

**University of Colorado Boulder**  
**Syllabus for Proposed Music and Film Course**

**Professor:** Michael W. Harris, Office: TBD, Office Hours: TBD

**Course Time:** Proposed as a TTH class with a Wednesday night screening.

**Feature Films Screened:**

*Anatomy of a Murder* (1959, score by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn)  
*Ben-Hur* (1959, score by Miklós Rózsa)  
*Cabaret* (1972, songs by Kander and Ebb)  
*Destiny* (1921, score by Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra)  
*Edward Scissorhands* (1990, score by Danny Elfman)  
*King Kong* (1933, score by Max Steiner)  
*Metropolis* (1927, score by Gottfried Huppertz)  
*North by Northwest* (1959, score by Bernard Herrmann)  
*Planet of the Apes* (1968, score by Jerry Goldsmith)  
*Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981, score by John Williams)  
*Das Rheingold* (music and libretto by Richard Wagner)  
*The Sea Hawk* (1940, score by Erich Wolfgang Korngold)  
*Skyfall* (2012, score by Thomas Newman)  
*This Is Spinal Tap* (1984)  
*The Throne of Blood* (1957, score by Masaru Satō)

**Course Description:** Examines the development of music in film from its origins in 19<sup>th</sup> century musical traditions to the modern day. Emphasizes analysis and relationship between music and narrative films.

**Course Goals:** Understand and be able to place into context film music using correct terminology and facts. Also grasp the overall history and trends in the development of film music. Be able to think critically about film and use correct terminology in its assessment.

**Texts:**

Required:

Mervyn Cooks, *A History of Film Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2008)  
James Wierzbicki, *Film Music: A History* (Routledge, 2008)

Additional Texts and Readings on reserve in the library or posted on D2L

**Schedule** (Subject to change at a moment's notice):

**Unit 1: Back to Basics, How to Hear Films**

Week 1: Techniques and Terminology

Readings: from Chion *Audio-Vision* Ch. 1–4 (pp. 3–94) and Brown *Overtones and Undertones* Ch. 1 (pp. 12–37).

Listening and Viewing: *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981, score by John Williams)

Week 2: Early History of Film Music I: Pre-Film Roots

Readings: “Richard Wagner and the Fantasy of Cinematic Unity: The Idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in the History and Theory of Film Music” by Scott D. Paulin. In *Music and Cinema*, pp. 58-84; and Altman *Silent Film Sound* Ch. 3 (pp. 27–53).

Listening and Viewing: *Das Rheingold* (Music and Libretto by Richard Wagner)

**Due: Listening Journal #1**

Week 3: Early History of Film Music II: The Silent Era, Compiled Scores  
Readings: From Altman *SFS* Ch. 13 & 17 (pp. 249–69, 345–65).  
Listening and Viewing: *Destiny* (1921, score by Mont Alto Motion Picture Orchestra)

Week 4: Early History of Film Music III: The Silent Era, Composed Scores  
Readings: From Altman *SFS* Ch. 15 & 18 (pp. 289–319, 367–88).  
Listening and Viewing: *Metropolis* (1927, score by Gottfried Huppertz)  
**Due: Listening Journal #2**

### ***Unit 2: Golden Age of Hollywood Film Music***

Week 5: The Early Masters I: Max Steiner  
Readings: Wierzbicki *FMH* Ch. 8 (pp. 133–59) and Cooke *HFM* Ch. 3 (pp. 67–93)  
Listening and Viewing: *King Kong* (1933)

Week 6: The Early Masters II: Erich Wolfgang Korngold  
Readings: Cooke *HFM* Ch. 3 (pp. 93–108) and Brown *OU* Ch. 5 (pp. 92–120)  
Listening and Viewing: *The Sea Hawk* (1940)

