

INTRODUCTION TO AUDIO PRODUCTION

COMM 130, Sec. 202 Spring 2024

WEDNESDAYS, 7:00pm-9:30pm CT

IN-PERSON, WTC, School of Comm. - Room 002

Instructor: Duane Muhammad (preferred pronouns: he/him/his)

Email: dmuhammad2@luc.edu

Office Hours: By appt. via Zoom, or Wednesdays before class, please email at least 24 hours in advance

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 whether in the field of film or Broadcast Journalism, and art. Students will learn to employ audio as a creative tool for documentary storytelling, fiction filmmaking, Broadcasting, 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 and sound awareness.
- Learn how to discuss sound effectively using the proper jargon.
- Gain a working knowledge of basic audio technology including microphones, recorders, mixers, and DAWs.
- Conceptualize, plan, and execute effective sound designs.
- Practice the art of storytelling using sound.
- Develop directing and writing skills for audio productions.
- Understand audio workflows, practices, and standards.
- Develop interviewing for in-house and field recording skills.
- Learn how sound and image work in tandem to tell stories.
- Provide and accept constructive criticism through in-class critique.
- Manage effective collaborations.

EQUIPMENT to be covered:

- Zoom H4n/H6n Recorders
- Microphones (Shotgun, Cardioid, Dynamic, Lavaliers) & mic accessories
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- MATERIALS (required)
- External, portable hard drive (suggested brand: [WD Passport 1TB](#))
- Studio-quality headphones (preferably wired, able to turn off noise cancelling feature, “flat response”; suggested brand: [Sony MDR7506 professional stereo headphones](#))
- Note-taking materials
- AA batteries (for Zoom recorders)

*****The student is responsible for all backups of media assets.*****

PRODUCTION ASSIGNMENTS (75%)

(More detailed requirements provided in the Assignments section of SAKAI)

Minor Assignments:

Audio Diary: Record, log, and edit a short (1.5-3 minute) audio diary with 3 entries about subjects of your choosing, at three different locations. Provide 1 edited and mixed WAV file, 1 .mp3 compressed version of the mix, and 1 raw, uncompressed recording used in the project. (Complete/Not Complete - 5%) Due: Week 4

Sound Library: Create a library of at least 50 sound effects. Be ready to share your favorites with the class. (Complete/Not Complete - 5%) Due: Week 14

Major Assignments:

Soundscape: Plan and produce a short (2-4 minute) audio soundscape or sonic portrait of a specific (physical and/or psychological) environment, person, or event using only your own recordings (no **interviews or music!**). (10%) Due: Week 9

Group projects: (**MIDTERM**) Setting up actual scenarios such as interview situations for documentaries, short films, news events, and commercials. Your project must incorporate voice recordings with perfect capture of sound. (15%) Due: Week 7

Video Sound Design Project (Opposing Tone): Students select a short video clip (2-5 minute), remove the audio, and spot, design and build a soundtrack that coheres with the imagery to generate an opposing tone or surprising new meanings. (15%) Due: Week 13

Final Project: Plan, record, (4-6 minute) ***Class Group Project**- creative audio project of your choosing. The form and content are entirely up to you: it could be a short story, poem, comedy sketch show, experimental sound piece, drama—you name it. Projects should demonstrate fluency in the concepts and techniques taught throughout the course. (25%) Week 15

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT (5%):

Sound Design Analysis Paper: Provide a critical analysis of the sound design of a film. (5%) Due: Finals Week

TEST (10%):

Midterm Exam: (10%) Due: Week 7 Class Group Project

PROFESSIONALISM (10%):

Participation in discussions, critiques, and in-class activities as well as thoughtful and attentive communication with peers and instructor.

