

GE1128: MUSIC FOR FILM

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Music for Film

Subject Code

GE - Gateway Education

Course Number

1128

Academic Unit

School of Creative Media (SM)

College/School

School of Creative Media (SM)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

GE Area (Primary)

Area 1 - Arts and Humanities

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

Music for film is an introductory course with an emphasis on lecture-based learning, critical analysis, and individual work on assignments. There are minimal opportunities for the Tutor to train you in any particular software or hardware. Rather, the focus is on developing your own sensibilities and knowledge in the subject that may then inform and inspire your creative work. This course will equip you to discuss various aspects of music in film and give you a deeper appreciation of the art form. On completion of this course you will be able to:

- summarise theories for the perception of music (and other sound elements) in film;
- summarise the historical development of film music from technical and aesthetic perspectives;
- critically discuss the music and other sound elements and their relationship with visual components in films of different genre and character;
- analyse the music (and other sound elements) in two paired movie sequences (given or self-chosen);
- create or curate the music (and other sound elements) to a given movie sequence.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Compare various film genres and cinematic music (and other sound elements) from the social and historical context		x		
2	Discuss in a broader sense of global cinema practice, the role, function and use of music (and other sound elements) in films from the cultural perspective.		x	x	
3	Critique the associative power of film music (and other sound elements) on the human experience.		x	x	
4	Apply the knowledge gained from CILOs 1-3 to function as a music editor for film and wider media formats.			x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lecture	Present various film excerpts from within specific genres and scene types that span from the 1920s until the present.	1, 2	2 hrs
2	Tutorials	Discuss the use of music within various film excerpts and open the class for discussion.	2, 3	1 hr
3	Tutorials	Demonstrate the impact of music on the narrative and on the audience.	2, 3	Will be part of both lecture and tutorial sessions.
4	Lecture/Tutorials	Using freeware software, students will learn the basics of video and audio editing to support their Design Assignment.	1, 2, 3, 4	Demonstrations will be given during lectures, combined with student centred learning exercises to develop the audio editing skills of each student.

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs		CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Quizzes	1, 2, 3	20	None	No
2	Homework tasks, presentations, and other contributions.	1, 2, 3	20	None	Yes
3	Analysis Assignment: Students will complete a written analysis (~800 words) of the music (and other sound elements) in two given movie sequences (~5 minutes each). The given sequences are paired, e.g. original and remake of the same story (ex. King Kong 1933 and 2005). Each student is required to do a class presentation of either the Design or the Analysis Assignment.	1, 2, 4	30	None	Yes

4	Design Assignment: Students will design music (create or curate) for a given sequence (~5 minutes). The aim is to provide them an experience of being a music editor for film. Students will be provided with a short video containing dialogue and live action sound. Using provided music and soundscape files, students will be required to select and place music against moving image using freeware software. A support document in the form of a creative journal will be required to reveal the student's intention and creative process. Each student is required to do a class presentation of either the Design or the Analysis Assignment.	1, 2, 3, 4	30	None	No
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Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. Quizzes
2. Homework tasks, presentations, and other contributions
3. Analysis Assignment

4. Design Assignment

Criterion

Multiple questions.

Individuals will be assessed on how they critique a movie's music (and other sonic elements) – in terms of its role, function and application in relation to the visual elements.

Students will be assessed on their demonstrated analysis and understanding of the role and effect of music (and other sonic elements) in relation to visual elements for the given movie scene or scenes.

Students will be assessed on the type and placement of music for a given (5-minute) movie clip. Students are also encouraged to create their own music, but this is not a requirement.

Additionally, students will be assessed a supportive creative report, which should outline the intentional use of music/soundscape design.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Strong evidence of understanding of the concepts introduced in class as reflected by worksheets passed to students during tutorials; superior writings revealing original thinking; excellent presentation that requires originality; remarkable improvement through the semester

Good (B+, B, B-)

Evidence of understanding of the concepts introduced in class as reflected by worksheets passed to students during tutorials; good writing showing clarity and depth; good presentation that requires originality and good team work; satisfying improvement through the semester

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Partial evidence of understanding of the concepts introduced in class as reflected by worksheets passed to students during tutorials; writing that lack any depth; satisfactory presentation that requires originality; partial improvement through the semester

Marginal (D)

Little evidence of understanding of the concepts introduced in class as reflected by worksheets passed to students during tutorials; insufficient writing ability as revealed through topic discussions; disorganized presentation; little improvement through the semester

Failure (F)

No evidence of understanding of the concepts introduced in class as reflected by worksheets passed to students during tutorials; writings lack basic clarity; presentation that reveals no originality; no improvement through the semester

Additional Information for AR

All A+/A/A- grade assignment should comply with the highest performance of Discovery-oriented learning.

