

Music 291-ILC: Music in Film

Class meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:20–12:50, Campus Hall, Room 104

Instructor: Prof. David Schulenberg (email: dschulen@wagner.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:00–2:30, and Wednesdays, 9:30–10:30; Campus Hall, Rm. 110

This course examines the ways in which music has been used in film, primarily in Europe and the U.S., from the beginnings of the cinema around 1900 to the present. Together with TH 218-ILC (History of American Film), this course forms the Intermediate Learning Community “Sound and Action: Music and American Film History.”

This course begins with an introduction to basic concepts and terminology used in discussing music. We then turn more specifically to the theory of film music. In the main part of the course we consider a series of films, from the silent era to film of today, seeking to understand the diverse types of music that have been used in the cinema. We also consider *how* that music has been used: what it tells us about characters, how it enhances the plot and the action, how it shades the very ways in which we think about film itself. In addition to viewing a few of the great classics of film history, we will also consider some relatively little-known works. Through all of this, our focus will be on the music, considered both on its own and its relationship to the other elements of each film.

Course objectives. At the completion of this course, you should be able to:

- understand the broad outlines of the history of film music in Europe and the U.S.
- identify some of the specific types of music that have been used in films
- have greater sensitivity to and recognition of the ways in which music is used in films
- write and give aural presentations about film music, using commonly accepted terminology.

The course promotes these goals of the College's general education program:

- critical thinking
- an appreciation of different modes of inquiry
- competence in the skills of listening, speaking, and writing
- an appreciation of and sensitivity to the arts
- familiarity with one's own culture and other cultures in a global context.

Work for the course includes carefully watching and listening to films and videos; reading assignments; listening assignments; two short papers; two quizzes; and aural presentations for the class, one of which serves as the final examination. DVDs of most of the assigned films will be on reserve in the library. Although some assigned films may be available online, in general the audio quality of videos on YouTube and other online sites is not of sufficient quality for our purposes. In addition, internet disruptions can make the use of online videos impractical. Reading assignments will be chiefly from the two textbooks listed below.

Course policies. The course is conducted as a seminar in which each student is expected to participate in discussions and in the presentation of material. All assignments are due *in class* on the dates shown in the syllabus. Please come to class prepared to discuss and ask questions about

both the reading and the listening or viewing assigned for that day. Absences and work received late will earn a reduced grade unless you have made prior arrangements with me, or in case of a documented medical excuse or other emergency.

Email and internet. Please do not submit work as email attachments unless I specifically ask you to do so. Also, please do not send me email messages asking questions about matters discussed in class; I will not respond to such messages. Although you may consult websites and use music and video downloads for some purposes, successful completion of the course requires you to view complete films on DVD (or in some cases in class or in the theater) and to obtain information that is available only from printed books and other hard-copy sources, and from scholarly databases available through Wagner's Horrmann Library. **In general, *Wikipedia* is not an acceptable source for papers and presentations. Imdb.com and other commercial websites may be cited only if information obtained from them is verified from another, independent source, which must be cited as well.**

Grades and attendance. Your final grade will be based on the two papers (10% and 20%, respectively), two quizzes (20%), regular student presentations (20%), and the final presentation (20%). Class attendance and participation are worth 10%. Attendance is mandatory, and grades will be reduced for unexcused absences. **Anyone arriving to class late or leaving early will be marked absent. You will also be marked absent if you use a cellphone or text messaging in class, or if you leave the classroom and return multiple times during a single class.**

Only documents from medical or other appropriate professionals will be accepted as excuses for lateness or absence. Make-up exams will not be given; students excused from tests will instead be assigned additional written work.

Textbooks. Assigned readings are from two sources:

David Schulenberg, *Music: A Basic Handbook*, online guide to musical ideas, terms, and history

Kathryn Kalinak, *Film Music: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Music reference sources are available from the Horrmann Library. The most important of these sources are found at [Oxford Music Online](#), which can be reached under the letter "O" on the library's [Databases page](#). Searches in *Oxford Music Online* will yield results in several separate databases, including the following (both are also available in print versions):

[The Oxford Dictionary of Music](#). As the name implies, this is a dictionary of musical terms, including entries for the names of composers and titles of major works. Go here for concise explanations of unfamiliar words and expressions.