COURSE SCHEDULE

***This is an IN-PERSON (F2F) class. The schedule is subject to change; students will be notified via email about any updates to the syllabus or schedule. ***

Week 1 – January 17– Introduction

- Instructor & Student Introductions
- Syllabus & Course Goals for the Semester
- Equipment Requirements & Best Practices
- Using your Cellphone or Computer as Sound Recording Devices - Activity
- “Hearing vs. Listening” - Discussion
- Assign Audio Diary Project (Due Week 4)
- Assign Soundwalk (Due Next Week)

Homework:

- Begin recording for Audio Diary Project (Due Week 4)
- Complete Soundwalk (Due Next Week)
- READ Antonioni, “From a Thirty-Seventh Floor over Central Park” (Discuss Next Week)



Antonioni_Soundtrac
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- READ *Voice and Vision* Chapter 15 (Discuss Next Week)



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Week 2 – January 24 – Characteristics of Sound

- Lecture: Essential Audio Terminology
- Discuss readings & Soundwalks
- Zoom Recorder DEMO

Homework:

- Record for Audio Diary Project (Due Week 4)
- READ *Voice and Vision* Chapter 23 (Discuss Next Week)



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Week 3 January 31 – The Digital Audio Workstation

- Microphone DEMO: Types, uses, pick-up patterns - Activity
- Preparation and readiness for production, Part 1: The Basics
 - Inventory of audio gear
 - Check and testing of all gear
 - Organizing and labeling gear
 - Being present

- Limitations on set in-house or remote
- Organizing recording data
- Time permitting: In-class work time to complete your Audio Diary Project

Homework:

- Finish Audio Diary Project (Due Next Week)
- Tech Quiz: Check out and familiarize oneself with Zoom H4n + one external mic (Due Week 5)

Week 4 – February 7- Capturing sound for productions

- Listen & Critique Audio Diary Project
- Assign Sound Library Project (Due Week 14)
- Lecture: Sound vs Audio
 - Directing the Ear
 - Punctuation and Drones
 - Field Recording Techniques
 - Sound Effects

Homework:

- READ *Voice and Vision* Chapter 16 (Discuss Next Week)



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- Collect sounds for Sound Library (Discuss Week 14)
- Begin recording and mixing Soundscape Project (Discuss Week 6)
- Tech Quiz: Check out and practice with Zoom H4n recorder + one external mic (Discuss Next Week)
- *Bring in Soundscape project file and media for in-class work time & review*

Week 5 – February 14 – Building a Mix & Tech Quiz

- Discuss reading
- In-class Zoom H4n check-ins: Tech Quiz – Activity (participation only)
- Time permitting: In-class work time to complete Soundscapes

Homework:

- Complete Soundscape Project (Due Week 6)
- Keep adding sounds to Sound Library (Due Week 14)

Week 6 – February 21 – Critique Day

- Listen & Critique Soundscape Project
- If necessary: Complete any outstanding Tech Quizzes

Homework:

- Continue to collect sounds for Sound Library (Due Week 14)

- Be ready to share a favorite podcast, radio show, etc. in class next week

Week 7 – February 28 –MID TERM Telling Stories through Sound (****SPRING BRK Week 8- March 4-9****)ity
Homework:

- Keep collecting sounds for Sound Library (Due Week 14)
- READ *Voice and Vision* Chapter 22 (Due Week 10)



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- Week 9 – March 13– Audioplay

Homework:

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- Work on Audioplay (Due Week 10)
- Keep collecting sounds for Sound Library (Due Week 14)
- READ *Voice and Vision* Chapter 22 (Due Week 10)
- WATCH *Making Waves: The Art of Cinematic Sound* dir. Midge Costin

Week 10 – March 20 - Sound for Film I

- Lecture: Film Sound Design Overview
- Time permitting: WATCH (excerpt) and discuss

Making Waves

Homework:

- Work on Audioplay (Due Week 11)
- Develop ideas for Video Sound Design Project (Due Week 14)
- Keep collecting sounds for Sound Library (Due Week 15)
- READ “Phantom Audio Vision” by Michel Chion (Due Week 12)
- READ “Stretching Sound to Help the Mind See” by Walter Murch (Due Week 12)
- READ / watch Foley lesson in Sakai (Discuss Week 12)

Week 11 – March 27 – Sound for Film II

- Discuss readings
- In-class short screening: *Hacked Circuit* dir. Deborah Stratman

Homework:

- Finish Audioplay (Due Next Week)
- Keep collecting sounds for Sound Library (Discuss Week 15)
- READ “Phantom Audio Vision” by Michel Chion (Discuss Week 12)
- READ “Stretching Sound to Help the Mind See” by Walter Murch (Discuss Week 12)

