

Film Music

MUS 15 - Summer Session II, 2017
Tuesday/Thursday, 11a-2p
Warren Lecture Hall 2154

INSTRUCTOR | James Gutierrez
CONTACT | jag086@ucsd.edu
OFFICE HOURS | By appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

Why was it that the first film featuring synchronized sound had a lush musical score, but no dialogue? Why can we listen to a stand-alone soundtrack and feel the drama of the film, but a movie without its score feels so empty? How has the film medium altered the use of music in visual storytelling over time, and in what ways is it an extension of practices from the 19th century and before? How does the myth of the creative genius contribute to the valorization and profitability of popular film composers? Is film music a classical art, or a shameless branch of the culture industry? What does the choice of musical score reveal about directors' assumptions about their intended audience? What can cognitive science tell us about the mechanics of the audio-visual landscape, emotion, and memory?

These questions and many others will be examined in this course exploring the aesthetics and history of music in film. We will discuss various historical, aesthetic, psychological and production perspectives, and approaches used to compose film music. We will watch lots of films, including 'silent' films, blockbusters past and present, and examples from the fringe, observing the critical role music has played in the shaping of film history. Students will be able to engage more deeply with soundtracks, scores, and have the opportunity to create their own.

COURSE MATERIALS

No textbook are needed for this course. Readings and viewings will be available through TritonEd and the library.

Film music is intimately linked with the story of the art of film itself. To get the most out of this course, it's recommended that students watch the below video series tracing film history as we proceed through the quarter. The episodes are brief, dense, and artfully produced. The series also provides an important window to the contributions of film outside of the U.S.

<http://ucsd.kanopystreaming.com/video/story-film-odyssey-0>

GRADE BREAKDOWN

20% Attendance

Attendance for all lectures is mandatory. In order to grant more time for film viewings outside of class *discussion sections will not be meeting.*

30% Assignments

Readings and film viewings are assigned for each class meeting. Some films are mandatory, but students are encouraged to view some of the many examples mentioned in the readings. Take careful notes when viewing films, making observations about the music, its interaction with the characters, appearance and developments of

themes, drama, foreshadowing, context in the development of film music, and how it effects the viewer. Written responses (500 words) will be due each Thursday (weeks 1-4). Responses should reflect on the readings, compare/contrast the scores of the films viewed, and provide analyses of your listening experiences. All assignments will be submitted in the designated discussion thread on TritonEd.

20% Group Presentation

Groups will read one chapter from *Music, Sound, and Filmmakers* or *Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*, watch relevant scenes, choose examples, and present to the class. Groups should aim for 15 minutes, and every group member must have a speaking role to receive credit. Presentations will be graded on clarity, completeness of information, and analysis of chosen examples.

30% Film composing project - or - Paper (7-9 pages)

Students may choose to do either a project, or write a paper. Proposals are due by the end of week 3.

Project: Using free stock film footage and music samples widely available on the internet, create a cue at least 90 seconds long. Summarize your process and techniques used in one page.

Paper: Write about any topic related to film music. This can be an analysis of a favorite film score, exploring the artistic development (not biography) of a composer, the role of particular technology (such as synthesizers, DAWs) on the production of film music, a more in-depth look at a particular era, perspectives of music from European, Japanese, Indian, or Korean film, or pursuing any other question that arose during the quarter. You could explore how film music might integrate with your own major. 7-9 pages.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism on assignments will immediately be reported to the Academic Integrity Office, and can result in failing the course, and in some cases more extreme measures. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the Official UCSD Policy on plagiarism.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Music in Visual Storytelling

1. Introduction, music and myth
Reading: Thomson, chapter 9
Buhler
Viewing: Peterson, meaning in music
any original *Star Wars* film (*Episode IV* on reserve)
2. Wagner, Leitmotif
Reading: Paulin
Viewing: *Parsifal*, Wagner (1880)

Week 2: The Silver Screen

3. Early sound/film synchronization
Reading: Slowik, chapter 2
Wierzbicki ('12) chapter 3 (practical advice in silent film)

- Viewing: *Don Juan*, Crosland (1926)
4. "It's not the principle of the thing, it's the money"
- Reading: Slowik, chapter 6
- Viewing: *King Kong*, Cooper (1933)
your choice

Week 3: The Golden Age of Film Music

5. The classical film score
- Reading: Wierzbicki ('09) chapter 8
Wierzbicki ('12), 8.1, 8.3, 8.4 (Squabbles)
- Viewing: *Of Mice and Men*, Milestone (1939)
Casablanca, Curtiz (1942)
6. The émigré composers
- Reading: Marmorstein
- Viewing: your choice

Week 4: Postwar/A "New Wave"

7. New sounds and nostalgia
- Reading: Wierzbicki ('09), chapter 10-12
Wierzbicki ('12), chapters 12.1, 13.3
- Viewing: Post-war Cinema
<http://ucsd.kanopystreaming.com/video/story-film-part-5>
your choice
8. Synthesizers, formulas, and composing collectives (i.e. Hans Zimmer)
- Reading: Wierzbicki ('12), 15.1, 16.1, 16.4, 18.2, 18.3, 19.1, 19.4
- Viewing: your choice

Week 5: Psychology of Film Music, presentations

9. Reading: Cohen
Chattah
10. Group presentations

Sources:

Buhler. *Hearing the Movies: Music and Sound in Film History*

Chattah. *Film Music as Embodiment*

Marmorstein, *Hollywood Rhapsody: Movie Music and Its Makers*

Neumeyer. *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*

Slowik. *After the Silents*

Thomson. *How to Watch a Movie*

Wierzbicki. 2009. *Film Music: a History*

Wierzbicki. 2012. *Film Music Sourcebook*

Wierzbicki. 2012. *Music, Sound, and Filmmakers*