

# **INTRODUCTION TO AUDIO PRODUCTION (COMM 130)**

Fall 2017

Instructor: Jimmy Schaus

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Office hours by appointment, preferably before or after class session

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is an introduction to the world of audio production. It is meant for undergraduate students with an interest in audio and its applications in modern media and art. Students will learn to employ audio as a creative tool for documentary storytelling, fiction filmmaking, video art, news media, radio production, comedy sketches, commercials and internet production.

Creativity and careful execution are major factors in the grading of ALL projects.

## **COURSE GOALS**

- Understand basic audio concepts and terminology.
- Develop critical listening skills, learn how to effectively discuss sound.
- Gain a working knowledge of basic audio technology including microphones, recorders, mixers, and DAWs.
- Conceptualize, plan, and execute effective sound designs.
- Familiarity with audio editing, mixing, and design processes and methods.
- Practice the art of storytelling using sound.
- Develop directing and writing skills in regards to audio production.
- Understand audio workflows, practices and standards.
- Develop interviewing and field recording skills.
- Learn basic music editing and concepts.
- Learn how sound and image work in tandem to tell stories.
- Provide and incorporate constructive criticism to and from your colleagues.
- Manage effective collaborations.

## **EQUIPMENT** (Comprehensive list available on SAKAI)

- Zoom H4N Recorders
- Microphones
- Sound Device Field Recorder
- Mixers
- Adobe Audition

## **MATERIALS**

- External Hard Drive or USB Key\*

- Headphones (preferably "over-ear", Audio Technica and Sennheiser are good brands for the price)
- Note-taking materials

***\*The student will be responsible for all backups of all media assets. Computers in the labs are auto-set to wipe any material/media saved to them once a station is logged off, so saving things to the CPUs of these computers "temporarily" is not even an option. Failure to backup or loss of media is not an excuse. In addition to backing up to a USB key or external hard drive, the student may back material/media to the cloud. All LUC students have a DropBox account (LUC Box) that they can use.\****

## **ASSESSMENT CRITERIA & METHODS OF EVALUATING STUDENTS**

- Attendance and punctuality.
- Participation in all discussions, group projects, and critiques.
- Productive use of class time.
- Completion of all production exercises and assignments.
- Projects will be evaluated on their technical, aesthetic, and conceptual merit. The amount of effort you put into each project will guide the grading.

## **GUIDELINE FOR PRODUCTION ASSIGNMENT GRADING**

- Conceptual Merit (35%) -- Project demonstrates that the student has a clear idea driving the work.
- Aesthetic Merit (30%) -- Project is of high quality and demonstrates that the student put considerable time and effort into craftsmanship, or otherwise can conceptually "back up" why deviations from a high quality aesthetic were made.
- Technical Merit (35%) -- Project demonstrates a firm grasp on the technical skills taught in conjunction with the particular project and adheres to the project guidelines set by the instructor.

## **GUIDELINE FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT GRADING**

- Structure (25%) -- Organization, flow of thought, transitions, format
- Grammar/Mechanics (25%) -- Sentence structure, punctuation/mechanics
- Language (10%) -- Vocabulary, tone
- Content/information (40%) -- Clarity of purpose, critical and original thought, use of examples

## **PRODUCTION ASSIGNMENTS (50 %)**

*More detailed requirements provided later*

Audio Interview: Record, log, and edit a short (1.5-3 minute) audio interview with subject of your choosing, using a recording ratio of at least 10:1. Please try to "think outside of the box" regarding your subject matter, and use this as an opportunity to satiate your own curiosity about someone or something that piques your interest or inspires you, or shines light on someone or something that you feel is under-represented, or people might be surprised to find worthy of their attention. While the guidelines for the project are pretty open, please don't just interview your roommate. (10%)

Soundscape: Plan and produce a short (1.5-3 minute) audio soundscape or sonic portrait of a specific (physical and/or psychological) environment, person, or event using only sound effects and ambient audio (no interviews or music!). (10%)

