



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT SPRINGFIELD



## MUS/SOA 281 Music, Technology, and Culture

**Credit Hours: 3**  
**Fall 2009**

VPA 5 Music Technology Lab

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### **Course Description (see end of syllabus for schedule of topics)**

This course explores the relationship between musical symbolic sounds and technological innovation, with a focus on instrument construction; the timbres, scales, rhythms, and forms that instruments produce; the contexts people play instruments in; and the reasons why they play. At the same time, students cultivate their own creative instincts by inventing an original instrument and composing a piece incorporating the new instrument and musical sounds created by a computer.

### **Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes**

No prior music training is required for this course, which develops music listening, analysis, and compositional skills and familiarizes students with music technology in a broad array of historical and geographical musical environments. Students create an original instrument, compose and perform a work for the new instrument and computer, and explain choices made during this creative process.

After completing this course students should be able to:

- use basic terminology to describe musical sounds including pitch, rhythm, melody, harmony, tempo, dynamics, timbre, texture, form, and cultural context.
- describe familiar musical performance practices and compare with unfamiliar performances using basic musical terminology
- give a variety of examples of how humans develop and use systems of material objects or "technology" to accomplish specific musical tasks
- explain how the computer applications in our music technology lab fit into a larger context of culture-specific material systems for musical tasks
- design and construct an original technology that will accomplish a musical task (an instrument)
- compose and perform a work that utilizes the newly created system (instrument and rules of playing it)

## **Required Materials**

### **1) Nicholas Cook (2000). *Music: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.**

FROM THE BACK COVER: Drawing on a wealth of accessible examples ranging from Beethoven to the Spice Girls to Chinese zither music, Nicholas Cook attempts to provide a framework for thinking about *all* music. By examining the personal, social, and cultural values that music embodies, the book reveals the shortcomings of traditional conceptions of music, and sketches a more inclusive approach emphasizing the role of performers and listeners.

### **2) Bonnie Wade (2009). *Thinking Musically: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.**

FROM THE BACK COVER: *Thinking Musically* discusses the importance of musical instruments, describing their significance in a culture's folklore, religion, and history. It explores fundamental elements of music—including rhythm, pitch in melodic and harmonic relationships, and form—and examines how they vary in different musical traditions. The text considers the effects of cultural influences such as gender and ethnicity on the perception, interpretation, and performance of music. It also looks at how the forces of nationalism, acculturation, and westernization can affect musical traditions.

### **3) Portable Flash Drive 1 GB or larger**

## **Grading Procedures**

Students are evaluated according to the following grading system:

A 92-100	Clearly superior work, well above the norm, showing work and thinking that excel
A- 89-91	
B+ 86-88	
B 82-85	Very good work, showing extra effort and good thinking
B- 79-81	
C+ 76-78	
C 72-75	Competent, acceptable work—the norm, average
C- 69-71	
D+ 66-68	
D 62-65	Barely acceptable work, showing lack of effort or of understanding
D- 58-61	
F 00-57	Unacceptable work, or no attempt to complete the assignment

*You must reach the low number to qualify for the higher grade. Example: 88.76 is still a B+.*

## **Delivery Method**

This is a blended course, one half of which will be delivered online, and one half of which will take place in a weekly meeting in UIS Music Technology Lab.

The online portion of the course will include a weekly “Topic” lecture outlining the larger humanities context of the specific music/technology skills that students learn in the lab (see schedule of course topics and assignments at end of syllabus). Students will synthesize what they have learned from readings, online lectures, and lab sessions in weekly online discussion forums and “lablogs.”

Writing assignments connect individual projects to course topics and lab work.

The Music Technology Lab sessions will include instruction in the use of the following software programs:

“**Sonar**” desktop studio software allows students to manage and familiarize themselves with all of the sound characteristics described in the “basic terminology” objective above allows students, but especially to experiment with melodic sounds (vertical organization of pitch) produced by analog instruments, MIDI(digital) instruments, and forms of the human voice from around the globe. Using Sonar to organize tracks in layers, students learn about harmony, and laying tracks out over time illustrates the concept of “form.” Students will use this software to create their final project.

