

SM3153: SOUND DESIGN FOR CINEMA

Effective Term

Semester A 2026/27

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Sound Design for Cinema

Subject Code

SM - School of Creative Media

Course Number

3153

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

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

SM1702 Creative Media Studio I or SM1702A Creative Media Studio IA

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course aims to provide students with advanced techniques and concepts in producing a professional soundtrack for moving-image, and advanced knowledge in film sound and music aesthetics as applied to production processes and

techniques for film soundtrack design. to develop their literacy and sensibility in advanced audio production that can be applied to a broad range of artistic media and disciplines. Driven by the aesthetic needs of a film, students will learn how to plan, design and communicate with sound and music professionals. Practical audio and music techniques in all aspects of a moving-image production will be covered in class. Upon completion of the module, students will have confidence in creating a smooth and professional sounding soundtrack for their own creative project.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs	Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Identify and describe the role and function of sound and music for moving-image.	x		
2	Analyse, enumerate and explain various film soundtracks by deconstructing their sound elements (dialogue, sound effects, soundscape, ambient/location sound and music).	x		
3	Diagnose and justify aesthetic and or technical issues relating to sound and or music for a given film project.		x	x
4	Demonstrate fundamental skills of audio production in a creative project.		x	x
5	Apply advanced production techniques to produce a final soundtrack synchronized to picture in stereo and various cinema and domestic surround formats.		x	x
6	Transform basic technical competence into a unique style or personal signature.			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	Lectures	Theories and background for sound and music in film.	1, 2
2	Presentation	Critical listening to film soundtracks (with a global perspective) to form critiques and discussions on the sound and music content.	1, 2, 3

3	Screening and Critical Listening Sessions	Examine and critically listen to provided projects, diagnose problems and experiment with different scenarios to achieve the prescribed filmmakers vision.	2, 3	
4	Technical Workshops	Hands-on experience on all aspects and techniques used in a moving-image production.	2, 3	
5	Assignments and Quizzes	Various exercises and short test of knowledge on materials covered.	4, 6	
6	Final Project	Plan, design and produce final mastered soundtrack to the highest professional level for all distributed formats.	4, 5, 6	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?	
1	Class participation	1, 2, 3	10	-	No
2	Presentation	1, 2, 3	10	-	Yes
3	Assignments	4, 6	30	-	Yes
4	In-class quiz	4	15	-	No
5	Final project	4, 5, 6	35	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Minimum Continuous Assessment Passing Requirement (%)

0

Minimum Examination Passing Requirement (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. Class Participation

Criterion

This assessment task reviews students' participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the tutorial sessions. The evidence of 'negotiation', the sign of discovery, lies in students' pre-class preparation and interpersonal sensitivity to his/her peer members.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, strong ability to stimulate class discussion and comment on other points

- In-depth pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Interpret others' views with an open mind and ready to negotiate
- Readiness to share personal insight via analysis and synthesis with informed views
- Constructively critical, thus facilitating the discovery of new issues

Good (B+, B, B-)

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, ability to initiate class discussion and comment on other points
- Adequate pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Interpret opinions effectively

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- Attentive in in-class participation, listening with comprehension, but only infrequently contributing
- Adequate pre-class preparation but little familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Fair ability in interpreting opinions

Marginal (D)

- Unmotivated to participate in class discussion or comment on other people's views
- Little pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Poor ability in interpreting opinions

Failure (F)

- Unwilling to participate in class discussion and comment on other points, even when requested by the teacher
- No pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports and other materials
- Minimal ability in interpreting opinions

Assessment Task

2. Presentation

Criterion

This assessment will grade on content and fluency of presentation. Students should show their co-operation to conduct a well-organized presentation with their own argument and evidence from readings and notes. The threshold of 'discovery' lied in a student's self initiatives to conduct additional research and to personalize theories for her/his personal daily experience.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- Rich, informative content, excellent grasp of the material with in-depth and extensive knowledge of the subject matter
- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, and systematic exposition with a strong sense of narrative
- Superior presentation skills: distinct pronunciation, fluent expression and appropriate diction, exact time-management
- Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize

Good (B+, B, B-)

- Adequate content with firm grasp of the material that informs the audience on a subject matter
- Reasonable organization, balanced structure and composition
- Good verbal communication: comprehensible pronunciation, fluent expression and diction, fair time-management

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- Adequate content with comprehensive grasp of the material demonstrating basic knowledge of the subject matter
- Fair organization, weak structure and composition
- Fair presentation skills: acceptable pronunciation, expression and diction, fair time-management

