

# MIOL - Folk Instruments Class

## An introduction to your Music In Our Lives class

### **Introduction:**

Welcome to Music In Our Lives. For many of you, this class represents the fulfilling of a requirement in order to graduate. That doesn't mean it has to be boring or that you can't learn some valuable things that you can take with you for the rest of your lives. My method for teaching this class is very different from what you may be expecting. I will be teaching you ABOUT music by teaching you to MAKE music. Through the use of folk instruments like the guitar, banjo, mandolin, and piano keyboard (and possibly the recorder, pennywhistle, or others), you will begin to learn musical skills and concepts in an interesting and fun way.

### **How it works:**

- Each student will choose one of our folk instruments. There are limited numbers, so if there is a lot of interest in any one particular instrument, we may have to work out some system by which we trade off.
- Assuming the student has had no prior training on the instrument, he or she will begin with learning some basic chords and how to change from one to the next. As the student's skills improve, I will add new techniques and skills.
- Students will each progress at their own pace. Assignments will be made based upon my perception of what you are able to accomplish in a given period of time (having taught these instruments to teenagers for many years, I'm very good at this!)
- The students will have two full class periods, and part of a third, to learn, practice, and perfect that week's assignment. On the third day, the students will perform the assigned materials for me (one on one, NOT in front of the class). The grade will be determined using a rubric. 50 percent of the grade will be on how well the assignment was completed. The other 50 percent will be based on how hard you worked at it over the course of the week.

### **A Typical Class Period:**

- The students will enter the class, but wait to get their instruments until after attendance is taken. When directed to do so, they will get their instruments and assignment folder and begin working on their assigned materials.
- Approximately two thirds of each class will be spent in individual student work and passing off assignments. The last third of each class will be to either group performance or individual performances as desired.
- Students are **STRONGLY** encouraged to work together on duets and trios, once their individual assignments are complete. If desired, students may request a duet or trio as part of their weekly assignment.

### **Skills and Concepts To Be Learned:**

- Reading music and learning pitch names on the staff **WILL NOT** be required for anyone learning a stringed instrument. However, all students will study, practice, read, and write various examples of rhythm written in standard or percussion notation.
- Students playing a stringed instrument will learn to read, write, and perform from tablature notation specific to their instrument.
- Students will learn both chording and melodic skills on their instruments.
- Students are encouraged, but not required, to engage in public performances of the songs and skills they are learning. Extra credit may be awarded for exemplary performances.
- There may be various projects and/or units of study during the year which do not involve the playing of folk instruments. However, we will return to instrument playing frequently, as that is the main thrust of the course.

### **Supplies YOU need to provide:**

- Every student will need to have a single subject spiral notebook, or a very skinny three ring binder. This will remain in the classroom and will serve as the student's Pass Off Record. Completed and future song/skill assignments will be made here, thus allowing the student to track his or her own progress at a glance.
- Guitar and mandolin players will use a plastic plectrum (or "pick"). I will provide home-made picks, however, some students prefer to buy their own. They are not particularly expensive and can be purchased at any music store.
- If a student would prefer to learn a melodic folk instrument like the recorder or pennywhistle, he or she will need to purchase it themselves. Most music stores carry them. If this is the case with you, please buy a Soprano recorder or a key of "D" pennywhistle. Students are responsible for the care of any instruments they own and choose to bring in.

### **Guidelines for Use of Classroom Instruments:**

- Instruments are to be used only in the classroom. They may not be borrowed for use in the Senior Lounge or other recreational places (except in very rare, specific cases).
- Instruments may NOT be signed out for personal use at home except in specific cases where a student is practicing for an upcoming school concert or other performance.
- Students are NOT to attempt to tune or otherwise adjust the tuning keys of their instruments without permission from the teacher. This is VERY important so we don't break a lot of strings!
- Instruments are to be handled and played with care and respect at all times. They are not toys! Students who abuse the school instruments will not be allowed to play them and will have to purchase one of their own to abuse.
- If a school instrument is damaged or destroyed through a deliberate act or by obvious negligence, the student(s) responsible will be required to pay for the repair or replacement of the instrument.
- Students may bring in their own instruments to use in class with prior permission of the teacher. We will NOT be using any electrically amplified instruments (other than keyboards). **Please don't bring in your electric guitars!** Responsibility for a privately owned instrument is entirely up to the student who owns it. Neither the school nor the teacher is liable for any damage or loss of a privately owned instrument. Students bring in their instruments *at their own risk!*

### **Grading:**

- Grades will be primarily based upon the student's class work on their instruments. Effort and participation are extremely important, as is attitude and behavior. Remember, only fifty percent of the grade is for how well you play. The other fifty percent is *how diligently you are working at it!*
- Averaged with these Pass-Off grades may be quiz grades or project grades, depending on what we are working on that quarter.
- Please remember that many of you MUST PASS THIS CLASS to graduate! This is a very easy class to pass (as well as being fun!). Don't let a bad attitude or laziness torpedo your chances for graduation.
- Last but not least, this course is a class participatory course. Since you can't take the instruments home, you have to be present *in class* to do the work. Absences will hurt your class work. Excessive absences will lead to a loss of credit. Please make it a point to be in class!

**LET'S HAVE A GREAT YEAR!!**