“**Band in a Box**” software allows students to study and experiment with harmony and form, and to generate musical accompaniment arrangements without prior knowledge of a musical instrument. These arrangements can then be used to back up a soloist or as components in larger multimedia projects, such as those created in Sonar. Students may import a Band in the Box track into the final Sonar audio composition.

“**Finale**” introduces students to the concept of notation as a material system for preserving and communicating musical information. This software creates sheet music and scores from existing MIDI files, MIDI performances, or data entry. Finale also produces interactive files from a scanned sheet of music. Students may opt to use this software to convert notated music into aural form for their audio composition and vice versa.

***Your final grade will be determined by the following formula:***

<b>(1) Attendance and Participation</b>	<b>25%:</b>
Attendance	5%
Lablog	10%
Participation	10%
<b>(2) Exams (midterm and final)</b>	<b>20% (10% each)</b>

- (3) Assignments** **40%** (10% each)
- Song Form and Function Analysis
  - Radio Advertisement
  - Instrument Comparison
  - Build an Instrument

**(4) Final Composition Project** **15%**

*--All graded assignments and projects will lose 10% of their graded value for each class period (week) it is late, to a maximum of 30%.  
--All Audio Mixing MUST be done with Sonar in the UIS Music Lab.*

**Grading Criteria**

**Attendance and Participation (25%):**

Coming to class and participating in weekly online forums on time is worth points. Attendance will be taken promptly at the start of each class, and timely lablog submissions and online discussion responses will be recorded. You are encouraged to participate fully in online lectures and forum, and in Music Technology lab session, because each assignment is built on previous material presented in each of these categories. If you have a legitimate reason for missing class or forum participation you should contact the instructor.

**Exams (20%):**

The midterm and final exams will each consist of objective and short answer questions (approximately 70%) and essay questions allowing you to integrate key concepts and support your analysis with specific examples (30%). The final of the three examinations may include material drawn from the entire span of the course. **If extenuating circumstances cause you to miss an exam, you must call your teacher as soon as possible, preferably before the absence.**

### Radio Advertisement (10%)

Produce a radio advertisement a product or service of your choice. Incorporate musical sounds that bring extramusical associations to mind.

Grading Criteria	Description	%
Effectiveness	The product is clearly defined and identified. The narration is clear and controlled.	10
Creativity and thoughtfulness	Select music that you feel is symbolic of the product you are marketing. Import the wave file into Sonar and use this music to support the sales pitch.	20
Musical Association	Write a paragraph to accompany the announcement, which clearly explains the connection between the product or service and the musical example.	35
Timing	Commercial must be timed exactly 30 or 45 seconds	5
Engineering	The engineering is controlled and accurate. All edits are smooth without noticeable blips or uncontrolled fades.	10
Master folder	The master folder contains all project files i.e. (Sonar control file, any music files, any audio files and mix track). The script and the explanatory paragraph are included in the audio folder on separate read me files.	10
Mix file	The mix file is included in the master folder.	10

### Build an Instrument (10%)

Grading Criteria	Description	%
a) proposal (see course calendar for due date)	Proposal must be submitted by ____[due date]____ and contain a materials list, tools list, an explanation of how you will construct the instrument, a description of how you would like the instrument to sound and look. What performance context will the instrument work best in?	20
b) project construction	You complete the construction of an instrument by __[due date]__. The instrument makes sounds and shows that you have considered visual appearance in your design.	25
c) artistic rationale/inspiration	Readme file includes a documentation of your creative process, giving specific examples of who and what inspired you and why you made the choices that resulted in this instrument <u>connecting these ideas to specific course materials and discussions</u> . Discuss playing techniques for the instrument you have created. Include an explanation of which ideas worked well and which ones remain problematic. What musical task does your finished instrument carry out? Who is the intended consumer?	45
d) Class demonstration	You demonstrate your instrument in a five minute class presentation, highlighting the inspiration for the instrument, and its design features and construction process.	10

## Song Form and Function Analysis (10%)

Analyze 2 musical examples: one world music example and one popular music example from the given lists. Use Sonar Home Studio to identify elements of each song's form.