[The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians](#). This is the standard English-language music encyclopedia. It includes detailed biographies of thousands of composers, many incorporating complete lists of their compositions. Also in *Grove* are extended articles on individual musical instruments; countries and major cities; and general subjects such as "Film music" and "Instrumentation and orchestration." Many articles include lengthy bibliographies useful in identifying books and articles for further reading.

For papers and presentations it is essential to consult scholarly articles and reviews, which can be found through [JStor](#), accessible through the library's [Databases page](#). *JStor* must be used carefully, as it is merely a database, not a scholarly journal itself. Even scholarly items accessible through *JStor* may be outdated or inaccurate, but recent issues of periodicals with the word *Journal* or the like in the title are likely to be reliable.

Online resources outside of Wagner must be used with caution. [Wikipedia](#) can be helpful for getting started on a research assignment, but in general it is *not* acceptable as a reference in a paper or presentation. Articles about specific films on *Wikipedia* can be helpful for learning plots, casts, and other basic information, but **all information taken from *Wikipedia* must be verified from other, more reliable sources.**

Information about many films can also be obtained from the [Internet Movie Database](#), but this is a commercial site whose primary purpose is to sell videos and music. The information on this site should be considered advertising and as such may be slanted for commercial purposes. The same is true of the websites that are now created for most feature films, and also of websites for individual directors, composers, and other film professionals. Such sites can provide useful information, but **all information from commercial websites must be verified from other reliable sources.** The latter include scholarly books and articles as well as reputable newspapers and periodicals such as *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker*.

The course calendar below lists assignments and topics. You should do all listening and reading assignments before coming to class. Some listening or viewing assignments in addition to those listed below may be placed on reserve in the library or assigned in class

Course Calendar

- 1 1/20 Introduction; melody and pitch (online handbook, pp. 1–7)
- 2 1/22 Texture, meter, and tempo; sound (online handbook, pp. 7–15). Listen: exx. 1–5
- 3 1/27 Musical ideas; musical periods, genres, styles; early music (online handbook, pp. 15–24). Listen: music exx. 6–??
- 4 1/29 Classical and Romantic music; music in the 20th and 21st centuries; music for film and television (online handbook, pp. 24–34). Listen: music exx. ??–??
- 5 2/3 QUIZ
- 6 2/5 music, film, and the theory of both (Kalinak, chaps. 2 and 7)
- 7 2/10 music and early film: *Assassination of the Duke of Guise*; *Metropolis*; *Hallelujah* (Kalinak, chap. 4)
- 8 2/12 student presentations
- [2/17 no class: President's Day holiday]
- 9 2/19 *Alexander Nevsky* (Kalinak, chap. 5 up to “The Classic Hollywood Film Score,” pp. 51–61)

- 10 2/24 *King Kong, Casablanca, Citizen Kane* (Kalinak, chap. 5, “The Classic Hollywood Film Score,” pp. 61–66)
- 11 2/26 student presentations
- 12 3/3 *Wizard of Oz* (online handbook, p. 35)
- 13 3/5 student presentations
FIRST PAPER DUE
- [3/10, 12 no class: spring break]
- 14 3/17 *On the Waterfront, Psycho* (Kalinak, chap. 5, “New Musical Vocabularies Come to Hollywood,” pp. 66–70)
- 15 3/19 student presentations
- 16 3/24 QUIZ
- 17 3/26 *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kalinak, chap. 6 through “Electronic Music,” pp. 71–77)
TOPICS DUE FOR FINAL PAPER/PRESENTATION
- 18 3/31 student presentations
[Apr. 2 no class: Passover/Easter holiday]
- 19 4/7 *Sweet and Lowdown* (Kalinak, chap. 6, “The Compilation Film Score,” pp. 84–88)
- 20 4/9 student presentations
FINAL PAPER OUTLINES AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE
- 21 4/14 *Kundun* and *Memoirs of a Geisha* (online handbook, pp. 36–37; Kalinka, chap. 6, “World Music,” pp. 88–90)
- 22 4/16 student presentations
- 23 4/21 *Crouching Tiger, Burning Dragon* (Kalinak, chap. 6 on Chinese film music, pp. 81–84)
- 24 4/23 student presentations
- 25 4/28 television: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*
- 26 4/30 FINAL PAPER DUE
- 5/?? FINAL EXAM: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS