

	Department of Music
	MUA1056c-4056c Private Piano - Commercial 1-2 Units
Spring 2026	

Meeting days: TBA	Instructor title and name: Dr. Victor Labenske
Meeting times: TBA	Phone (cell): 619-602-1690
Meeting location: Cooper 214	E-mail: vlabensk@pointloma.edu
Final Exam: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jury: May 4 • If no jury: May 2, 1-3 PM 	Office location and hours: CM 214 M 2-4 Tu 1:30-2:30 W 10:30-11, 2-2:30 Th 1:15-2:00 F 10:30-11 We might also arrange to meet over lunch (Tu, Th, F)

PLNU Mission

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Private, applied instruction in a performing area is a vital part of the development of Music majors, as well as an appropriate elective for many non-majors. Students are assigned to a level according to their proficiency and mastery of materials listed for a given level. "C" Designation is for Commercial Music. Private piano lessons in beginning/intermediate improvisation. Topics covered may include interpreting basic lead sheets, chords and piano voicings, improvising, and accompanying in pop, jazz, and worship styles. May include some transcriptions or jazz/pop style solos.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOME

Develop applied music skills in one primary performance area in both solo and ensemble settings.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Although specific goals will vary according to the level and interests of each private student, by the end of the semester each student demonstrate the ability to

Possible outcomes depending on the students' chosen focus include looking at a basic lead sheet and playing in these ways:

- Play the melody with the right hand while comping/accompanying with the left hand
- Improvise new melodies over the chord changes of a given lead sheet
- Create basic solo keyboard arrangements from lead sheets or hymns
- Create simple two-hand accompaniments to accompany singing or instrumental solos in pop, jazz, or worship style
- Play all major, minor, diminished, and augmented triads in all inversions
- Play these types of seventh chords in root position and inversion (Major, minor, diminished)
- Play simple to more complex ii-V-I progressions in all keys.

TOPICS COVERED

The following topics may be covered, depending on the level and needs of the student:

- Triads and inversions
- Seventh chords and ninth chords in root position and inversions
- Arpeggio patterns
- Scales
- Chord extensions
- Altered chords
- Shell voicings
- Left hand voicings for comping
- Two-hand chord voicings and comping
- ii-V-Is in major and minor
- Major scales and jazz modes
- Playing by ear
- Playing/arranging church music

REQUIRED TEXTS AND RECOMMENDED STUDY RESOURCES

To be determined by the instructor after the first lesson. You may borrow music from me for the first 2 weeks. You'll need to order your music right away so you have it by the 3rd lesson. There will also be fees for any competitions you enter. **Ordering from the cheapest place on the internet may cause unacceptable delays.**

Music may be purchased from:

Lovley Music 858-277-5754 (**keep a local merchant in business!**)

MR Music Notes 619-283-2001 (Bob delivers to PLNU; no shipping charge...**keep a local**

merchant in business!)

[Pepper Music](#)

[Sheet Music Plus](#)

Other Materials Needed for Class:

- A metronome

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

- **Weekly Grade** – The 2 components (1. Practice hours and days, 2. Assignment sheet) will be averaged together to create a grade for each lesson after lesson #1.
 - **Practice hours and days**
 - Each week at your lesson, you will report the number of hours and the number of days you practiced over the past week
 - If you are studying for 1-unit, you are expected to practice a minimum of **4 hours per week/5 days per week**.
 - I'll average your hours practiced with the goal set for practice hours.
 - Your recorded practice time should be on assigned literature only.
 - Practice rooms are available by checking out a key at the music office.
 - **Assignment sheet** – Together, we will create an assignment sheet at each lesson; in consultation with you, I'll assign a grade for your progress on the previous week's assignments.
 - **Binder** – I will keep a binder in my office with your assignment sheets. Your job is to take a picture of the assignment sheet at each lesson so that you have an electronic copy to follow throughout the week.
- **Completing Pieces** –
 - If you are studying for **1 unit**, you will memorize **2 pieces** during the semester; alternately, 3 lead sheets will count as one piece and don't need to be memorized:
 - The **first piece** by **week 8**.
 - The **second piece** by **our last lesson (before finals week)**.
- **Piano forum** – Forum enables you to perform and to hear others perform. It allows you to “try out” pieces, to test memory and to perform a piece repeatedly to gain confidence with memory and stage presence. I encourage you to perform often and to repeat pieces so that you can get comfortable in performing them.
 - We have Forum Mondays from 4-5 (see forum schedule)
 - You need to attend the ENTIRE CLASS.
 - You must attend 5 piano forums if you are a music major whose are required to take piano this semester because your primary performance area is piano (or have on music scholarship). Other students must attend 2 forums: the first and the last.
 - For every two of the required number of forums you choose to miss, it will count as a missed lesson

- Music majors must perform on at least one forum.

