and consistent in core areas (breath, tone, resonance, tuning), moving the student meaningfully toward course objectives, with good potential for a successful jury.

14–13 points: Good

Attendance is excellent (14–15 lessons, all on time or with minimal excused absences promptly addressed). Preparation is adequate for most lessons but shows inconsistency in depth (e.g., partial memorization or uneven practice on propers/art songs). Progress is satisfactory—foundational techniques improve, but gains in phrasing, expressivity, or stylistic application to sacred repertory are moderate. Student is generally on pace but may need focused effort for jury readiness.

12–11 points: Satisfactory

Attendance is very good (13–15 lessons attended, with few unexcused issues). Preparation is uneven; student often arrives with incomplete assignments or requires significant in-lesson review of technique/repertoire. Progress is modest—some improvement in basic vocal technique (posture, onset, breath) is visible, but challenges persist in resonance, tuning, or efficient rehearsal habits. Jury preparation is developing but requires substantial additional work.

10–9 points: Adequate

Attendance meets expectations (12–14 lessons), with some tardiness or rescheduling that is communicated. Preparation is frequently insufficient, leading to repeated coverage of the same material and limited accompanist use. Progress is minimal—basic concepts are addressed, but

technical issues (e.g., alignment, breath management, articulation) show only slight or inconsistent improvement. Student is behind pace for juried program objectives.

8–7 points: Developing

Attendance meets expectations (12–14 lessons), with some tardiness or rescheduling that is communicated. Preparation is regularly lacking, with little evidence of outside practice or progress on assigned chant propers, motets, or solo repertoire. Progress is limited—some awareness of technique emerges, but major deficiencies remain in core areas, and rehearsal efficiency is poor. Significant effort is needed to meet course objectives.

6–5 points: Limited

Attendance meets expectations (12–14 lessons), with some tardiness or rescheduling that is communicated. Preparation is minimal or absent for most sessions. Progress is slight or stagnant; fundamental vocal technique shows little advancement, and repertoire readiness for jury (propers, motets, art songs) is far below expectations. Rehearsal habits lack efficiency.

4–3 points: Insufficient

Attendance meets expectations (12–14 lessons), with some tardiness or rescheduling that is communicated. Preparation is almost nonexistent. Progress is negligible or regressing due to inconsistency; student shows little application of concepts like resonance, tuning, or stylistic appropriateness for sacred music. Unlikely to meet jury requirements without major intervention.

2–1 points: Minimal

Attendance meets expectations (12–14 lessons), with some tardiness or rescheduling that is communicated. Virtually no observable progress toward any course objectives.

0 points: No Credit

Missing more than 3 lessons, no preparation, and no progress. Student fails to engage with the applied lesson requirement.

Final Exam – Jury – Monday, December 7, 2026 – Time as arranged – 40% of final grade

Students will sign up for a jury slot 3 weeks in advance of the jury. Students must ensure the studio teacher can be present at the jury. Failure to have the studio teacher at the jury will result in failure of the jury. Exceptions will be made only in extreme extenuating circumstances.

Technology: Sound and video are required to be in good working order, with a steady wifi connection, and no distortion of the sound. Teachers must be able to hear the singer and any accompaniment with clarity. Students are expected to make arrangements for accompaniments as necessary, including payment. Juries will be delivered via Zoom (preferable) or Google Meet (by arrangement in advance). Students must email the studio teacher, and Drs. Berry and Donelson-Nowicka the link by 8 a.m. on Monday, December 7. The email with the Zoom link must include 1 PDF copy of all music prepared for the jury—the complete chant formulary, 3 motets, and 2 art songs/arias, from which the committee will choose 3 selections.

Juries will be graded according to the following rubric. Dr. Berry, Dr. Donelson-Nowicka, and your teacher each grade according to this rubric; the final jury grade is based on the sum of all 3 point totals.

	3	2	1	0
Breath Management/Alignment <i>Inhalation is easy, full and efficient. Exhalation provides stability, support, vibrancy, and vocal energy. Buoyant alignment assists a balanced engagement of the tone.</i>	Inhalation is easy and sufficient. Exhalation provides support, balanced stability, and energized phrasing. Alignment is buoyant.	Inhalation is mostly easy and sufficient. Exhalation provides stability, support, and vocal energy some of the time, with some collapsing in the body at the ends of phrases. Buoyancy is developing.	Inhalation is often noisy or insufficient. Exhalation does not provide stability, and the singer tenses or collapses in the body. The singer requires extra breaths to complete phrases. Buoyancy is occasional.	Inhalation is consistently noisy & insufficient. Exhalation does not provide stability, and the singer tenses or collapses in the body. The singer requires extra breaths to complete phrases. Buoyancy is non existent.
Tone/Vocal Production <i>Resonance and timbre are appropriate to the style, with balanced resonance throughout range. Onset and offset are clean, clear and balanced allowing for vibrancy. Tuning is accurate throughout the range. Dynamic flexibility is present; singer has the ability to make subtle changes appropriate to style and character.</i>	Resonance is complete and balanced. Onsets are immediate and promote clear, complete timbre at all times. Offsets are silent and allow rebound in the breath system. Tuning is always accurate. The flexibility and warmth of the voice is fully evident in the performance.	Resonance is developing, chiaroscuro through some of the range. Onsets are immediate most of the time but occasionally either tighten the tone or allow excess breath in the sound. Offsets have occasional extra air or extraneous noise. Tuning is mostly accurate. The flexibility and warmth of the voice is sometimes evident in the performance.	Resonance is for the most part incomplete, chiaroscuro mostly not evident in vocal range. Onsets are often delayed and with extra noise or air much of the time. Offsets have extra air or extraneous noise much of the time. Tuning is often problematic. The flexibility and warmth of the voice is not fully evident in the performance.	Resonance is incomplete, chiaroscuro not evident in vocal range. Onsets are always delayed and with extra noise or air all of the time. Offsets have extra air or extraneous noise all of the time. Tuning is problematic. The flexibility and warmth of the voice is not fully evident in the performance.
Musicianship <i>Pitches and rhythms are accurate and performed</i>	All pitches are accurate. All rhythms are	Pitches and rhythm are accurate most of	Many pitches and rhythm are inaccurate.	All rhythms and pitches are inaccurate.

