

Course Title:	Introduction to Scoring for Movies & Television
Course Number:	SCOR 403 (2 Units, a single 2-hour session per week)
Term; Day; Time:	Fall-2020; Mondays; 10:00–11:50 am
Class Size:	16 maximum
Location:	online
Instructor:	Eric Schmidt
Office & Office Hours:	by appointment

Course Description:

This course offers study, training, and practice in the art and craft of composing music for movies and television. The class features lectures, audio-visual demonstrations, composition/scoring assignments, and in-class critiques. Students compose and produce scores on laptop computers using basic composing, sampling, and music-preparation software (required). Except where noted in the schedule, each session is divided as follows: 1 hour of lecture and 1 hour of critiquing the weekly scoring assignments.

Learning Objectives:

This course is designed for composers and other musicians interested in exploring and attempting to meet the challenge of creating underscore for films and television. The course presents a thorough overview of the composition techniques and technological applications involved in the process of integrating underscore music into film and television projects. At the completion of this course, students will possess the knowledge and skill set needed to perform basic scoring of short films and television projects.

Prerequisites:

Students should possess a basic knowledge of music composition and theory. In addition, students should arrive having had practical experience using either Sibelius or Finale as well as sequencing software, i.e., Logic Pro, Digital Performer, Cubase, etc. While students who have taken MTEC 443 and/or MTEC 445 are well prepared, others lacking such technology training and/or experience may wish to take advantage of such web-based tutorials as those provided by Lynda.com, YouTube, or other sites.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required:

All students will need a laptop that is equipped with one of the music notation programs (Sibelius or Finale), one of the sequencing programs (LogicPro, Digital Performer, Cubase, etc.), and a sample library of orchestral sounds (Native Instruments Komplete, EastWest, Garritan, etc.)

Readings:

- Required Text: Bellis, Richard. The Emerging Film Composer: An Introduction to the People, Problems, and Psychology of the Film Music Business. (www.richardbellis.com)
- Recommended Text: Davis, Richard. Complete Guide to Film Scoring: The Art and Business of Writing Music for Movies and TV (2nd Edition). Berklee Press

Grading:

Standard grading is based on the following: 60% for homework (composition and reading assignments); 20% for the 2 class reports; 10% for the final project ; and 10% for class participation. Most weeks (see schedule below), students are assigned a writing assignment of one “cue” (usually a single musical piece for a scene from a film or television project). They will upload their computer-produced cues to the designated server, where they will be played in class and critiqued by the professor. (Note 1: As the semester proceeds, and their knowledge of the subject increases, all students are expected to join into these in-class critiques. Note 2: There is a practical aspect to this methodology: It is customary in the film and television industry for the composer’s submitted cues to be critiqued by the filmmaking team, leading to requested modifications and re-writes.)

Course Schedule:

Week 1:

- Orientation: class expectations, gear required, weekly format and schedule, grading.
- The concept of “Art vs. Craft.”
Introduce commonalities and differences between concert and film composition;
your “job” as a film scorer; timing and sync issues.
How to spot a scene and select your ‘hit’ points.
- **Lecture Topic:** “How To Begin”: Setting your limitations. How to select harmonic language and instrumentation. Setting up your template.
Discovering the pace of the scene. Examine 5 chord progressions.
- **Assignments:** (1) Based upon lecture material, create chord progression and then expand into solo piano piece from assigned cue sheet scene description. Sequence and make make a score. Place onto blackboard for critique in class next week.
2) Read Intro and chapters 1 & 4 in Bellis book.

Week 2:

- Critique student piano cues.
- **Lecture Topics:** “Composing Tools.1”: Listen to and examine 7 printed scores that introduce a variety of compositional tools: Including, triadic, non-triadic, shifting tonalities, voice leading, bass line movement, use of various meters and odd phrasings.
- **Assignment:** From the provided cue sheet, compose a cue for 5-part string ensemble, sequence and print score for delivery and presentation at next class meeting.