Marginal (D)

- Weak content, loose grasp of the general ideas with some knowledge of the subject matter
- Poor organization, structure and composition
- Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, poor time-management

Failure (F)

- Inadequate content, fail to identify the general ideas with knowledge of the subject matter
 - No organization, structure or/and composition
 - Poor presentation skills: marginal pronunciation, expression and diction, minimal time-management
-

Assessment Task

3. Assignments/Quiz

Criterion

Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, build up argument and analysis. The threshold of 'discovery' lied in a student's self initiatives to conduct additional research and to personalize theories for her/his personal daily experience.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- Excellent grasp of research material, able to explain key concepts, assumptions and debates
- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, distinct thesis, properly argued with strong narrative
- Insightful interpretation of the subject matter with distinct themes and thesis
- Critical analysis with insightful comments opening up new issues, or suggesting the ability to theorize
- Ability to approach a text or a theme using a variety of theories and analytical tools
- Strong bibliography suggesting breadth and depth of coverage and informed insights

Good (B+, B, B-)

- Firm grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts and assumptions
- Reasonable organization, balanced structure, adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand
- Clear ideas which keep to the point, clear-cut subject, ability to interpret opinions independently
- Organized bibliography which can be utilized in accordance with the topic

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- Comprehensive grasp of materials, able to explain key concepts
- Fair organization, weak structure, adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand
- Relevant points to the subject matter, fair ability to interpret opinions
- Unorganized bibliography which can be utilized in accordance with the topic

Marginal (D)

- Loose grasp of materials, cannot explain key concepts
- Poor organization and structure, weak content, limited use of resources
- Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions
- Insufficient and/or unorganized bibliography

Failure (F)

- Poor grasp of materials
 - No organization and structure, inadequate content, no/ irrelevant use of resources
 - Irrelevant points to the subject matter, minimal ability to interpret opinions
 - Irrelevant bibliography
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Assessment Task

4. Final Project

Criterion

Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, execute creative ideas and projects. The threshold of ‘discovery’ lies in a student’s proactively turning theory into praxis, to transform course material into self-owned authorship.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

- Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature
- Excellent appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Work raises questions and instill insights about the process of conception, creative strategization and production
- Innovative exploration by combining knowledge from different disciplines (e.g. mathematics, psychology, physics, anthropology, etc.) to create an inter-disciplinary project
- Efficient adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available with constructive adjustment

Good (B+, B, B-)

- Strong appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available and constructive feedback/ suggestions

Fair (C+, C, C-)

- Basic appreciation and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Limited ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Marginal (D)

- Marginal appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Marginal ability to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Limited adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

Failure (F)

- No appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium
- Fail to create project/ work that demonstrate the processes of thinking and creative exploration
- Minimal adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

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 Sound, Film Music, Sound Effects, Ambience, Acoustic Treatment, Foley Recording, Automatic Dialogue Replacement, MIDI, Audio Sampling, Post Production, Audio Mixing, Audio Mastering, Surround Sound Production

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Altman, R. (1992). Sound theory, sound practice. New York, Routledge.
2	Beck, J. and T. Grajeda (2008). Lowering the boom : critical studies in film sound. Urbana, University of Illinois Press.
3	Holman, T. (2010). Sound for film and television. Burlington, MA, Focal Press.
4	Sergi, G. (2004). The Dolby era : film sound in contemporary Hollywood. Manchester, Manchester University Press.

5	Alberding, C. W. (2000). It's NOT not music! : ethnomusicology and film sound design, University of California, Riverside, 2000.: iv, 64 leaves.
6	Blake, L. (1984). Film sound today : an anthology of articles from recording engineer/producer. Hollywood, Reveille Press.
7	Cogan, R. and P. Escot (1976). Sonic design : the nature of sound and music. Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall.
8	LoBrutto, V. (1994). Sound-on-film : interviews with creators of film sound. Westport, Conn., Praeger.
9	Losseff, N. and J. R. Doctor (2007). Silence, music, silent music. Aldershot, Hampshire, England ; Burlington, Vt., Ashgate.
10	Sexton, J. (2007). Music, sound and multimedia : from the live to the virtual. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
11	Sonnenschein, D. (2001). Sound design : the expressive power of music, voice, and sound effects in cinema. Studio City, CA, Michael Wiese Productions.
12	Weis, E. and J. Belton (1985). Film sound : theory and practice. New York, Columbia University Press.
13	Whittington, W. (2007). Sound design & science fiction. Austin, TX, University of Texas Press
14	Film Sound http://www.FilmSound.org

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Nil