Week 7: The Early Masters III: Miklós Rózsa  
Readings: Wierzbicki *FMH* Ch. 9 (160–86), Cooke *HFM* Ch. 3 (pp. 108–30), and Brown *OU* Interviews pp. 271–80  
Listening and Viewing: *Ben-Hur* (1959)  
**Due: Listening Journal #3**

### ***Unit 3: A Changing Sonic World***

Week 8: Collaborations I: Hitchcock and Herrmann  
Readings: Cooke *HFM* Ch. 5 (pp. 183–212), Brown *OU* Ch. 6 (148–74) and Interview pp. 289–93  
Listening and Viewing: *North by Northwest* (1959)  
**Due: Film Score Analysis Project**

Week 9: New Sounds and Techniques I: Jazz Music  
Readings: Wierzbicki *FMH* Ch. 10 (pp. 189–208) and Cooke *HFM* Ch. 5 (pp. 212–25)  
Listening and Viewing: *Anatomy of a Murder* (1959, score by Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn)

Week 10: New Sounds and Techniques II: Avant-garde  
Readings: Article and Interview with Jerry Goldsmith from *Film Music Notebook*, and “A Popular Avant-Garde: The Paradoxical Tradition of Electronic and Atonal Sounds in Sci-Fi Music Scoring” by Lisa M. Schmidt. In *Sound of the Future*, pp. 22–41.  
Listening and Viewing: *Planet of the Apes* (1968, score by Jerry Goldsmith)  
**Due: Listening Journal #4**

Week 11: The Film Musical  
Readings: from Altman *AFM* Ch. 2–4 (pp. 16–89).  
Listening and Viewing: *Cabaret* (1972, songs by Kander and Ebb)

Week 12: The Rock and Roll Soundtrack  
Readings: Cooke *HFM* Ch. 10 (pp. 396–421)  
Listening and Viewing: *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984)

Week 13: Collaborations II: Burton and Elfman  
Readings: Wierzbicki *Film Music* Ch. 11 and Epilogue (pp. 209–36) and Cooke *HFM* Ch. 12 (pp. 454–510)  
Listening and Viewing: *Edward Scissorhands* (1990)  
**Due: Listening Journal #5**

#### **Unit 4: Final Thoughts**

Week 14: Music and Film in Japan

Readings: Cooke *HFM* Ch. 9 (pp. 382–95), Malm *Traditional Japanese Music* ch. 4 (119–48)

Listening and Viewing: *The Throne of Blood* (1957, score by Masaru Satō)

Week 15: Music and the Film Franchise

Readings: Selections from *The Music of James Bond* by John Burlingame

Listening and Viewing: *Skyfall* (2012, score by Thomas Newman)

**Due: Listening Journal #6**

Final Exam Week: No Class

**Due: Final Project**

#### **Grading:**

Film Journals: 180 points (6 at 30 points each)

Film Score Analysis Project (Midterm): 50 points

Final Project: 100 points

Attendance: 20 points

Total: 350 points

**Attendance Policy:** Success in the course will rely heavily on regular attendance as there are no exams or quizzes. As such, a component of your grade will be attendance based. All students have two unexcused absences for lectures and one unexcused absence to film screenings will be allowed. After that, you will lose one point from your attendance grade of which there are 20 total. Reasons for excused absences include: medical reasons (with a doctor's note), family emergencies (death of family member, etc.), or school related activities (with a note from a University official). This does not include sorority/fraternity events, death of pets, or any appointments, jobs, etc. that you had the ability to schedule at a different time.

**Class Organization:** A normal week in class will have the following format: Tuesday lecture and discussion of the week's readings (come prepared!), Wednesday evening screening, Thursday discussion (in which you will discuss as a small group for the first 10-15 minutes of class and then we will have class discussion for the remainder of the time). This class is built around the idea of participation of the students in discussion of the films and readings, as such everyone is expected to be able to ask and answer questions within the classroom, both when called upon or offer their thoughts on remarks made by both the professor and fellow students.