Week 3:

- Critique student cues.
- **Lecture Topics:** “Composing Tools.2”: Listen to and examine 4 long cues with a focus on form and structure, motivic development, use of ostinato figures and keyless writing.
- **Assignment:** From the provided cue sheet, compose a cue for piano, strings, and winds; (no score required this week) then sequence for presentation at next class meeting;

Week 4:

- Critique student cues.
- **Lecture Topics:** “Melodic Construction”: What makes them memorable and what do they have in common. Examine 13 ‘great’ melodies and analyze. Discuss ways to break out of 2 and 4 bar phrasing
- **Assignment:** Compose and sequence a cue that captures a broad emotion. (We will not compose to a cue sheet or film this week). It should feature a strong melody. Present to class next week.

Week 5:

- Critique student cues.
- **Lecture Topics:** “Orchestration”: A brief history of the orchestrator. Defining the orchestration job today. From sketch (2-line to complete), to midi and audio mixes. Examine industry standard score and part preparation. A quick overview of orchestral instruments. Discuss instrument ranges and uses.
- **Assignment:** From assigned piano sketch, orchestrate and print out score and assigned parts for prescribed ensemble. Upload each to the server. Instructor will collect them, make notes and return to students.

Week 6:

- Share and discuss your challenges, and successes, in your assignment.
- **Lecture Topics:** “Composing Tools.3”: 12-tone, the “drone”, use of odd meters, non-triadic writing, use of synths, loops and sound design elements. Examine five cues using these techniques.
- **Assignment:** Compose and then sequence to video a cue for a provided clip of an scary or tension filled scene. Present to class next week.

Week 7:

- Critique student “spooky” cues.
- **Lecture Topics:** “History and Gear”: A brief history of the film scoring business in Los Angeles. An overview of computers, sequencing programs, including Digital Performer, Logic Cubase, and ProTools. Sequencing tricks of the trade.
- **Assignments:** (1) Produce an 5 minute report on a film score of your choice, that was Oscar nominated (or won, and.....no John Williams scores allowed). Include history, education and credits of the composer. Select one scene and analyze the cue. Prepare a simple 2 or 3 line takedown. Upload this to the server. Present to class week 11.
(2) Read chapter 5 of Bellis book.

Week 8:

Lecture topic: “The Hybrid Score and The Business”.

How to create a large orchestral sound with limited players.

Discuss career possibilities and business models, including income streams, agents, package deals, and budgeting.

- **Assignments:** Read chapters 2 and 3 of Bellis book

Week 9:

- **Lecture Topics:** “Recording Session Preparation”: Explore how to manage your composing time and what needs to be prepared ahead of time to realize an efficient and successful recording session.
- **Assignment:** Prepare a 5 minute report on a television series that has been nominated (or won) an Emmy award. Include history, education and credits of the composer. Select one scene and analyze the cue. Prepare a simple 2 or 3 line takedown. Present to class week 12.

Week 10:

- **Lecture Topics:** “Composing in a specific style” How to follow directions.
- The WBros. sound: “Sylvester & Tweety-Salieri” episode and score.
- The Disney sound: Winnie the Pooh.
“Odds And Ends”: Discuss any areas that students wish.
(Can include composition, ethical, business, artistic vision, dramatic or technical issues.)
- **Assignments:** Complete your movie report.

Week 11:

- Students present their movie reports.
Lecture Topic: “Running A Session”: Review everyone’s role, studio setup, conductor selection, score and part preparation.
- **Assignment:** (1) Student selects a scene of their choice. Compose and sequence a rough mock-up. Submit to instructor for private critique.
(2) Read chapters 6 and 7 of Bellis. (3) Complete your TV report.

Week 12:

- Students present their TV report
- **Lecture:** Differences in composing for television and video games.
- **Assignment:** Read chapters 8 & 9 of Bellis.

Week 13:

- Review semester materials. What did we learn?
- Discuss the Bellis book.
- Do you really want to be a film composer?
- Discuss final project/exam parameters (completion of cue from week 11).

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu> describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://domsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

Statement on Academic Integrity:

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, (www.usc.edu/scampus or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis

In case of a declared emergency, if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.