

USC Thornton School of Music

Department of Screen Scoring

SCOR 507: Studio Conducting and Contemporary Score Analysis

Semester: Fall 2021
Units: 2
Instructor: Eric Schmidt
Meets: Tuesday 12:30-2:20
Location: G-150
Office: G-150 M/T 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
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Course Description: This class focuses on two distinct aspects of screen scoring. The first, “Studio Conducting,” will begin with an introduction to basic conducting techniques followed by an exploration of the unique aspects involved in conducting scoring sessions. The second focus, “Contemporary Score Analysis,” is an in-depth analysis of outstanding scores from current television series and feature films.

Learning Objectives: This course is designed to help prepare students for their conducting and scoring work in the Screen Scoring Program. In the first part of the course, the students will become familiar—and comfortable—with the unique aspects of conducting ensembles in a scoring studio environment (how to be efficient, give instructions, conduct to clicks and streamers, handle pre-recorded tracks, etc.). In the second part of the course, students will gain an applied understanding of non-traditional scoring techniques, i.e., those productions in which the musical focus is upon the creative use of a synthetic palette, non-melodic and ambient sound design, and song placement. Students will learn how and why this newer scoring method may be effective.

Course Notes: Letter Grade

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required: PowerPoint or other presentation media.

Required Readings & Supplementary Materials: Current on-line and published materials will be assigned by the instructor throughout the semester. In addition, each student will need to acquire and bring to class a conducting baton.

Description and Assessment of Assignments: All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified.

Grading Breakdown: Student evaluation consists of a variety of factors that includes: organized and informative presentation of two in-class reports, in-class participation, conducting proficiency, and completion of a composition assignment (see below).

Grading is divided into four major components and evaluated upon the following criteria:

- Class Assignments: 60%
- 1. Composition Cue (10%) On-time completion of a professionally competent work that includes proper use of specified compositional tools.

2. Two Oral Reports (25% for each report): Professionally rendered audio- visual presentations (using Power Point, Keynote, or similar software) comprising an in-depth musical analysis of a television series or feature film, to be selected and assigned by the instructor, including biography/credits on the composer.

- Conducting: 20%

Correct application of studio techniques learned in class for the orchestration class recordings and final recording session.

- Class Participation: 10%

- Final Project: 10%

Students will submit a student film containing their score that demonstrates utilization of the compositional techniques explored in this course.

Additional Policies: Professional responsibility, common courtesy, and respect for one's instructor, guest speakers, and fellow students require that all class members attend all sessions, arriving in time to be seated at their desk or workstation at the scheduled start time. Students who fail to honor these protocols will receive reduced grades in class participation.

Regular and engaged attendance is mandatory. The designed curriculum relies extensively on in-class presentation, student involvement and instructor critique. As there is no text book, being present and taking detailed notes is of paramount importance. Students should approach the instructor ahead of time to discuss any anticipated class absence that is due to a conflicting schedule involving another Scoring program element.

Course Schedule:

Week 1

Lecture: The Basics

Review the class format and requirements. Discuss the difference between concert conducting and studio conducting. Introduce all of the basic conducting patterns.

Discuss correct body positioning; what to do with the alternate hand; how to practice at home using a mirror.

Conducting: Conduct to recordings (with clicks) in simple time signatures.

Assignment: Practice conducting to assigned score.

Be prepared to demonstrate in class next week.

Week 2

Students (in groups of 10) conduct their prepared piece for critique by instructor.

Lecture: Proper Podium Procedure for the Scoring Stage.

Presentation of the instructor's conducting philosophy for scoring sessions. View and discuss video of a conductor at a scoring session. What are correct and incorrect protocols? Review industry standards that are utilized to allow for an efficient and smooth-running session. Dressing properly for the professional environment. Your roles as the conductor: Introducing yourself and the project, calling up each cue using film nomenclature, the count-off for each piece, ending the cue cleanly, speaking clearly (and loudly) while giving performance suggestions gracefully, making corrections regarding notes and ensemble balance, talking to the booth, adjusting click levels, how to not wear out your ensemble, keeping a positive energy in the room, how to cue players properly.

Conducting: Conduct while being video-taped (in groups of 10) to recordings that have multiple meter changes and use variable click.

Assignment: Practice conducting to assigned score.

Be prepared to demonstrate in class next week.

Week 3

Review and critique video clips of students conducting from the previous week.

Students (in groups of 5) conduct their prepared piece for critique by instructor.

Lecture: Making Adjustments During a Session.

Looking at the score for the first time; how to 'sight' conduct. How to hear problems in the recording: wrong notes (printed or performed?), balance issues, adjustments to dynamics and articulations, too much discussion vs. too little.

Examine scores with odd (7/8, 5/4) meters.

Conducting: Sight conduct to recordings that have odd meters and tempo changes. Conduct a score that contains notation errors. Five students will conduct while five others, acting as booth supervisor, follow the score. Repeat until all have conducted and supervised.

