CMS.S63/S98 DJ History, Technique, and Technology
Comparative Media Studies/Writing
Spring 2023

Students will learn foundational practices of live DJ mixing and explore a chosen contemporary or historical dance scene from around the world. Lectures will examine the evolution of the craft and technologies of the DJ. Students will have access to equipment for practice. Assignments include writing and recording a presentation based on historical research and interviews, as well as participation in an end-of-semester performance.

No prior experience is necessary, but students must sustain interest in some form of popular dance music.

Schedule: Monday and Wednesday 1–2:30pm
Canvas: https://canvas.mit.edu/courses/20232
Instructor: Philip Tan (philip@mit.edu, E15-320B)
Classroom: E15-314
Credits: 12 (3-2-7)

Grading
Students will be graded on two individual assignments and will work as a class to produce a live DJ event at the end of the semester.

- Assignment 1: Reading and summary (30%)
- Assignment 2: Recorded presentation or performance (30%)
- Assignment 3: Contribution to end-of-semester event (30%)
- Attendance: Maximum of four absences unless excused by instructor (10%)

Assignment 1: A five-page single-spaced written paper (1000-1250 words) summarizing at least 100 pages of assigned reading. Students will select specific chapters from the provided books to summarize. The conclusion of the paper should highlight one standout chapter from the book and provide context on why other DJs might benefit from reading it.

Students are responsible for verifying that the statements and arguments in their paper accurately represent the original text but should not quote or copy phrases directly from the source material. This assignment will be graded on accuracy to the source material, clarity of writing, quality of prose, and timely submission.

The paper must be submitted in PDF format on Canvas **before March 25th**. (Spring Break)

Assignment 2: A 15-minute audio or video recording showcasing the student's research into a historical development in dance music, mixing technique, or DJ technology. For instance, a documentary segment, an edited interview, or a music mix. Students will also submit a simple text document to accompany the recording. Spoken-word works should include a transcript, and music mixes should include a track listing and annotations about the selected music.

Recordings will be publicly released on the Internet after the semester. The assignment will be graded on depth of research, audio quality, and timely submission of all deliverables. The quality of editing or performance will not be graded.

The paper must be submitted in MP4 or MOV format on Canvas **before May 13th**. (Last full week of the semester.)

Assignment 3: An end-of-semester live DJ event for the MIT community. Students will identify and choose their role, which should include duties leading to the date and during the event itself. This may include hosting and promoting the event, working with a venue, sound system setup and engineering, decorations or lights, or live performance. No student can do everything; students will be encouraged to compartmentalize their roles, play to their strengths, and divide their responsibilities with their classmates. Only participation will be graded.

Attendance: Regular and consistent class attendance is mandatory. Your final grade will be penalized if you miss more than four classes without prior justification and approval from the instructor. Students arriving to class after 1:10pm will be marked as late. Lateness without an excuse may result in a lower participation grade.

Excused absences due to illness will be granted if requested. Please email the instructor before the start of class if you will be absent due to illness. Students are discouraged from coming to class when sick. Meeting up with classmates in person while you have a contagious illness is particularly discouraged.

Graduate students
Graduate students should select topics for their papers and presentations that include and address technologies, musical genres, or dance cultures outside of the syllabus and readings provided in class. Students are encouraged to take advantage of MIT Libraries and interlibrary borrowing, and may reference Internet sources with diligent citation and verification.

Academic Integrity
This course will hold you to the high standard of academic integrity expected of all students at the Institute. Violating the Academic Integrity policy in any way (e.g., plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, cheating, etc.) will result in official Institute sanction. Please review the Academic Integrity policy (integrity.mit.edu) and contact the instructor if you have any questions about appropriate citation methods, the degree of collaboration that is permitted, or anything else related to the Academic Integrity of this course.

	Lecture and discussion topics	Assignments and *readings* due
Feb 6 M	DJs and cultures of dance	*Syllabus*
Feb 8 W	Analog and digital recording formats	*Start of Assignment 1*
Feb 13 M	Crate digging and organizing music	

Feb 15 W	Beats, bars, phrases, track structure	Set up Beatsource account
Feb 21 T	Track preparation and selection	Dig and analyze new tracks
Feb 22 W	Evolution of DJ hardware & software	*How DJing Works*
Feb 27 M	Soul, Salsa, Rock, Reggae, Jazz, Funk	*99% Invisible - Wickedest Sound*
Mar 1 W	Cueing, dropping, baby scratch	
Mar 6 M	Disco, Hi-NRG, Boogie, R&B, Balearic	*Nightclubbing: NYC's Better Days*
Mar 8 W	Beatmatching, blending, EQs, isolators	
Mar 13 M	Hip-hop, Freestyle, Open Format	15 Levels of Turntable Scratching
Mar 15 W	Rewinds, scratches, sampler, echo	
Mar 20 M	House, Techno, Trance, UK Garage	*How House Music Was Born*
Mar 22 W	Loops, effects, drop mixing	Friday: Assignment 1 due
Mar 27-31	**Spring Break**	
Apr 3 M	End-of-Semester event brainstorming	*Start of Assignment 2*
Apr 5 W	Tempo changes, harmonic mixing	
Apr 10 M	Jungle, Dubstep, Grime, EDM Trap	*Wait… Where did Skrillex Go?*
Apr 12 W	Acapellas, stems, mashups	
Apr 17 M	**Patriots' Day**	
Apr 19 W	Swing, Blues, and Jazz dance	**Mike Hibarger**
Apr 24 M	DJs and live instruments	**Pri Yon Joni**
Apr 26 W	Digital vinyl systems	**Drew Bach**
May 1 M	Speakers, amplifiers, gain staging	*DJ Techtools: Colleen "Cosmo" Murphy*
May 3 W	Balanced cables and microphones	
May 8 M	Club and event sound systems	**Nick Amento**
May 10 W	Event planning	Friday: Assignment 2 due
May 15 M	**End-of-semester event**	Assignment 3