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

film music, sound in film, movies, history, audiovisual perception, audiovisual design, technology

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Chion, Michel. Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen. Columbia University Press, 1994-2019. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cityuhk/detail.action?docID=5614000 (Links to an external site.).

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Chion, Michel, and Claudia Gorbman. Film, a Sound Art. Columbia University Press, 2009.
2	d' Escriván, Julio. "Sound Art (?) on/in Film." Organised Sound 14, no. 1 (2009): 65-73.
3	Decker, Todd. Hymns for the Fallen: Combat Movie Music and Sound after Vietnam. Univ of California Press, 2017.
4	Holbrook, Morris B. "Music Meanings in Movies: The Case of the Crime - Plus - Jazz Genre." Consumption, Markets and Culture 11, no. 4 (2008): 307-27.
5	Juslin, Patrik N, and Daniel Västfjäll. "Emotional Responses to Music: The Need to Consider Underlying Mechanisms." Behavioral and brain sciences 31, no. 5 (2008): 559.
6	Kittler, Friedrich A. Gramophone, Film, Typewriter. Stanford University Press, 1999.
7	Murch, Walter. "10: Walter Murch—Subject: Designing Sounds for Apocalypse Now." Projections, 1996.
8	———. In the Blink of an Eye. 995: Silman-James Press Los Angeles, 2001.
9	Murray, Leo. Sound Design Theory and Practice: Working with Sound. Routledge, 2019. https://www.taylorfrancis.com.ezproxy.cityu.edu.hk/books/9781315647517 .
10	Trevor, Caitlyn, Luc H Arnal, and Sascha Frühholz. "Terrifying Film Music Mimics Alarming Acoustic Feature of Human Screams." The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America 147, no. 6 (2020): EL540-EL45.
11	Coppola, F. F. and J. Milius (1979). Apocalypse Now. Based metaphorically on Konrad's Heart of Darkness, Coppola's story traces American soldiers in Vietnam tasked with assassinating renegade Colonel Kurtz.
12	Villeneuve, D. (2016). Arrival. A linguist works with the military to communicate with alien lifeforms after twelve mysterious spacecraft appear around the world.
13	Iñárritu, A. G. (2014). Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance). A washed-up superhero actor attempts to revive his fading career by writing, directing, and starring in a Broadway production.
14	Coppola, F. F. (1974). The Conversation. A routine wiretapping job turns into a nightmare when Harry Caul, a surveillance man, hears something disturbing in his recording of a young couple in a park. His investigation of the tape and how it might be used sends him spiraling into a web of secrecy, murder, and paranoia.
15	Caro, M. and J.-P. Jeunet (1991). Delicatessen. Post-apocalyptic surrealist black comedy about the landlord of an apartment building who occasionally prepares a delicacy for his odd tenants.
16	Klimov, E. (1985). Idij i smotri [Come and See]. After finding an old rifle, a young boy joins the Soviet resistance movement against ruthless German forces and experiences the horrors of World War II.
17	Nolan, C. (2014). Interstellar. A team of explorers travel through a wormhole in space in an attempt to ensure humanity's survival.
18	Cooper, M. C., et al. (1933). King Kong. A genuine masterpiece in the history of film-making and a cult-classic movie.
19	Jackson, P. (2005). King Kong. A greedy film producer assembles a team of moviemakers and sets out for the infamous Skull Island, where they find more than just cannibalistic natives.
20	Hooper, T. and D. Seidler (2010). The King's Speech. The story of King George VI, his impromptu ascension to the throne of the British Empire in 1936, and the speech therapist who helped the unsure monarch overcome his stammer.
21	Wachowski, L. and L. Wachowski (1999). The Matrix. A computer hacker learns from mysterious rebels about the true nature of his reality and his role in the war against its controllers.
22	Almodovar, P. (1988). Mujeres al borde de un ataque de "nervios" [Women on the verge of a nervous breakdown]. A television actress encounters a variety of eccentric characters after embarking on a journey to discover why her lover abruptly left her.