Week 12 – April 3 – Critique Day

- Discuss readings from last week
- Assign & Discuss Final Project (Rough Mix Due Week 15; Final Mix Due Finals Week)
- Assign Written Assignment (Due Finals Week)

Homework:

- Start working on: Final Project, Written Assignment
- Bring in materials for Foley in-class activity (Next Week)
- Work on Video Sound Design Project (Discuss Week 14)
- Keep collecting sounds for Sound Library (Discuss Week 15)
- READ “Phantom Audio Vision” by Michel Chion (Discuss Next Week)
- READ “Stretching Sound to Help the Mind See” by Walter Murch (Discuss Next Week)

Week 13 – April 10 – Experiments in Sound I

- Foley In-Class Group Project - Activity

Homework:

- Continue working on Final Project (Rough Mix Due Week 16) and Written Assignment (Due Finals Week)
- Complete Video Sound Design Project (Due Week 14; automatic 10% penalty on project grade for failure to present in class)
- Keep collecting sounds for Sound Library (Due Week 15)

Week 14 – April 17 – Critique & Experiments in Sound II

- Watch & Critique Video Sound Design Project

Homework:

- Continue working on Written Assignment (Due Finals Week)
- Finish collecting sounds for Sound Library (Due Next Week)

Week 15 – April 24 – Final In-Class Project (Finals Testing April 29-May 4, 2024)

Written Assignment (Due Finals Week)

- Course Evaluations
- Critique of Final Project

- Finish Final Mix of Final Project (Due Finals Week)
- Finish Written Assignment (Due Finals Week)

FINALS WEEK – May – Assigned Exam Period: 7:00pm-9:45pm

- NO MEETING but UPLOAD Final Project, Written Assignment & any missing work to SAKAI during Final Exam Time, DUE by 9:45pm
- Have a great summer break!

GRADE BREAKDOWN

75% (750pts) Production Assignments:

- Audio Diary 5% (Complete/Not Complete: 50pts)
- Soundscape 10% (100pts)
- Sound Library 5% (Complete/Not Complete: 50pts) Audioplay 15% (150pts)
- Video Sound Design 15% (150pts)
- Final Project 25% (250pts)

10% (100pts) Midterm Exam

5% (50pts) Written Assignment

10% (100pts) Professionalism (includes discussions, critiques, & activity participation)

TOTAL: 1000pts

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 = 0

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA & METHODS OF EVALUATING STUDENTS

- Attendance and punctuality.
- Completion of all assigned readings.
- 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 one puts into each project will guide the grading, as will creative ambition.

ASSESSMENT SCALE (general language informing project grades and final course grades)

A ~ *Superior* degree of originality expressed throughout written, media and class participation work; full technical and creative understanding of production processes expressed in written and media form; all ideas developed thoughtfully with attention to detail and personal connection; excellent quality of self-authored recordings; spelling and grammar correct throughout written assignments; skilled use of digital media production techniques and technologies; audio production showcases technical and creative excellence. Mixes and edits are concise, fully realized, technically sound and completed with a superior quality.

B ~ *Above average* degree of originality throughout written, media and class participation work; high-level understanding of production processes expressed in written and media form; most ideas developed thoughtfully with attention to detail and personal connection; above average quality of self-authored recordings; few errors in spelling and grammar throughout written assignments; competent handling of digital media production and mixing techniques with

only minor technical or aesthetic difficulties; artistic production delivers a complete effort but the execution or clarity of concept could be stronger. Mixes and edits are concise, somewhat realized, technically sound and completed with an above-average quality.

C ~ *Average* degree of originality throughout; partial understanding of audio production; met minimum requirements of assignments; average quality of self-authored recordings; uneven initiative in pre-production, production, post-production and problem solving.

numerous spelling and grammar errors in written assignments; media production involves significant aesthetic and technical problems; finished work meets the stipulations of the project prompts but does not indicate personal investment. Mixes and edits are lacking in key categories.

D ~ *Below average* originality; limited understanding expressed throughout written, media and class participation work; underdeveloped ideas; poor production quality; little initiative in working or thinking independently; numerous spelling and grammar errors in written work; numerous technical issues in recording and mixing; application of media production techniques is seriously impaired by aesthetic and technical problems; artistic production is superficial, incomplete, or lacking adequate development. Mixes and edits are not fully realized efforts, possibly failing to meet one or two technical requirements of an assignment, such as minimum duration.

