

**Course ID and Title: CTPR 487: Recording for Film Scores**

**Units: 2**

**Term: Fall Day: Monday Time: 4:00pm-6:50pm**

**Location:** John Williams Scoring Stage

**Instructor: Martin Lopez**

**Office:** SCA B104

**Office Hours:** Email me

**Contact Info:** [mlopez@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:mlopez@cinema.usc.edu) (213) 764-4511

**Student Assistant: Kevin Remy**

**Contact Info:** [Kremy@usc.edu](mailto:Kremy@usc.edu)

**Course Description**

We will balance technical precision with artistic creativity, addressing the procedural aspects of music recording while overcoming common studio insecurities. Confidence and awareness are valued and missing. We will acquire both.

Through practical exercises, students will develop their skills in working with Pro Tools, managing complex recording sessions, and mixing visually immersive audio experiences.

**Learning Objectives**

By the end of this course, students will confidently navigate Pro Tools and apply their listening skills effectively in practical, real-world studio settings.

**Course Notes**

You will need access to Pro Tools Studio/Ultimate.

**Required Readings and Supplementary Materials**

You will be the primary resource. I will provide supplementary reading and listening materials via email as we move through the exercises.

**Description and Assessment of Assignments**

You will work with Pro Tools exercises that build on our class discussions. These short, cumulative tasks will improve your mixing and recording skills, reinforce and expand upon key concepts and help you grow your creative confidence.

**Participation**

Without it, we do not move. It is important that you engage in the conversation; a lot of what we will be doing will be dependent on the questions and ideas that you share.

## Grading Breakdown

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Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
Participation		15
Pro Tools Exercises: Covering recording, mixing, and editing techniques.	TBD	35
Re-Recording Mixes: A culminating assignment that reflects your ability to apply all course principles and techniques	TBD	50
<b>TOTAL</b>		100

### Grading Scale

TBD.

### Assignment Submission Policy

One week per Pro Tools exercise, ideally. More on this.

### Grading Timeline

Talk to me. I can provide feedback when asked.

### Attendance

Please email me if you plan to miss any days or exercises.

Timely attendance is mandatory and failure to attend all class sections from beginning to end may affect grades.

- Exemptions will be allowed on a case-by-case basis and must be supported by a written accommodation request from the USC Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS).
- Students who become ill and need to self-isolate will be supported in their efforts to stay current with classwork and assignments. Faculty are no longer required to provide an option for students to zoom into class. However, Faculty may choose to use zoom at their discretion in an effort to help students stay current in their course work.

**Students must contact the professor or SA 24 hours prior to class start time if they need to miss class for any reason.**

**Academic Integrity**

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

## Course Schedule

### Week 1

[Introductions and Listening Exercise]

- Email me. Tell me about yourself; include any music background you have and your goals for taking this class.
- Share a song that you find interesting and describe an element of its sound that you find noteworthy.

### Week 2

[Basic Pro Tools Setup and Listening Test]

- Begin with a basic patching exercise to establish the fundamental practice we will use in all of our Pro Tools sessions.
- Practice mixing through a preset compressor and begin training your ability to hear compression effects.
- Recreate a provided mix using only your individual channel faders—do not adjust or modify the plugins.
- Aim to match the sample mix and print your result.

### Week 3

[Understanding Tool Limits and their Sound Curves]

- Examine the limitations of compressors and equalizers by visually analyzing their breaking points. We will learn how their "curves" shape volume, time and frequency.
- Listen to the effects of manipulating these tools to process your sounds.

### Week 4

[Mix 1]

- Control vs Influence: When should we use our tools to *influence* our music vs aiming to control a sound. There is a difference. You will begin to understand that there is no mystery, and that the answer is always yes.
- Mix a provided session with the given plugins, making any adjustments necessary to match the sample mix and print your result.
- Introduction to Parallel Processing

### Week 5

[Volume, Time and Space: Perception]

- Grasp the concept of headroom as we jump into space and modulation. As your mixes grow more complex, managing headroom will become crucial for handling dense arrangements and sounds in any type of mix.
- Gain Staging for Complex Mixes using Pink Noise

### Week 6

[Equalizers: It's in the name]

- Learn to identify and evaluate EQ settings, distinguishing between effective and ineffective adjustments, and decide when to cut or boost frequencies.
- How to discern between what is good? What is bad? What do you like?

