



# USC University of Southern California

## **SCOR 503A - FALL 2023** Advanced Media Scoring

Tuesdays, 10:00-11:50 in TCM G102B

**Instructor: Lolita Ritmanis**

Email: ritmanis@usc.edu

Office hours by appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will provide students with various composition and communication techniques, tools useful in the world of media scoring. Much attention will be paid to the collaborative aspect of scoring a film or episodic television/streaming projects, how to understand what's behind the story and identify the role that music can play. We will address some of the basics, such as melody, rhythm, color. Assignments will provide an opportunity to hone musical storytelling techniques across genres - from large budget tentpole feature films, to independent films, primetime/streaming series, live to picture events, documentaries, student films. There will be two live recording projects: SCOR 503A - week 12 on Saturday, November 11th, and a collaborative assignment - composition/conducting for SCOR 507/SCOR 503A - week 15 on Friday, December 1st. In addition, there will be weekly technique assignments to sharpen composition, orchestration, production, organization, communication skills.

### **WEEK 1 - Tuesday, 8/22/2023**

Class overview and expectations. Introductions.

Developing a dialog with directors and producers. Conceptual vocabulary. Shaping a score.

### **ASSIGN:**

*-Concept Composition - demo, and presentation (length: 2:00) - due week 2 (8/29) - Details provided in class.*

*- Interview questions - due week 4 (9/12) - Details provided in class*

## **WEEK 2 - Tuesday, 8/29/2023**

Due: Concept composition presented in class (demo.)

INSTRUCTION TOPIC:

Signature scores: Review and analysis of a selection of feature film scores where themes and leitmotifs play an important role.

-Assignment due week 3 (9/5): Compose a signature theme (notate this in Sibelius, Finale or Dorico.) (No demo required.) Details provided in class.

-Assignment due week 3 (9/5): Rescore of a scene from TBD (original score by Harry Gregson Williams) in preparation for our field trip to the studio of HGW. In addition, familiarize yourselves with the work of HGW by watching the following films before week 4 (9/12): TBD

## **WEEK 3 - Tuesday, 9/5/2023**

Due: HGW cue - demo.

Due: Signature theme - notated.

INSTRUCTION TOPIC: Sound design - electronic, non orchestral scoring.

INSTRUCTION TOPIC: Embarking on a project. We will pre-spot the short film for our SCOR 503A recording project (recording session is in week 12, on Saturday, November 11th.) Discuss parameters for this project, as well as review scores similar in scope.

-Assignment: Sound design cue - due week 5 (9/19) - demo to picture, choice of 1 of 5 visual landscape clips. Details provided in class.

-Assignment: SCOR 503A recording project - mock-up due week 9 (10/17), score due week 10 (10/24), score revisions due week 11 (10/31), parts due week 12 (11/7) - session is week 12 - Saturday, November 11th.

## **WEEK 4 - Tuesday, 9/12/2023 @ 9:30AM**

Field Trip to Harry Gregson-Williams studio in the Pacific Palisades

Due: Interview (uploaded)

### **WEEK 5 - Tuesday, 9/19/2023**

Due: Sound design cue

INSTRUCTION TOPIC: Primetime/streaming. Discuss the landscape of primetime television/streaming series/ limited series.

- Assign Team Composition TV/Streaming Series and Presentation - due week 7 (10/3) - Details provided in class.

Reflections on HGW Field Trip

### **WEEK 6 - Tuesday, 9/26/2023**

INSTRUCTION TOPIC: Marvel/DC Superhero Scoring - Discuss the landscape of scoring for these and other large scale properties/ franchises - with a concentration on the superhero genre.

- Assignment: Rescore and mockup a main title for a Marvel/DC project of your choice (to picture) - due - week 11 (10/31).

### **WEEK 7 - Tuesday, 10/3/2023**

Due: Primetime/ Streaming Team Presentations

### **WEEK 8 - Tuesday, 10/10/2023**

INSTRUCTION TOPIC: Media Scoring - crossing genres and platforms - Women Warriors, Art Installations, Live to picture events. etc.

*GUEST - TBD*

- Assign and Discuss SCOR 507/SCOR 503A Final. Mock up and score due week 13 (11/14), score revisions and piano reduction due week 14 (**Monday**, 11/21), parts due week 15 (11/28),

### **WEEK 9 - Tuesday, 10/17/2023**

Due: SCOR 503A Project - mockup due

INSTRUCTION TOPIC: The landscape of documentary film scores - creative budget minded solutions. Evaluate scores - examine compositional techniques/orchestration approaches.

### **WEEK 10 - Tuesday, 10/24/2023**

Due: SCOR 503A Project - score due

INSTRUCTION TOPIC: Songwriting for films and television. When the composer has an opportunity to participate in the songwriting process, what to do? Discuss the landscape of songwriting for the media composer. When and how to participate.