F ~ *Lack of originality and understanding*; expressed throughout written, media and class participation work; underdeveloped ideas; poor production quality; no expressed initiative in working or thinking independently; numerous spelling and grammar errors render written work unreadable; numerous technical issues in recording and mixing; application of media production techniques is seriously impaired by aesthetic and technical problems with no evidence of effort or improvement: artistic production is missing, and/or lacks meaningful content. Mixes and edits display little to no work, poor technical quality and are incoherent or incomplete. Did not meet any technical requirements of the assignment or simply turned nothing in.

POLICIES AND EXPECTATIONS

COVID-19 PROTOCOL & PRODUCTION PROJECTS (per the instructor)

When attending class or completing creative projects outside of class, students will be expected to adhere to university standards for health and safety related to the COVID-19 pandemic, shared here:

<https://www.luc.edu/wellness/medical/immunizations/>

By that same token, you will not be asked or expected to take risks to complete creative projects that require you to compromise your ability to adhere to the university's community standards.

PROFESSIONALISM

Student professionalism is important in making this class a vital experience for everyone. All students need to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and to participate in class discussions. On critique days, creative assignments should be fully completed and ready to share. During critiques, it is expected that everyone gives constructive feedback. Attendance alone does not constitute "professionalism." In-class participation that raises the level of informed, positive, constructive dialogue in the course will be taken into account during grading. IMPORTANT: Missing a critique day with an unexcused absence will result in an automatic 10% / -10 point penalty on one's Professionalism grade.

READINGS, ASSIGNMENTS & TESTS

Readings and any homework should be completed by the beginning of class. Production assignments must be in the correct media format, properly labeled, within the duration specifications and following all other guidelines provided, posted to Sakai before midnight on the day of in-class critique.

- Always test your media before turning it in.
- Always make a safety copy of your project and media files and have them accessible to you on

critique day, in case of any technical difficulties.

- All guidelines for a project must be followed for a project to be considered complete.
- The days we critique projects are for you. In general, not being prepared to share work on critique days will negatively impact your professionalism grade (see above), but not sharing a Final Cut of the Video Sound Design Project (Week 13) or a Rough Mix for the Final Project (Week 15) will also result in automatic -10% / 1 letter grade penalties on those project grades, so treat these dates as deadlines.
- Tests 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 the material.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS, DUE DATES, & REDO's

- A penalty may 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.
- For the purposes of this class, "late" for assignments is defined as any time (or time stamp) after the designed time listed in the guidelines of the assignment details on Sakai. In general, this will be 11:59pm on Tuesdays.
- Assignments turned in late but before the in-class project critique will lose one half letter grade, e.g. an A- becomes a B+.
- Assignments turned in up to one week late (between the due date & time and the start time of class the following week) will lose one full letter grade, e.g. an A- becomes a B-.
- Assignments turned in two weeks late will lose two full letter grades, e.g. an A- becomes a C-.
- Assignments turned in three weeks late will lose three full letter grades, e.g. a B+ becomes an F.
- No work will be accepted after it is more than three weeks / classes late.
- Late projects may not be reviewed in critiques and may not receive written feedback from instructor. Grades for late work will be posted as soon as the instructor is able, or by the end of the course.
- You must turn in a Final Project in order to PASS the class.
- Students have the option of requesting a "redo" on one graded production project after the grade is posted, with the instructor's permission prior to undertaking it. Late work and the final project are not eligible. A "redo" project can only achieve 1 letter grade higher than the initial grade. Email the instructor to make the request and for more information.
- As we navigate the challenges of COVID-19, the onus is on the student to communicate via email with the instructor about their specific scenario and needs, so that a plan to complete coursework can be mutually agreed upon and implemented. Documentation may be requested.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

- The class will meet IN-PERSON every WEDNESDAY from 7:00pm–9:45pm. Punctuality is required.
- There are only 16 weeks in a semester. Missing 1 class session for a course that meets once a week is missing out on a significant amount of class time. **Therefore, a transparent and stringent attendance policy is required and is as follows:**
 - **The first two absences may be unexcused, i.e. no explanation is required unless the student seeks to have the absence excused.**
 - **The third absence is one full letter grade off the final course grade.**
 - **The fourth absence is two full letter grades off the final course grade.**
 - **The fifth absence is three full letter grades off the final course grade.**
 - **The sixth absence is an automatic F for the course.**
- If it is unavoidable that you will have to miss class, please consult the instructor about the situation beforehand, via email. Merely letting the instructor know that you cannot attend class does not mean that the absence is automatically excused. You may be asked to provide written documentation to cover an excused absence.