Audio Documentary or Drama: Record and edit a short (2-4 minute) audio documentary, radio drama, or spoken word piece into a fully produced, radio-ready audio project. Your project must incorporate voice recordings, SFX, and music. If you wish, you may expand upon your previously completed interview projects with this assignment. Think about how sounds, when edited and placed next to other sounds, take on new narrative or conceptual significance, and about how disparate types of sound, such as the spoken word, music, and sound effects, can flow and interweave to build a fully formed narrative experience for the listener. (15%)

Film Soundtrack: Build a soundtrack from the ground up for a video clip of your choosing, from a selection of four I will provide for you (TBD). The point of this assignment is to think and act critically regarding sound's relation to image, and to develop a sort of "parallel" or "oppositional" sonic world which does more than passively reinforce what we see on the screen. A corresponding critical "treatment", which outlines your plan and analyzes your sound design decisions, will be due beforehand and discussed over with me. (15%)

## **WRITING AND OTHER ASSIGNMENTS (20%)**

Sound Walk: Go on a sound walk, record notes, and discuss in class. (5%)

Audio Analysis of Film, Sound Piece or Live Event: Written analysis of how sound is deployed in a film, sound piece or live sound event. Students are encouraged to attend a screening at an independent cinema, an experimental music concert, or performance, art show, or play in which sound is a vital component, though watching a movie at home or listening to an audio piece is acceptable. Suggestions for screenings, venues and live events provided at the end of the syllabus. (10%)

Accompanying Analysis for Film Soundtrack Project: Consider this a sort of "treatment" for your final film soundtrack project, wherein you outline your sound design strategy and critically analyze your sound design choices. Does the sound work with or against the image? What are you accomplishing narratively or tonally with your use of sound?

Are your sounds "natural" and "realistic", or do they stretch the perceived reality of the image? (5%)

## **TESTS & PARTICIPATION (30%)**

Quiz 1 (10%)

Quiz 2 (10%)

Participation/Attendance (10%)

## **READINGS**

All readings will be posted on Sakai. There is no required book for this course.

## **GRADING SCALE**

93-100% A = 4.0  
90-92% A- = 3.67  
87-89% B+= 3.33  
83-86% B = 3.00  
80-82% B-= 2.67  
77-79% C+= 2.33  
73-76% C = 2.00  
70-72% C-=1.67  
67-69% D+=1.33  
60-66% D = 1.00  
0-59% F

## **PARTICIPATION**

Student participation is important in making this class vital and useful to everyone. All students need to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading(s), and with creative assignments fully completed and ready to show. During critiques, it is expected that everyone give constructive feedback. Attendance alone does not constitute participation. In-class participation that contributes to raising the level of informed dialogue in the course, will be taken into account during grading.

## **READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS & QUIZZES**

Readings and assignments must be completed at the beginning of class on the date to which they are assigned. Production assignments must be in the correct media format, properly labeled, within the running time specifications and within all other specifications provided.

- Always test your media before turning it in.

- Always make a safety copy of your project and bring it with you on screening days in case of any technical difficulties.
- Production Exercises and Projects include the assigned paperwork.
- Quizzes will be drawn from material covered in readings, class lectures and discussions. Some topics will be covered only in the readings, some topics will be covered only in lectures and some will be covered in both readings & lectures. Students are responsible for ALL of the material.

## **LATE ASSIGNMENTS & DUE DATES**

- A penalty will be assessed for any assignment that is not turned in or uploaded to Sakai by the beginning of the class session that it is due.
- Assignments turned in one class late will lose one full letter grade.
- Assignments not turned in within the first 15 minutes of class will be considered late and lose one full letter grade.
- Assignments turned in two classes late will lose two full letter grades.
- NO WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER IT IS MORE THAN 2 WEEKS LATE. • Late projects will not be screened in class.
- You must turn in a FINAL PROJECT in order to PASS the class.

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

The class will meet every Tuesday and Thursday from 2:30-3:45pm. Attendance and punctuality are mandatory and will be reflected in your grade. If it is unavoidable that you will have to miss class, you must consult the professor about the situation beforehand (via email or in person) and may be asked to provide a written excuse for the absence. If a student is more than 20 minutes late to class they will be marked absent. Three or more absences or frequent tardiness, whether or not for a reasonable cause, may result in the student failing the class if the student does not withdraw from the class prior to the deadline for withdrawal with a grade of "W." It is the student's responsibility to find out any important information missed in their absence. You are expected to come to every class on time, prepared and ready to engage in classroom discussions and participate in group projects.

