

# INDEPENDENCE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## Songwriting 101 Syllabus

### I. GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

**Instructor Name:** Jim Halsey

**Course Number:**

**Course Title:** Songwriting 101

**Semester:**

**Credit Hours:**

**Prerequisite/corequisite:**

**Division and Discipline:**

**Course Description:** This course investigates the core elements of songwriting by breaking down the individual segments of a song and exploring how each segment fulfills a responsibility to the overall structure and format of the song, and how each element is essential to the song's success.

**II. COURSE AS VIEWED IN THE TOTAL CURRICULUM:** This course explores the basic elements of songwriting. It will illuminate and define these elements of songwriting so that the student can get a clear idea of the process of constructing attractive and marketable songs. Subjects covered in this 9 class course are Theme, Structure, Melody, Groove, Hook, Intro, Lyricism, Appeal, and a summary class to tie these elements together. This course is a media arts course.

**III. TEXTBOOK AND OTHER REQUIRED MATERIALS:** "How to Make It in the Music Business", by Jim Halsey

**IV. REFERENCES:** Songs from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present will be explored to discover how successful songs use each core element to maximize its potential. Exercises and assignments are designed to identify these key elements and show how these elements have been present in popular music and other formats historically and into the present.

**V. INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS AND CLASSROOM POLICY:** Instructor expects students to focus on the information presented and be able to define, discuss, inquire of and explore the terms and roles of the music industry. Instructor expects student answers to be their own; this industry rewards originality and brutally marginalizes the plagiarist. Plagiarism is against stated institutional policy and could lead to ICC disciplinary action and/or dismissal from the college; the consequences within the music industry are far more severe. Students who excel at completing assignments and developing original thought as it pertains to the creative process of the music industry not only receive rewards in the classroom, such as good grades, but will find themselves better prepared for success in the industry as a whole. Student is expected to meet ICC academic honesty policy as stated in the ICC Student Handbook.

**VI.** Attendance policies outlined by the school at [www.indy.cc.ks.us/academics/academicstandards.htm](http://www.indy.cc.ks.us/academics/academicstandards.htm) are to be observed. Since this course is designed and paced for preparation to achieve results in the music industry, those results are directly correlated to the students ability to attend and institute the information disseminated in this class. Student is expected to observe attendance policy within the school's attendance policy as published in the policy manual.

**VII. OBJECTIVES:** This course explores the basic elements of songwriting. It will illuminate and define these elements of songwriting so that the student can get a clear idea of the process of constructing attractive and marketable songs.

Theme

Structure

Melody

Groove

Hook

Intro

Lyricism

Appeal

Summary class to tie these elements together.

Demo Preparation

Copyright basics  
Publishing intro

**V III. COMPETENCIES: Student will learn to identify and provide examples of these key elements of songwriting and show competency at assimilating them into the songwriting process.**

Theme  
Structure  
Melody  
Groove  
Hook  
Intro  
Lyricism  
Appeal  
Summary class to tie these elements together.  
Demo Preparation  
Copyright basics  
Publishing intro

**V III. Core Competencies:** Songwriting 101 is designed and structured to meet and exceed the learning outcomes and competencies specified by the Kansas Core Competency Project for this course. The learning outcomes and competencies detailed in this syllabus meet, or exceed, the learning outcomes and competencies specified by the Kansas Core Competency Project for this course.

**IX. CORE ABILITIES:** The student should be able to define, discuss and understand the concepts, terms and basic elements of song structure. Student should also understand the historic value of differing styles and genres. Student should also be able to use internet and other resources for research of subject matter.

**IX. METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:** Text, audio, internet activity, assignment exercises.

**X. METHODS OF EVALUATION:** This course is evaluated via activity participation (40%), assignment completion (40%), and terms and assignment evaluation (20%).

**XI. COURSE OUTLINE:**

Song Intros and their impact - This initial class will explore and uncover the most basic elements of what constitutes a well-written song. Key elements, definitions and parameters of what make up a well written song.

Song Structure: Rules or Guidelines? - Overall song structure and how the different sections of the song are arranged. Internal structure of verses and chorus. Basic sections to a song are the intro, verse, chorus, bridge, and the break.

Groove: Care to dance? Or just fall in love? - How the rhythm and tempo interact with the form and lyrics of a song determine its groove and can ultimately influence the song's success. The importance of how the groove interacts with the other elements of a song.

Melody: 'I've got this song stuck in my head...' - The influence of melody in modern songwriting.

Lyrics: Say it, don't spray it. - The wedding of lyrics and melody are of the foremost importance in the songwriting process. Sometimes that marriage flows like the proverbial 'match made in heaven'; other times it seems to require a hammer and anvil to get the two parts of the equation to meld. At the end of the day it is imperative that the two parts fit like a hand in a custom made glove for that song to ever have a chance of becoming successful.

Theme: Love, angst, politics, and religion – Simple themes with broad appeal. Weigh the consequences and strike a balance. Being honest in your songwriting.

Hook: 'There's just something about that song.' - A musical hook is the part of a song that you remember after only hearing it. Simple, right? Think again. In fact, as a songwriter, you should give it a lot of thought. The hook is essential if your song is to stand a chance of becoming a hit.

Appeal: 'Well, my Mom just loved it!' – Getting honest feedback. Finding how a song fares in the ears of

the public and the industry. Making a good demo and getting into the right hands.

Tying it all together: Diamonds from coal dust. - Practice the process until good at it. Be in the habit of being prepared to take advantage of opportunities when inspiration hits. Be willing to work at it.

Basics of the copyright process, forms, fees

Publishing basics, options, process, expectations.

**XII. NEXT COURSE IN SEQUENCE:** Next course for which this course is prerequisite.

### **XIII. Special Situations-**

All students seeking assistance with academic programs because of documented disabilities should contact the appropriate contact person listed below:

#### **Instructional Needs**

*Title IX Coordinator:* Dr. Paula Davis, Dean of Instruction

AC 117, Academic Building

620-331-4100 Ext. 5418

[Pdavis@indycc.edu](mailto:Pdavis@indycc.edu)

#### **Facility/Technical Needs**

*ADA Coordinator:* Greg Eytcheson, Chief Info. & Facility Officer

Cessna Building

620-331-4100 Ext. 5444

[Grege@indycc.edu](mailto:Grege@indycc.edu)

### **XIV. COURSE PREPARATION AND APPROVAL**

**Date Prepared:** Date revised or prepared for approval.

**Prepared By:** Person preparing the syllabus for revision or approval.

**Date Approved:** Dates course approved by Academic Council and Dean of Instruction.