- **TARDINESS:** If a student is more than 30 minutes late to class without notifying the instructor ahead of time, they will be marked absent. However, one should always still come to class, even if they are tardy, in order to maintain one's participation and professionalism grade.
- Frequently leaving class sessions early, whether or not for a reasonable cause, works like the tardiness policy, but backward from the end of class. Leaving early by a half hour or more will result in an absence unless it has been excused in advance by the instructor.
- Many of us have multiple jobs and responsibilities. Please do not schedule work shifts or job interviews or internships during class time (work is not grounds for an excused absence).
- It is the student's responsibility to find out any important information missed in their absence.
- **The Fall 2023 deadline to withdrawal (W) without a penalty grade of WF is November 3.**

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 245, 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:

https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

STUDENT USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

To maintain our culture of excellence and integrity, students are not to use AI-assisted technology in the classroom or to complete class projects unless they are specifically authorized to do so by their faculty for an assignment, test, quiz, or any deliverable that is graded.

MANDATED REPORTER

As a faculty member at Loyola University Chicago, I am committed to supporting students and upholding gender equity laws as outlined by Title IX. Therefore, if a student chooses to confide in me regarding an issue of gender-based misconduct, I am obligated to inform Loyola's Title IX Deputy Coordinator. The Title IX Deputy Coordinator will assist you in connecting with all possible resources for support and reporting both on and off campus.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY CENTER (SAC)

If you have a special circumstance that may have some impact on your course work and for which you may require accommodations, please provide documentation from the Student Accessibility Center confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate these needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of 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. Formal arrangements must be made through the office before course adjustments can be made. Additional information about the services available at Loyola, including eligibility for services, is on the SAC website: <https://luc.edu/sac/sacstudents/>

MANAGING LIFE CRISES AND FINDING SUPPORT

Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), you are strongly encouraged to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral ([LUC.edu/csaa](https://luc.edu/csaa)) for yourself or a peer in need of support. If you are uncomfortable doing so on your own, please know that I can submit a referral on your behalf – please email me or schedule a meeting with me during office hours. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites at [LUC.edu/dos](https://luc.edu/dos) or [LUC.edu/csaa](https://luc.edu/csaa). Or you may contact them directly at 773-508-8840 and at deanofstudents@luc.edu.

RECORDING ONLINE CLASS DISCUSSION POLICY (*for virtual classes*)

In this class, software may be used to record live class discussions. As a student in this class, your participation in live class discussions will be recorded. These recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the class, to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content that was presented. All recordings will become unavailable to students in the class when the Sakai course is unpublished (i.e. shortly after the course ends, per the [Sakai administrative schedule](#)). Students who prefer to participate via audio only will be allowed to disable their video camera so only audio will be captured. Please discuss this option with your instructor.

The use of all video recordings will be in keeping with the University Privacy Statement shown below:

Privacy Statement

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is offered. Students will be informed of such recordings by a statement in the syllabus for the course in which they will be recorded. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording. Recordings including student activity that have been initiated by the instructor may be retained by the instructor only for individual use.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION STATEMENT

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESS

- Treat the class like a job (one that hopefully you enjoy!)
- Show up on time, and be generous with your presence
- Show up for critiques, EVEN if you failed to complete a project
- Come to class prepared, positive and curious, assuming the best in your peers
- Take good notes
- Don't be afraid to ask for help or clarification, either from the instructor or peers
- Always err on the side of communication rather than aloofness
- Don't wait until the last minute to do the assignment. It is difficult to do creative projects the night before—so start early.

*Syllabus is subject to change and students will be updated and informed of any change immediately. *