23	Campion, J. and M. Nyman (1993). <i>The Piano</i> . A young mute woman and her child travel to New Zealand in the 1800s for an arranged marriage to a farmer. After the marriage she meets another man, and the competition for her love begins. Just one of the men realizes that her affections can only be won through her beloved piano.
24	Anderson, P. T. (2002). <i>Punch-Drunk Love</i> . A psychologically troubled novelty supplier is nudged towards a romance with an English woman, all the while being extorted by a phone-sex line run by a crooked mattress salesman, and purchasing stunning amounts of pudding.
25	Ratner, B., et al. (2002). <i>Red Dragon</i> . A retired FBI agent with psychological gifts is assigned to help track down "The Tooth Fairy", a mysterious serial killer. Aiding him is imprisoned forensic psychiatrist Dr. Hannibal "The Cannibal" Lecter.
26	Girard, F. (1998). <i>The Red Violin</i> . A red-colored violin inspires passion, making its way through three centuries over several owners and countries, eventually ending up at an auction where it may find a new owner.
27	Donen, S. and G. Kelly (1952). <i>Singin' in the Rain</i> . A silent film production company and cast make a difficult transition to sound.
28	Wise, R., et al. (1965). <i>The Sound of music</i> . Maria, a spirited young woman, leaves the convent to become a governess to the seven young children of Captain von Trapp, an autocratic widower whose strict household rules leave no room for music or merriment.
29	Scorsese, M. (1976). <i>Taxi Driver</i> . A mentally unstable veteran works as a nighttime taxi driver in New York City, where the perceived decadence and sleaze fuels his urge for violent action by attempting to liberate a presidential campaign worker and an underage prostitute
30	Bergman, I. and W. A. Mozart (1975). <i>Trollflöjten</i> [Die Zauberflöte, The magic flute]. Janus Films & Swedish State Broadcasting Network Symphony Orchestra. The Queen of the Night offers her daughter Pamina to Tamino, but he has to bring her back from her father and priest Sarastro. She gives a magic flute to Tamino and magic bells to the bird hunter Papageno, who follows Tamino and wants to find a wife. The duo travels in a journey of love and knowledge.
31	Mizoguchi, K. (1953). <i>Ugetsu Monogatari</i> (雨月物語). A tale of ambition, family, love, and war set in the midst of the Japanese Civil Wars of the sixteenth century.
32	Kaufmann, P., et al. (1988). <i>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</i> . In 1968, a Czech doctor with an active sex life meets a woman who wants monogamy, and then the Soviet invasion further disrupts their lives.
33	Hitchcock, A. and B. Herrmann (1958). <i>Vertigo</i> . A former police detective juggles wrestling with his personal demons and becoming obsessed with a hauntingly beautiful woman

Annex (for GE courses only)

A. Please specify the Gateway Education Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) that the course is aligned to and relate them to the CILOs stated in Part II, Section 2 of this form:

Please indicate which CILO(s) is/are related to this PILO, if any (can be more than one CILOs in each PILO)

PILO 1: Demonstrate the capacity for self-directed learning

1, 2, 3, 4

PILO 2: Explain the basic methodologies and techniques of inquiry of the arts and humanities, social sciences, business, and science and technology

1, 2, 3, 4

PILO 3: Demonstrate critical thinking skills

1, 3, 4

PILO 5: Produce structured, well-organised and fluent text

1, 2, 3, 4

PILO 6: Demonstrate effective oral communication skills

1, 2, 3

PILO 9: Value ethical and socially responsible actions

1, 2

PILO 10: Demonstrate the attitude and/or ability to accomplish discovery and/or innovation

1, 2, 3, 4

B. Please select an assessment task for collecting evidence of student achievement for quality assurance purposes. Please retain at least one sample of student achievement across a period of three years.

Selected Assessment Task

Design Assignment, Students will design music (create or curate) for a given sequence (~5 minutes). The aim is to provide them an experience of being a music editor for film. Students will be provided with a short video containing dialogue and live action sound. Using provided music and soundscape files, students will be required to select and place music against moving image using freeware software. A support document in the form of a creative journal will be required to reveal the student's intention and creative process.