## **DEVICE POLICY**

Laptops and other note taking devices may be used during lectures. All devices should be turned off and stored away during screenings and presentations. Phones must be turned off during class time. Texting and all forms of social media communication should happen outside of the classroom, during class breaks. Use of desktop computers in class is for course related work only and NOT for updating your Facebook status, checking email or other activities not directly related to this course.

## **FOOD POLICY**

To minimize distraction and the possibility of damage to equipment, food and beverages are not allowed in the classroom, editing area or studios. A water bottle is OK but please keep it capped or put away when working with the equipment or computers.

## **OWL**

To reserve equipment, go to: <https://equipmentloan.luc.edu/webcheckout/wco>. If you are unable to access the site, you can make a reservation by calling the OWL (Tech Coordinator Andi Pacheco) at 312-915-8830 or by stopping by the OWL (SOC 004) in person. For additional OWL or reservation questions, you can also e-mail Andi at: [apacheco@luc.edu](mailto:apacheco@luc.edu). Please refer to the equipment list for our class, posted on Sakai.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Plagiarism in your work will result in a minimum of a failing grade for that assignment. The case may carry further sanctions from the School of Communication or the University, the most serious being permanent expulsion. If you have questions about what proper source referencing looks like, see someone at the Tutoring Center in the Sullivan Center, Suite 260, extension (773) 508-7708. It is also dishonest to turn in the same work for two classes, turn in a paper you have not written yourself, copy from another student or use a "cheat sheet" during an exam. Visit and review Loyola's policies on Academic integrity here. <http://luc.edu/soc/Policy.shtml>

## **ACCOMODATIONS**

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from the Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of the course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

\*subject to adjustments\*

### **Week 1 -- Introduction, Basic Audio Concepts and Terminology**

Tuesday August 29

- Class Introductions
- Overview of what we hope to accomplish this semester, discussion on prior experience with or understanding of sound
- Sound in the world and in our lives, Hearing and Listening, Pauline Oliveros, John Cage, R. Murray Schaefer

**-Assign: Sound Walk, due 9/5, Interview, due 9/19**

Thursday August 31

-Physical properties of sound and psychoacoustics  
-*I Am Sitting in a Room* (Alvin Lucier)

-**Read:** Ch. 10 *Sound Recording Systems* from *Filmmaker's Handbook* (Ascher & Pincus)

## **Week 2 -- Recording Techniques**

Tuesday September 5

-**Due:** Sound Walk, discuss in class  
-Digital audio recording, file types, sample rate, bit depth, compression  
-Ryan Patrick Maguire's experiment with Suzanne Vega's *Tom's Diner*, *moDernisT*

-**Read:** Ch. 11 *Sound Recording Techniques* from *Filmmaker's Handbook* (Ascher & Pincus)

Thursday September 7

-**Demo:** Zoom recorders, microphones, different approaches to digital recording & recording set-ups

## **Week 3 -- DAWs, Sound Editing, Art of the Audio Interview**

Tuesday September 12

-Different approaches to interviews and platforms for their dissemination, radio, podcasts, film/tv  
-Terri Gross, Ira Glass, Story Corps, Errol Morris, *Decline of Western Civilization* (Penelope Spheeris), *Women's Lib Demonstration NYC* (Videofreex), *Portrait of Jason* (Shirley Clarke)

Thursday September 14

-**Demo:** Adobe Audition, bringing files in, volume/gain, tracks, editing, transitions

**Read:** *Rhythm and Tempo in the Landscape* (Schaeffer)

**Assign:** Soundscape (due 10/3)

## **Week 4 -- Soundscapes**

Tuesday September 19

**-Due: Interview Project.** Listen/critique in class.

Thursday September 21

-Finish listening/critiquing Interview projects

As remaining class time allows...