- Assign -Compose a song for (your choice): indy film - contemporary , James Bond theme - classic or contemporary, period or novelty song. Write the lyrics yourself or collaborate with a lyricist. Leadsheet due week 12, demo due week 15 (final class.)

### **WEEK 11 - Tuesday, 10/31/2023**

Due: Superhero MT demos due - in class review.

Due: SCOR 503A Project - score revisions due

Review panel TBD

### **WEEK 12 - Tuesday, 11/7/2023**

Due: SCOR 503A Project - parts due

Due: Song leadsheet

INSTRUCTION TOPIC: Skills and preparation to seek work as an assistant: orchestrator, additional music composer, arranger, tech assistant, personal assistant. Review sketches - to scores, demos - to fully produced masters, etc. How does the emerging composer carve out a place

SCOR 503A Recording session Saturday, 11/11/2023

### **WEEK 13 - Tuesday, 11/14/2023**

Due: SCOR 507/SCOR 503A - Mock up and score due

### **WEEK 14 - Tuesday, 11/21/2023 - NO CLASS**

Due: SCOR 507/SCOR 503A Score revisions and piano reduction - uploaded by **Monday**, 11/20

- There will be no in person class this week - (make up = private consultations via ZOOM already occurring week 10 on Thursday & Friday)

## WEEK 15 - Tuesday, 11/28/2023

Due: Song demo

Due: SCOR 507/SCOR 503A - Parts due - SCOR 507/SCOR 503A recording session is in week 15 on Friday, December 1st

INSTRUCTION TOPIC: Your path: Spring semester - to graduation - onward!

### Grading Breakdown

Grading will be based on completed assignments as well as engagement, dedication, curiosity, integrity, and immersion in the class. Recorded and written assignments must be uploaded by 8:00AM on the due date. Unexcused absences will be reflected in the final course grade.

Assignment	% of Grade
Concept Composition - Score demo	10
Interview Questions - Written	5
HGW Cue - Rescore to picture	5
Signature Theme Leadsheet - Notated	5
Sound Design Cue - Score to picture	5
Primetime/Streaming Team Assignment	10
*SCOR 503A Recording Project -Rescore to picture	20
Superhero Main Title - Rescore to picture	10
Song - Demo/Leadsheet	10
*SCOR 507/503A - Original score	20
Total	100

\* = Live session

**Prerequisite(s):**

Proficiency in scoring techniques – Offered solely to USC Screen Scoring Students

**Course Notes:**

This course is being offered in an in-person modality. Please be attentive to the class attendance policy found in this syllabus. Online alternatives will not be considered unless instructors are presented with a directive from the offices of Student Health or Student Affairs. However, if on any day you are ill, stay home. In that case, contact the instructor to make up work or otherwise maintain contact with the class.

**Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required:**

Digital audio workstation (DAW) : Logic, Digital Performer, Cubase, other  
Music Notation Software: Sibelius, Finale, Dorico, other

**Other USC Technology Support Links**

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

**Required Materials:**

Current on-line and published materials will be assigned by the instructors throughout the semester. In addition, each student will need to acquire and bring to class a conducting baton.

**Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment**

USC prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. Please do not share or otherwise distribute class materials, music scores or recordings produced by me or any students in the conduct of this course without expressed permission.

*SCampus Section 11.12(B)*

*Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).*

## 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](https://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/research-and-scholarship-misconduct](https://policy.usc.edu/research-and-scholarship-misconduct).

### Support Systems:

**Counseling and Mental Health** - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling](https://studenthealth.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](https://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) 740-9355(WELL), press “0” after hours – 24/7 on call  
[studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault](https://studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault)

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

**Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity and Title IX** - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298  
[eeotix.usc.edu](https://eeotix.usc.edu)

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

**Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment** - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298  
[usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care\\_report](https://usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report)

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity | Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

**The Office of Student Accessibility Services** - (213) 740-0776  
[osas.usc.edu](https://osas.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 Campus Support and Intervention** - (213) 821-4710

[campussupport.usc.edu](http://campussupport.usc.edu)

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](http://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](http://dps.usc.edu), [emergency.usc.edu](http://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.

[LiveSafe Mobile Safety App](#)

[TrojansAlert Emergency Notification System](#)

**USC Department of Public Safety** - **UPC:** (213) 740-6000, **HSC:** (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

[dps.usc.edu](http://dps.usc.edu)

Non-emergency assistance or information.

### **Thornton Emergency Services**

Thornton Emergency Response Team: If evacuation or other actions are needed, members of the Thornton Emergency Response Team will provide verbal instructions.

Thornton Business Continuity Team: Multi-channel messages will be sent to your phone, text, and email providing next steps in the case of an emergency or significant unexpected disruption to facilities or operations.