**Week 7**

[Mix 2: Orchestral and Acoustic Sounds Exercise]

- Work on mixing a session with orchestral and acoustic elements. Concentrate on balancing tonal space and volume to achieve a cohesive sound.
- Practice equalizing quickly.

**Week 8**

[Deal With It Recording Sessions] DRUMS

- During these sessions, we will aim for effective recreation or reinterpretation of the material we will be replacing.
- Focus on stereo miking techniques and identifying polarity issues through careful listening.

**Week 9**

[Editing I]

- Learn the comping and editing process by integrating takes from our recording session back into the original multitrack master.
- Begin creating a composite that either matches or complements the original mix master.

**Week 10**

[Editing II]

- We will examine polarity and time-related issues in our initial recording, exploring how using multiple microphones on a single source impact recording and editing, and discuss creative ways to utilize these effects.

**Week 11**

[Deal With It Recording Sessions] RHYTHM SECTION

- Use close miking and microphone rejection techniques to effectively isolate sources, especially useful in noisy environments.
- Explore how the proximity effect can be creatively applied to capture and shape sound.

**Week 12**

[Editing III]

- Manage frequency masking and dynamic control of your sounds to establish the foundation of your mix.
- Preparing your mix with appropriate headroom and gain staging.

**Week 13**

[Deal With It Recording Sessions] PIANO

- Discover how to creatively blend a new element into an existing space or mix.

**Week 14**

[Mix 3]

- Catch up on all your editing and start mixing.

**Week 15**

[Mix 3]

- Keep working on mix.

**Finals Week**

[Live With It Final Mix]

Refer to the final exam schedule in the USC *Schedule of Classes* at [classes.usc.edu](http://classes.usc.edu)

## The School of Cinematic Arts Support Systems and Statements

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Diversity and Inclusion are foundational to the SCA community. We are committed to fostering a welcoming and supportive environment where students of all identities and backgrounds can flourish. The classroom should be a space for open discussion of ideas and self-expression; however, SCA will not tolerate verbal or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation, or violence against persons or property. If students are concerned about these matters in the classroom setting, they are encouraged to contact their SCA Diversity and Inclusion Liaison, <http://cinema.usc.edu/about/diversity.cfm>; e-mail [diversity@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:diversity@cinema.usc.edu) or anonymously submit a report on SCA Community: <https://scacommunity.usc.edu/secure/diversityEquity/> You can also read more about how to report discrimination based on a protected class here: <https://eeotix.usc.edu/get-help/what-are-my-choices-text/>

### SCA Office of Student Services

213-740-8358 or [StudentAffairs@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:StudentAffairs@cinema.usc.edu)

### SCA Embedded Therapists

Students enrolled in an SCA major program can schedule an appointment with an embedded therapist for the School of Cinematic Arts through the student health portal [MySHR](#).

### SCA Community

For additional SCA resources please visit [scacommunity.usc.edu](http://scacommunity.usc.edu)

### Creative Technology and Support

(213) 821-4571

[creativetech@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:creativetech@cinema.usc.edu)

Location: SCA 128

Support Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 AM - 8:30 PM

<https://knowledgebase.sca.usc.edu/>

<https://workstations.sca.usc.edu/>

### Physical Production Office

The Physical Production Office assists students and faculty with production-related matters including production numbers, locations, permits, insurance, gear and equipment vendors, safety issues, and crew and actor policies. More information can be found by visiting the online [Production Procedures and Safety Handbook](#). The Physical Production Office is located at SCA 304 and is open every weekday from 9am-5pm (Fridays 9am-1pm). You can also reach the Office by calling 213-740-1298 or by email at [spo@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:spo@cinema.usc.edu).

### Office of Industry Relations

School of Cinematic Arts - SCA 235

(213) 740-4432

[ir@cinema.usc.edu](mailto:ir@cinema.usc.edu)

### Cinematic Arts Library Research Guide

<https://libguides.usc.edu/cinema>

## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

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### Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the

dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

**Students and Disability Accommodations:**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodation is not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](https://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

**Support Systems:**

*COVID-19 Resource Center* - <https://coronavirus.usc.edu/what-should-i-do/>

*Counseling and Mental Health* - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

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

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

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

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

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

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

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

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

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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.



[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

FOOD AND DRINKS (OTHER THAN WATER) ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY  
INSTRUCTIONAL  
SPACES IN THE CINEMATIC ARTS COMPLEX