ATTENDANCE/GRADING

Attendance is mandatory. Any unexcused absence will result in the lowering of your grade. Attentiveness, preparation, and attitude contribute to your grade.

Always bring a pencil and notepad to your lesson. Take notes, just as you would in any other class. Always arrive at your lesson prepared to play the previous week's assigned scales, arpeggios and cadences. I will always want to hear these first, in the order set forth below. At the same time, be sure to keep your previously studied scales in good working order. You may be expected to play any of these at any time during the semester. We will add a new major scale, its relative minor, and corresponding arpeggios and cadences each week. Be prepared to demonstrate your work and the progress you have made on these and your pieces each week. By the end of the semester I expect you to give a polished performance of everything we have worked on, with close attention to every technical and musical detail.

This is the way you should spend your practice sessions during the week:

ALWAYS begin by reviewing a set of scales you have previously learned. Then, move on to the scales you have been assigned for that week. Be sure to follow the correct fingering closely. If you encounter problems, practice each hand separately and slowly before putting them together. Keep your arms relaxed, from the shoulder down, with a flexible wrist parallel to the keyboard, fingers curved and in contact with the keys at all times. Be conscious of producing a beautiful singing tone, and please do not keep time with your arms, or tap your foot!

ALWAYS practice your scales in this order:
1. Major scale - two octaves in eighth notes, then three octaves in eighth note triplets, then four octaves in sixteenths.
2. Arpeggio - four octaves in eighth note triplets.
3. Cadence chords and their inversions.
4. Relative minor scale - Natural minor two octaves in eighth notes, Harmonic minor two octaves in eighth note, Melodic minor two octaves in eighth notes.
5. Minor arpeggio - four octaves in eighth note triplets.
6. Minor cadence chords and inversions.
Practice SLOWLY until your fingering is secure and you can play the scales evenly, without hesitating, each note sounding clearly with a rich tone, each finger going all the way to the bottom of the key. When your fingering is secure, then you can pick up speed. Speed is not our primary goal. Do make music of your scales, though, and not just routine exercises. Remember to keep those arms and fingers relaxed, but alert.

Repertoire – Practice one piece, then the others. The next day, switch the practice order so that none of your pieces becomes neglected. You must determine which finger you are going to place on every note and commit yourself to using this exact fingering EVERY time you play it. You must practice this way so that the fingering becomes natural to you, freeing you to then address and focus on the other details of the piece. In other words, good fingering is your foundation.

Work on one phrase at a time, paying close attention to every detail. Practice SLOWLY. Speed is meaningless and a waste of our time until we have worked out the finer details. Take hands apart and practice separately. If you ignore a difficult passage or a musical detail, it will come back to haunt you! Everyone has to practice this way! Without this attention to detail we can't be free to make music, and making beautiful music is our goal here.