Assignment: Practice conducting to assigned score.

Be prepared to demonstrate in class next week.

Week 4

Review video of students conducting from the previous week.
Students (in pairs) conduct their prepared piece for critique by instructor.

Lecture: Preparation for students first recording session.

The ‘size’ of your conducting matching the ‘size’ of your ensemble and writing. How to not-be-nervous. Review proper preparation of your score and parts.

Assignment: Using a score and recording of their own, students prepare to conduct this in class next week. (If the student has completed the composition of their string quartet for their orchestration class, they may use this instead).

Week 5

Review your first recording session. What worked? What didn't?
Students individually conduct their prepared piece for critique by instructor.

Lecture: How a score's compositional 'style' affects one's conducting.

Examine various styles: Action, mysterious, dialogue-heavy, romantic, comedy and epic, and discuss how each should be handled a bit differently.

Conducting: Sight conduct to scores/recordings of various styles.

Assignment: Practice conducting to one of four assigned scores. Be prepared to demonstrate in class next week.

Week 6

Students, in groups of five, conduct their prepared piece for critique by instructor.

Lecture: Synth-based scoring.

Examine two notable/award winning television series that utilize synth-based composition techniques. Study several scenes, from each, with transcribed scores. Things to examine and discuss include: the background of the composer, how does the composer make the scene work dramatically, where does the line exist between composition and sound design, what gear is used, how does this method of composition differ—or not—from traditional scoring?

The bottom line...is it effective dramatically?

Assignment Oral Report: Prepare an 8-10 minute analysis, using today's lecture as a model, on an assigned series. Transcribe two cues, duplicate and distribute copies to classmates. Lead class in an examination of the composition tools utilized. (Due weeks 8 or 9)

(NOTE: The proposed instructor has found that, by giving the students these report assignments, several educational advantages are realized. With this 'hands-on experience' they actually learn the compositional techniques being explored better than if they just heard them in a lecture format. It teaches them how to prepare a professional presentation utilizing various media. It helps them learn how to be organized. Not least important, it enhances their public speaking ability (most young composers have little experience speaking in front of groups as they have spent most of their time alone, writing in their rooms).

Week 7**Lecture: Scores utilizing songs.**

Analyze four television series that use songs, predominately, in place of traditional underscore. We will examine: how the style/genre of the song fits with the style/genre, or time setting, of the film, where do the songs come from, are they original or licensed, how do they integrate with underscore, who makes the song selection? From the composer's perspective, is this all a good idea?

Assignment: Continue work on your report.

Prepare to conduct your score for the woodwind quintet session in your orchestration class.

Week 8

Students, individually, conduct their prepared piece for critique by instructor.

Lecture: Synth based scoring.

Examine several notable/award winning motion pictures that utilize synth-based composition techniques. Study several scenes, from each.

Assignment: Continue work on your report.

Week 9

Oral Presentations: 10 students present their reports in class.

Assignment: none

Week 10

Oral Presentations: The remaining 10 students present their reports in class.

Lecture: Discuss parameters for second in-class report on a motion picture score. (Due in week 13 or 14)

Assignment: Presentation on motion picture score.

(NOTE: As part of their SCOR 511A curriculum, each student is assigned a major motion picture for which they are to author a lengthy and in-depth musical analysis (30-40 pages). So that the results of all this hard work are not seen only by the instructor of that class, the students are required to adapt this material into a 10-minute oral presentation that they can share with the instructor and students in this class.)

Week 11**Lecture: Combination scores - synths and acoustic instruments**

Examine several television series that feature scores that combine synths and acoustic instruments. Several scenes, from each, with transcribed scores, will be examined in detail.

Assignment Cue: Compose and sequence a 1:30-2:00 minute scene, of your own selection, utilizing techniques we have explored in this class. Post to server. Due next week.

Week 12

Students present their cues for an all-class critique led by the instructor. *Assignment:* Continue work on your second report.

Practice conducting for your next orchestration class recording.

Week 13

Oral Presentations: Ten students present their feature film report.

Assignment: Continue work on your second report.

Week 14

Oral Presentations: The remaining ten students present their feature film report.

Assignment: Practice conducting for your final recording session.

Week 15

Lecture: Recap what we have learned this semester and how it is applicable to developing one's career.

Discuss the final project.

Assignment: Complete your final project, a student film of your choice, which utilizes methods and techniques examined in this class.

Finals Week

Submission of the final project during the finals time (Place on the server).

For the date and time of the final for this class, consult the USC *Schedule of Classes* at classes.usc.edu/.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems**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 Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Support Systems:

Student Health Counseling Services - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) | Title IX - (213) 740-5086

equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

Information about how to get help or help a survivor of harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following protected characteristics: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations.

Bias Assessment Response and Support - (213) 740-2421

studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions for appropriate investigation and response.

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776

dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710

studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call

dps.usc.edu