

Syllabus for Music 246: Introduction to Creative Digital Music

Note: this syllabus is provided for information only, and is subject to change through the first class meeting.

Course Meeting Times and Format

M/W 1:10-2:00pm

Location: Music Computer Lab (056 Estes Music Hall)

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Hopkins hopkinsc@iastate.edu
(<mailto:hopkinsc@iastate.edu>)

Office hours (in the music computer lab): M/W 2:10-3pm

Prerequisites

Although there is no designated course prerequisite required for course registration, to succeed strongly in Music 246 students should have prior knowledge of music fundamentals, such as note systems, key and scale systems, and organization of tempo and rhythm. These fundamentals are normally acquired from study of an instrument or voice to perform from written parts or scores together with a music theory fundamentals course such as Music 101. Music 246 will not provide remedial instruction in these fundamentals, but students may be directed to supplementary texts and/or interactive websites for review.

Course Description and Learning Outcomes

The course provides an introduction to audio and MIDI software as used in creating digital music, with a focus on using a digital audio workstation (DAW). The course includes study of basic digital audio techniques, waveform editing, MIDI data structures, and practical creative projects in musical composition.

The course format includes reading assignments, quizzes, practical lab exercises, written technical exams (short answer and essays), and creative projects.

Upon satisfactory completion of Music 246 students will be proficient in the following:

- editing and processing audio clips
- editing and processing MIDI data and MIDI clips
- automating sound design changes in virtual instruments
- designing creative timeline-based multi-track compositions

The course is designed to stand alone, but also provides the required prerequisites for Music 346, which emphasizes algorithmic musical events programming, and for Music 446, which emphasized sound synthesis programming.

Course Delivery and Computing Environment

The course combines in-person instruction with self-paced reading and lab assignments. Students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled class meetings in the music computer lab, which will combine introductory lecture-demonstrations with workshop-style assistance completing reading, technical, and creative lab assignments. All assignments are provided and submitted via Canvas.

Any change to the mode of instruction will be made at the discretion of the instructor in coordination with university policies.

Provided Software and Equipment

The course requires specific software, MIDI keyboards, and computers. All necessary technology is provided in the music computing lab (056 Estes Hall), which is an open lab with approximately 60 hours per week available outside of class meetings.

Provided computers: 24" iMac M1 using macOS for in-class labs and projects

Provided music equipment: M-audio Oxygen49 MIDI keyboard controllers,

headphones

Provided software: ocenaudio, Pro Tools Studio

Course Policies

First Week Class Attendance

Attendance for the first week of classes is required *except by prior arrangement*. Classes during this first week include an essential orientation to the operation of lab equipment. Students will complete assignments that confirm their ability to use the required course materials (see above) and computer systems, and thus confirm that they will be able to continue in the course. **Note: for Spring 2024 this policy is adjusted to include January 22-24.**

Use of Required Software

Because in-class discussions, lab work, and presentations need to be based on a common vocabulary and consistency in practical techniques, students may not substitute alternate software for assignments, including creative projects. All submitted projects must be software-specific project files that are open to review of every aspect of editing, processing, and mixture using the course software. So for example, students may not complete creative projects using other software and merely turn in a rendered audio file.

In the case of using the course-defined software under their own licenses, students are cautioned to take particular care not to update their own systems to a version in advance of that currently supported by ISU. Note that this may not be the latest update. In general, lab software updates are not made mid-semester.

Completion of Assignments

Assignments will be considered complete after they are submitted to Canvas and confirmed to open on the instructor's system. Files required for presentation of the project must actually open and run for the project to be considered completed and assigned a passing grade. Significantly for Pro Tools, audio files must be included

and properly linked to project files.

Unexcused late work will not be accepted.

Prep Week, Final Exam, and Grade of Incomplete

Two graded quizzes will be given during Prep Week. These are merely work in progress reports for the final project and do not required study time.

Final Projects will be due at the beginning of the regularly scheduled final exam period for the course. If a valid excuse exists for the failure to submit the final project as scheduled, the instructor will determine the method of compensation in calculating the grade for the course.

A grades of incomplete (I) will be granted only in accordance with university policy. In general, grades of incomplete may be granted in cases of medical or family emergency and must be supported by a valid written excuse. Students may not be failing the course at the time of requesting a contract for an I grade.

University Syllabus Statements

See the link to Syllabus Statements for the standard required and recommended statements. Nothing has been added specifically for this course.