**Readings and Listening:** There will be a lot of reading to be done every week. I expect you have this reading done by the Tuesday class period as it will be critical to the group and classroom discussion that you are prepared each week. A normal week will have roughly 50 to 60 pages of readings (this number could be higher or lower, though). I would recommend taking notes as you read each assignment, along with writing down thoughts during or after the film screenings. I will also be placing the soundtrack albums on reserve and expect you to have listening to them at least once before seeing that week's film. It is crucial to have a basic idea of the sound of the score and its major themes before seeing the film.

#### **Assignments:**

*Film Journals:* These are 2–3 page write ups on the reading, listening, and viewing done for the class and are worth 30 points each. They are due at 2 or 3 week intervals (see schedule) and should discuss one of the films we viewed in depth, tying in the reading and listening done for that film, though you should also consider all the readings done since the last film journal. They are to be submitted electronically via D2L and are due by 5PM on Friday. You should write about how the music functions within the film's plot,

interesting points relating to the readings and discussed we had as a class, and any additional insights you might have. You might also do some basic research on the film and score's reception history by looking up contemporary reviews via ProQuest and other library databases. Moreover, though, you should think of these essays as also part criticism. What did you like or dislike and, most importantly, why? The ability to think critically about music's place within a film is an important goal of this class.

*Film Score Analysis Project (Midterm):* A 4–5 page analysis essay of a film score worth 50 points, going into detail of how the music works in conjunction with the narrative. In addition to the analysis essay students will prepare a music/sound cue chart deconstructing the audiotrack (this should serve as the starting point of your analysis). I will discuss how to prepare these charts in class. You should consider similar issues that we bring up in class along with using citations from the readings to support your arguments. But, the film you choose cannot be one that we watch and discuss as part of the class.

*Final Project:* In lieu of a final exam, students will submit a final project worth 100 points. The final project provides you with a chance to investigate more closely a film sound topic of personal interest. There are four different options for projects, described below:

1. *An analytical study:* This kind of project would be similar to the film score analysis project. A cue chart is required for the film analyzed. Additionally, research materials (books, journals, DVD commentaries) must be included in a cogent argument for your interpretation of the audio-visual relationship in a chosen film. You can choose a film we have discussed in class for this project.
2. *A historical study:* This kind of project would trace a trope of film sound across a period of time (for example leitmotivic technique, a particular pop song or quotation of a classical work, a unique instrument like the Theremin, or the Wilhelm scream). In this study you could also follow the development of sound technology and its effect on film-making (e.g. the switch to talkies, the rise of Dolby digital).
3. *A study of a foreign film:* This project is similar to the analytical project, but in addition you must consider the cultural work a film does based on the time and place in which it was created.
4. *A compare and contrast study:* This project would compare and contrast two scores that have something common ground (i.e. the same composer, director, characters—for example, you could study two John Williams scores; two movies directed by Alfred Hitchcock; or compare and contrast sound in Tim Burton's *Batman* with Christopher Nolan's *Batman Begins*).
5. *Writing or compiling a score for a film:* For students that are so inclined, you may choose to compose a score for either a pre-existing silent film or an original short film of your own making. The film should be no more than fifteen minutes long and should include at least ten minutes of music. The music can be either original or compiled from pre-existing music (classical, pop, or film music). Additionally a 2-3 page explanation of your score is required. This project can also be done as a small group of 2 to 3 people, but all must contribute to the selection or writing of the music, and the short paper should detail each group member's contribution.

Whatever type of project you choose to pursue, you should begin to formulate your ideas for the final project during the first four to five weeks of the semester. You can use work that you previously did in either a Film Journal or a Midterm Project as a basis for the Final Project. I will be interested to hear all your ideas and will be available to assist you in any way that I can. You are required to meet with me at least once to discuss your final project and receive formal approval, which must be given by week 9 of class. Final papers/projects should be approximately 10-12 pages in length, unless you choose option 4.