-Bridging the interview and soundscape: Delia Derbyshire, Glenn Gould

-Sonic portraits of place/field recording: Peter Cusack, Michael Pisaro, Hildegard Westerkamp, Chris Watson

-BBC Radiophonic Workshop

-Electronic music and sound as detached from the world: Karlheinz Stockhausen, Brian Eno, Eliane Radigue, Laurie Spiegel, Suzanne Chiani

-Review field recording techniques

**-Read:** *Mixing* (Tomilson Holman)

## **Week 5 -- Sound Design**

Tuesday September 26

-Mixing, Panning, EQ, compression, reverb, other effects

-Presence, punctuation/drone, field recording techniques, sound effects

Thursday September 28

-Check in on and discuss progress for Soundscape projects with Jimmy, in class time to work and troubleshoot

-Review for Quiz 1

## **Week 6 -- Storytelling**

Tuesday October 3

**-Due: Soundscape projects.** Listen/critique.

**-Assign:** Audio Documentary or Drama (**due 10/31**)



Thursday October 5

-Listen/critique remaining Soundscape projects.

**-Quiz 1**

-Storytelling with Sound: Janet Cardiff, Robert Ashley, Third Coast Audio Festival, podcasts, radio plays, Ira Glass, *Tuba Thieves* (Alison O'Daniel)

## **Week 7 – Fall Break, Lab Time**

Tuesday October 10 – NO CLASS

Thursday October 12

-Continue "Storytelling" in-class listening, and/or in-class lab time and brainstorming for Audio Documentary/Drama project

## **Week 8 -- Sound Perspective, Sound Effects, Editing Dialog**

Tuesday October 17

-Sound Effects

-Dialog Editing

-Walter Murch's concept of "Worldizing" sound

Thursday October 19

-Free sound archives, found sound

-Locating sound effects and music, audio doc editing

**-Read:** "Projections of Sound on Image" (Chion), "Stretching the Sound to Help the Mind See" (Murch)

**-Assign:** Film Soundtrack

## **Week 9 -- Elements of a Film Soundtrack, Slippage Between Sound and Image**

Tuesday October 24

-Dialog, ambient sound, sound effects, music

-Watch and analyze film clips for soundtrack

-Introduce concepts from Walter Murch and Michel Chion

Thursday October 26

- Slippage between sound and image
- Diagetic/non-diagetic, on/off-screen
- Counterpoint, acousmatic

## **Week 10 -- Further Investigations into Film Sound**

Tuesday October 31

- Due: Audio Documentary/Drama.** Listen/critique.

Thursday November 2

- Remaining critiques of Audio Documentary/Drama
- Sound as deceptive and subversive: Excerpts *The Conversation* (Coppola) and *Hacked Circuit* (Stratman)
- Spotting and Scripting Sound

## **Week 11 -- Foley**

Tuesday November 7

- In-class Foley recording for film clip

Wednesday November 9

- Placing Foley sound

## **Week 12 -- Mixing and Mastering**

Tuesday November 14

- Due: Audio Analysis Papers**
- Aesthetics and Techniques for Mixing, Mastering

Thursday November 16

- Mixing and mastering, cont.

## **Week 13 – Discuss Film Soundtrack Treatments/Thanksgiving**

Tuesday November 21

**-Due/Discuss: Treatment for Film Soundtrack project.** We'll go over these in class. If I don't have time to get to everybody, I'll provide feedback on Sakai.

Thursday November 23 – NO CLASS

## **Week 14 – Basic Music Editing and Concepts**

Tuesday November 28

### **-Quiz 2**

- Audio interfaces, recording external instruments
- Multi-tracking, mixing
- Class recording?

Thursday November 30

-Music editing/class recording project cont.

## **Week 15 -- Film Soundtrack Projects Due**

Tuesday December 5

**Due: Film Soundtrack Projects**, listen/critique

Thursday December 7

-Finish critiquing projects, celebrate end of class!

## **Local Venues and Resources**

### SOUND

Third Coast International Audio Festival - <http://www.thirdcoastfestival.org/> Based in Chicago, the Third Coast International Audio Festival (TCIAF) curates sound-rich audio

stories from around the world and shares them with as many ears as possible – on the radio, on the Internet, and at public listening events all over the place.