<i>with pitch and rhythmic integrity; the markings of the music are observed and presented with idiomatic style. The entire performance is sung securely and sensitively.</i>	accurate. The markings of the music are observed, and the style presented is idiomatic.	the time. Most of the markings in the music are observed, and much of the style presented is idiomatic.	Attention to the score is unclear or lacks understanding. The style requires further study.	Attention to the score is not evident or lacks understanding. The style requires much further study.
Diction Languages are sung with accurate pronunciation and effective articulation, with idiomatic inflection beyond basic phonetics. The singer displays thorough understanding and communication of the text.	The singer communicates the meaning of all text. All languages are accurate in pronunciation and articulation, and demonstrate idiomatic characteristics.	The singer communicates the meaning of much of the text. Most languages are accurate in pronunciation and articulation, and demonstrate idiomatic characteristics.	The singer often does not communicate the meaning of the text. Languages are often inaccurate in pronunciation and articulation, and lack idiomatic characteristics.	The singer does not communicate the meaning of the text. Languages are completely inaccurate in pronunciation and articulation, and idiomatic characteristics are nonexistent.
Artistry/Phrasing The physical life, musicality, and vocalism of the singer fully express the beauty of the music and its text.	The singer exudes confidence. The physical, musical and vocal choices made by the singer allow their individual artistry to engage the listeners in the entire performance. The performance is expressive and beautiful all of the time.	The singer mostly exudes confidence. The physical, musical and vocal choices made by the singer allow their individual artistry to engage the listeners in part of the performance. The performance is personally expressive and beautiful most of the time.	The singer often does not exude confidence. Memorization is mostly incomplete with several errors. The singer has difficulty making physical, musical and vocal choices, and their individual artistry does not engage the listeners in most of the performance. The performance is expressive and meaningful some of the time.	The singer does not exude confidence. Music is not memorized and is filled with errors. The singer has difficulty making physical, musical, and vocal choices and their individual artistry does not engage the listeners in the entire performance. The performance is not expressive and not meaningful in its entirety.

VII. Grading Procedures

St. Patrick's Seminary & University uses the following grading scale:

A	100-93	B-	82-80	D+	69-67
A-	92-90	C+	79-77	D	66-63
B+	89-87	C	76-73	D-	62-60
B	86-83	C-	72-70	F	59 and below

The STPSU Writing Skills Rubric will be used when grading any formal written assignments. This Rubric may be found in Appendix III of the Academic Catalog.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, St. Patrick's Seminary & University provides services and accommodations to students who experience barriers in the educational setting due to learning, emotional, physical, mobility, visual or hearing disabilities. For more information please contact the Academic Dean.

In Sacred Music programs, courses fulfill requirements toward degree or certificate completion only when a grade of C- or higher is earned.

VIII. Required Texts/Magisterial Documents

Students must purchase scores of all required repertory.

IX. Recommended Texts

Please consult your studio teacher for additional recommended texts.

X. Academic Integrity

1. Academic Honesty Policy: Each student in this course is expected to abide by St. Patrick's Seminary & University's Academic Honesty Policy: written work must be the student's own, and each student must take care to give full documentation for all material quoted or paraphrased from other sources, including the Internet. Consult the seminary's Style Guide for proper citation rules. The use of generative AI is forbidden, unless explicitly permitted by the instructor.
2. Plagiarism Policy: We define plagiarism as the use of another person's ideas or words without appropriately indicating them as such.
3. Consulting Policy: You are encouraged to study together and to discuss information and concepts covered in lecture and the sections with other students. You can give "consulting" help to or receive "consulting" help from such students. However, this permissible cooperation should never involve one student having possession of a copy of all or part of work done by someone else, in the form of an e-mail, an e-mail attachment file, a diskette, or a hard copy. Should copying occur, both the student who copied the work from another student and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment. Penalty for violation of this policy can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action. If you have a paper read and corrected by someone outside of class, you must use the St. Patrick editing form. Have the "editor" fill it out. You should turn in

the original paper, the rewrite, and the form to the instructor. This is a safeguard for you, the student. The use of generative AI is forbidden, even for consulting/proofreading, unless explicitly permitted by the instructor.

4. Examination Policy: During examinations, you must do your own work. Talking or discussion is not permitted during the examinations, nor may you compare papers, copy from others, or collaborate in any way. Any collaborative behavior during the examinations will result in failure of the exam and may lead to failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

XI. Class Schedule

Course schedule is subject to change according to the discretion of the instructor.

15 Weekly Lessons with 1 week available to skip	August 24 to December 4, 2026
Sign-up for juries due	Monday, November 16, 2026
Juries, Lesson logs due	Monday, December 7, 2026

Please note the following deadlines for drop/add and withdrawal.

Please note that telling a professor that you wish to drop a course does not affect your registration status and will not trigger a tuition refund. Official notice of an intention to change registration status must be sent to the Registrar at registrar@stpsu.edu and copy info@catholicinstituteofsacredmusic.org.

Monday, August 17 th	Last day to drop, 100% tuition refund
Thursday, October 15 th	Last day to drop the course, 50% tuition refund
Friday, October 30 th	Last day to withdraw, 0% tuition refund
Friday, October 30 th	Last day to change from credit to audit or vice-versa, 0% tuition refund