INCOMPLETES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS: You will receive 100% of the earned score for the weekly grade if you choose to meet the memory requirements by the due date. If you choose not to meet the requirements, the grade for that week will be 50% of the weekly grade earned that week. Subsequent weekly grades will be 50% until you have chosen to complete the memorize assignment.

FINAL EXAM POLICY

Final Exam Policy: Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day.

For students not required to take a jury, you will play at the final piano forum on the Saturday before finals week 1-3PM as your final exam. Missing the piano forum will count as a missed lesson.

Commercial music majors with a performance emphasis in piano, will take a piano jury for this course. Piano scholarship recipients who are taking this course to fulfill their music scholarship requirements are also required to take a jury. Missing a required jury will result in course failure. The final grade instructor assigns must be no more than one grade higher or lower than the jury grade.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Grading components (details below):

1. **weekly grade (assignment sheets and practice hours/days).**
2. **memorization schedule.**
3. **attendance.**

Standard Grade Scale Based on Percentages

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

CONTENT WARNING

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In this course, all of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been

intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of music and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

TRIGGER WARNING

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive several types of information. In this course we will cover a variety of topics. I don't anticipate that any topics in this course will be triggering but I will count on you to let me know. The experience of being triggered versus intellectually challenged are different. The main difference is that an individual must have experienced trauma to experience being triggered, whereas an intellectual challenge has nothing to do with trauma. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include leaving class while the topic is discussed or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center. Should you choose to sit out on discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material; but we can discuss if there are other methods for accessing that material, and for assessing your learning on that material. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in music composition and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

SPIRITUAL CARE

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the [Office of Spiritual Life and Formation](#).

PLNU COPYRIGHT POLICY

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.]

PLNU RECORDING NOTIFICATION

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

PLNU ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

PLNU ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2533). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. Professors are able to view a student's approved accommodations through Accommodate.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any accommodations.

LANGUAGE AND BELONGING

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/nondiscrimination.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND DISCRIMINATION

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/Title-IX.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias

AI POLICY

You are allowed to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini Pro 1.5, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc) to generate ideas, but you are not allowed to use AI tools to generate content (text, video, audio, images) that will end up in any work submitted to be graded for this course. If you have any doubts about using AI, please gain permission from the instructor.

PLNU ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

Note: The information below must be included under the “PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy” Section if you are teaching an Online or Hybrid course.

LOMA WRITING CENTER

The Loma Writing Center exists to help all members of the PLNU community cultivate transferable writing skills to engage their academic, professional, personal, and spiritual communities. We work toward this goal by conducting one-on-one consultation sessions, supporting writing education across the PLNU community, and participating in ongoing writing center research.

Getting feedback from the Loma Writing Center while you’re in the process of working on an assignment is a great way to improve the quality of your writing and develop as a writer. You are encouraged to talk with a trained writing consultant about getting started on an assignment, organizing your ideas, finding and citing sources, revising, editing for grammar and polishing final drafts, and more. For information

about how to make in-person or online appointments, see [Loma Writing Center webpage](#) or visit the Loma Writer Center on the first floor of the Ryan Library, room 221.

- [Appointment Calendar](#)
- [Website](#)
- Email: writingcenter@pointloma.edu

LOMABOOKS INSTRUCTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Note: For courses using materials available through Lomabooks

For both digital and print materials, please add these student instructions to your syllabus and Canvas Course. Prior to the start of class, the PLNU Bookstore will also be sharing student instructions in a standalone email on how to access their content.

*This course is part of our course material delivery program, **LomaBooks**. The bookstore will provide each student with a convenient package containing all required physical materials; all digitally delivered materials will be integrated into Canvas.*

You should have received an email from the bookstore confirming the list of materials that will be provided for each of your courses and asking you to select how you would like to receive any printed components (in-store pick up or home delivery). If you have not done so already, please confirm your fulfillment preference so the bookstore can prepare your materials.

*For more information about **LomaBooks**, please go: [HERE](#)*