Constellation – <http://www.constellation-chicago.com> Constellation is a venue on Chicago's northwest side founded by drummer/composer Mike Reed. Constellation's mission is to present progressive performance and forward-thinking music with a focus on jazz, improvisation and contemporary classical. \*Frequency Festival: 02/25-02/28

Lampo – <http://www.lampo.org/> The organization, which is based in Chicago, promotes and supports artists working in electronic and electroacoustic music, free improvisation, sound art and other new forms.

Experimental Sound Studio – [www.experimentalsoundstudio.org](http://www.experimentalsoundstudio.org) ESS is a non-profit, artist-run organization focused on sound in all its exploratory cultural manifestations, including music, sound art, installation, cinema, performing arts, sound poetry, broadcast, new media, and more.

Elastic Arts - [elasticarts.org/](http://elasticarts.org/) Elastic Arts is a non-profit organization fostering a community of music, art and performance through developing, hosting, producing, and promoting creative, independent, and local music concerts, exhibitions, and multi-arts performances.

Midwest Society for Acoustic Ecology - <http://mwsae.org/> The Midwest Society for Acoustic Ecology (MSAE) is a regional chapter of the American Society for Acoustic Ecology (ASAE), a membership organization dedicated to exploring the role of sound in natural habitats and human societies, while promoting public dialogue concerning the identification, preservation, and restoration of natural and cultural sound environments.

## LOCAL CINEMAS

The Nightingale -- The NIGHTINGALE is a rough and ready microcinema located in Chicago's Noble Square neighborhood. Programming strains include avant-garde/experimental/expanded cinema, new media, experimental narrative, documentary, and emerging video art. Projection capabilities include 16mm and digital formats. <http://nightingalecinema.org/>

Gene Siskel Film Center -- The Gene Siskel Film Center selects and presents significant world cinema in a non-commercial context that sets aesthetic, critical and entertainment standards. To this end, the GSFC exhibits a range of carefully curated film art in technically excellent facilities, and educates the audience, setting film in an historical and cultural context through courses, lectures, panel discussions, and publications, and through research and collections. As an integral part of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the GSFC further enhances the educational mission of the school and promotes a dialogue between disciplines. <http://www.siskelfilmcenter.org/>

Facets -- Facets transforms lives through the power of world, classic, and independent film. Facets is an eminent film conservator, leader in youth-focused media-education programs, and presenter of the best in children's, international, and classic films. To the late film critic Roger Ebert, Facets is a "temple of great cinema."  
<http://www.facets.org/cinematheque/>

Music Box – Venue for independent, foreign, cult and classic films.  
<https://www.musicboxtheatre.com/>

Filmfront -- filmfront is a cine-club located in chicago's pilsen neighborhood. selected programs draw from overlapping spheres of global, classic, documentary, experimental and local cinema. situated at the core of a diverse community, our storefront venue invites a cross-cultural dialogue in the form of discussions, panels, lectures, and exhibitions in addition to our regular screenings. Filmfront.org

Doc Films – Student-run film society at the University of Chicago in Hyde Park.  
<http://docfilms.uchicago.edu/>

Chicago Film Society -- The Chicago Film Society exists to promote the preservation of film in context. Films capture the past uniquely. They hold the stories told by feature films, but also the stories of the industries that produced them, the places where they were exhibited, and the people who watched them. We believe that all of this history-- not just of film, but of 20th century industry, labor, recreation, and culture--is more intelligible when it's grounded in unsimulated experience: seeing a film in a theater, with an audience, and projected from film stock. <http://www.chicagofilmsociety.org/>

## INTERNET

Audio Network music catalog: <http://www.audionetwork.com> School of Communications school-wide music catalog.

Ubu – <http://www.ubu.com> Canonical sound works.

Ear Room – <https://earroom.wordpress.com/> Ear Room is an online interview platform exploring the subject of sound in artistic practice.

Freesound – <http://freesound.org> Free sound library with user submitted recordings.

Free Music: <http://dig.ccmixer.org/> <http://freemusicarchive.org/> & <https://musopen.org/music/>

Internet Archive- <http://archive.org> Source for copyright free/public domain music, video, and text.

Macaulay Library – <http://macaulaylibrary.org> The world's largest archive of animal sounds