Grading Criteria	Description	%
Citation	In the readme file you give a complete discography citation that includes for each song: song title, songwriter, performer, album, publisher, date, and run time.	5
Extramusical connections to form	In the readme file you explain the relationship between each song's form and the function of the music in their cultural contexts. (Basics are provided but we suggest you consult Smithsonian Global Sound and Oxford/Grove Online for additional information.)	30
Description	In the readme file you describe any changes in dynamics, fade-ins, fade-outs, tempo changes, mood (happy, sad, dark, etc), instruments used in the orchestration of this arrangement, and their primary purpose for each selection.	30
Markers	Markers in Sonar file clearly indicate various sections in each piece.	20
2 Master folders	Each song should have its own master folder. Each master folder contains all project files i.e. (Sonar control file and the audio file for the music analysis). The discographical information and explanations are included in each master folder on read me files.	15

## Final Composition Project (15%)

Grading Criteria	Description	%
a) proposal (to be submitted before project due date—see course calendar)	Proposal must be submitted by ____ [due date] ____ and explain the type and form of music you will compose. For example, will you use ABA, ABAB, through composed, blues form, or another? Which instruments will you perform on? Which instruments will you use in the soundtrack portions of the composition? What tempo, meter, length, scales, texture, and other musical qualities will you incorporate? What is the function of your composition, including the intended consumer?	10
b) composition	You include your original instrument in the composition. You complete the composition by __ [due date] __. The instrument performances and soundtrack are multi-tracked and mixed (no less than 2 and no more than 4 minutes). The composition is made up of at least 3 tracks.	30
c) master folder	The master folder contains all project files, i.e. Sonar control file, audio folder, with audio files and the final mix track. Copyrighted materials are properly cited.	10
d) Summary of artistic rationale/inspiration	Readme file includes a documentation of your creative process, giving specific examples of who and what inspired you and why you made the choices that resulted in this composition, <u>connecting these ideas to specific course materials and discussions</u> . Include an explanation of which ideas worked well and which ones remain problematic. What cultural task does your finished composition carry out? Who is the intended consumer?	40
e) class demonstration	You play your final composition (up to a 2 minute excerpt) in a five minute class presentation, in which you highlight your compositional process.	10

## Instrument Comparison (10%)

This paper will be a discussion of two instruments that belong to the same category of international instrument classification EXCEPT the mechanical and electrical category (see WADE: Figure 2.7, page 34). Go to the *Smithsonian Global Sound collection* on the Brooken’s Library website and a) choose an example from one of the classifications presented in class and b) find a contrasting instrument example from the same classification. Write a paper that includes a discussion of each instrument’s origin, practitioners, and cultural role; and a description of the music that is being produced by the instrument in Smithsonian online example. Please note that the Smithsonian Global Sound supports only 3 users at one time so you will need to plan ahead to be sure you have access to the examples you want to hear—this means you may have to try a couple of times so don’t wait until the last minute(!)

Grading Criteria	Description	%
a) The <b>title</b> , <b>date</b> , and <b>record label</b> of the recordings and the <b>name</b> and <b>cultural heritage</b> of groups performing	This description will include the location, date and source of the recorded files (Smithsonian), Give each performer or group’s name, performance style, cultural heritage, and any other specific information pertinent to this recording.	10
b) <b>Comparison</b> of instruments	Compare and contrast the <i>construction of</i> and <i>playing method for</i> each instrument.	15
c) <b>Describe</b> the <b>music</b> on the recordings	Compare and contrast the sound of the two different instruments. This may include musical vocabulary or your own words and could include discussions of tempo, dynamics, rhythm, form, modes, timbre, instrumentation, texture, etc.	20
d) Performance <b>context comparison</b>	Where is the performer from and how does the music reflect this. Was the music produced for religious, political, entertainment or some other purpose? How was it produced, distributed and consumed?  <i>If there are multiple contexts pick and focus on one for each instrument.</i>	20
e) New <b>Grove Dictionary</b> of Music reference	Consult <i>Oxford/New Grove</i> Online article for each instrument and give citations, including authors.	15
f) Ideas / creativity	Your project shows thoughtfulness and insight and the information is accurate.	10
g) Grammar / formal <b>organization</b>	Your writing is concise and grammatically correct, approximately 500 -750 words, typewritten, double-spaced.	10

## Tentative Class Schedule:

WEEK #	TOPIC/Reading	ASSIGNMENT	Lab Activities
1. Week of August 23	Introduction Music: Artistic Communication through Sound Technology: Systems of Material Objects to accomplish tasks Culture: Human relationships that give value to musical (and other) symbols	Syllabus	
2. Week of August 30	<u>WADE: CH 1: Thinking about Music: People, Music, Meaning, Use, Transmission</u>  <u>COOK: Chapter One: Musical Values</u>		Introduction to audio recording
3. Week of Sept. 6	<b>9/7 Labor Day No Class</b> <b>9/8 Class will be held</b>  <u>WADE: CH 5: Thinking about Structure</u>		Music Lab Orientation Understanding the Sonar Arrangement window
4. Week of Sept. 13	Structure continued Context, Aesthetics, Intellectual Play, Social Values		Contemporary artists and forms SONAR: Song Form Analysis
5. Week of Sept. 20	<u>WADE: CH 2: Thinking About Instruments</u>	DUE: Sonar Form Analysis	
6. Week of Sept. 27	Instruments continued  <u>WADE: CH 3: Thinking About Time</u>  Pulse, irregular durations, rhythm for texts	DUE: Instrument Comparison	“Time” lab exercise
7. Week of October 4	Units of Time	DUE: Original Instrument Proposal	Time signatures Drum loops, Ostinato Using “ <b>Rhythm Ace</b> ” software

8. Week of October 11	<u>WADE: CH 4: Thinking about Pitch</u> intervals, scales		Interval and Scale drill exercises “ <b>Music Lessons</b> ” software Interval and Scale drill exercises
9. Week of October 18	MID TERM EXAM	EXAM	EXAM
10. Week of October 25	<u>COOK: CH 2: Back to Beethoven</u> COOK: CH 3: A State of Crisis?	DUE: Original Instrument	Demonstrate Instruments
11. Week of Nov. 1	<u>COOK: CH 4 An Imaginary Object</u>		Compose a melody, add harmony Using “ <b>Sonar</b> ” and “ <b>Band in a Box</b> ” softwares
12. Week of Nov. 8	COOK: <u>CH 5 A Matter of Representation</u>	DUE: Radio Advertisement	Written Symbols for Musical Sounds Using “ <b>Finale</b> ”
13. Week of Nov. 15	<u>WADE: CH 6: Thinking About Issues</u> Culture Contact, Authenticity, Mass Media, Local Musics		Integrating artistic rationale/inspiration and original composition Copyright law
Week of Nov. 22	THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS		
14. Week of Nov. 29	Distribution, Ownership <u>COOK: Chapter 7 Music and Gender</u>		Begin class presentations
15. Week of Dec.6	Class presentations	DUE: Final Project	Class presentations
16. Week of Dec. 13	Section A (Mon) Wed 12/16 3PM FINAL EXAM Section B (Tues) Thurs 12/17 3PM FINAL EXAM	FINAL EXAM	

## **Course Policies**

If extraordinary events interfere with your ability to complete any of the course assignments, contact your instructor immediately at 217-206-6570. Include a description of what happened and a phone number at which you may be reached.

The instructor reserves the right to make changes in the schedule or syllabus as the need arises. If a major change is made, students will be notified well in advance.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify the Office of Disability Services (HRB 80; 206-6666) during the first week of class to arrange for any accommodations needed for the course.

## **Academic Integrity**

The UIS community of faculty, staff, students, and alumni are committed to academic excellence, which thrives on honesty, trust, and mutual respect. Academic integrity is at the heart of this commitment.

Students are responsible for being aware of the Academic Integrity Policy: <http://www.uis.edu/campussenate/AcademicIntegrity.htm> , and for demonstrating behavior that is honest and ethical in their academic work.

Academic violations include plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation, academic interference, unauthorized access, and facilitation. Violations of the Academic Integrity Policy may result in sanctions including failing the assignment, failing the course, transcript notation, or referral for Academic Hearing. Please ask the instructor of this course if you have questions regarding course expectations.

## **Subject to Change Statement**

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor(s) to accommodate instructional and/or student needs.