

Las Positas College  
3000 Campus Hill Drive  
Livermore, CA 94551-7650  
(925) 424-1000  
(925) 443-0742 (Fax)

## Course Outline for HUMN 44

### NARRATIVE FILM MUSIC

Effective: Fall 2010

#### I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

HUMN 44 — NARRATIVE FILM MUSIC — 3.00 units

An examination of the function of music in cinema. A discovery of the contributions of classical, popular, and folk composers to the art of filmmaking and the influence of film music on the general culture of our time.

3.00 Units Lecture

#### Grading Methods:

Letter Grade

#### Discipline:

	<u>MIN</u>
<b>Lecture Hours:</b>	54.00
<b>Total Hours:</b>	54.00

#### II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

#### III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

#### IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

**Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:**

- A. recognize basic musical and filmic elements and techniques;
- B. distinguish ways in which film music differs from other musical forms;
- C. identify techniques of various composers and filmmakers;
- D. describe roles of supporting performers;
- E. demonstrate familiarity with historical development of film music;
- F. explain the studio and star systems and their impact on film music;
- G. analyze the recording and filming processes and techniques;
- H. describe how musical and filmic elements combine to produce a unified work of art;
- I. demonstrate appreciation for complexities of film music composition.

#### V. CONTENT:

- A. History of film
  1. From silent to "talkies"
  2. The studio and star systems
- B. Elements of music
  1. Musical composition and recording
  2. Filmmaking
- C. Impact of music on dramatic realization of film
  1. Representative films and portions of films:
    - a. The Gold Rush (1925; silent)
    - b. Ben Hur (1926; silent)
    - c. Gone with the Wind (1939)
    - d. Spellbound (1945)
    - e. On the Waterfront (1954)
    - f. Psycho (1960)
    - g. Bonnie and Clyde (1967)
    - h. Star Wars (1977)
    - i. Fitzcarraldo (1982)
    - j. Schindler's List (1993)
    - k. The Lord of the Rings trilogy (2001-03)

#### VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. Small group discussions
- C. Listening to recordings and follow-up discussions
- D. Viewing of films and film clips and follow-up discussions

#### VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

A. Reading

1. Read Chapter 1 of the text and be able to explain the role music plays in silent films and to identify that role in several film clips.
2. Research a form of non-filmic music writing, e.g. symphonic, ballet, or opera and be prepared to demonstrate how it differs from writing music for films.

B. Writing

1. In your journals, observe in each film or film clip we view how the music or lack of music impacts the action.
2. Based on your reading and the films we view, write a complete description of the relationship between the film director and the film composer.

C. Collaborative learning

1. As a class, watch and then discuss in small groups clips from classic films in several genres and determine the musical differences.
2. Attend a theatrical screening of a contemporary film with a classmate. Later, compare and contrast the music in the film with the classic films we have viewed in class.

VIII. EVALUATION:

A. **Methods**

1. Other:

a. Midterm and final exam

1. Short answer questions

- a. Typical question: What is "found music"? How does the score for Bonnie and Clyde reflect this technique?

2. Essay questions

- a. Typical question: Using three specific films, discuss the ways in which composers create a unique theme for a single character.

b. Weekly post-viewing and discussion short writing assignments

1. Typical question

- a. Discuss your impressions of the sound effects in the musical score for Star Wars.

c. Small group presentations

1. Typical topic

- a. Choose one genre, e.g. romance, western, horror, and using two classic and two contemporary films from the genre, demonstrate how film music has or has not changed over time.

B. **Frequency**

1. Weekly journal
2. Weekly post-viewing and discussion of short writing assignments
3. Two small group presentations
4. Two written examinations—midterm and final

IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Cooke, Mervyn *A History of Film Music*. 1st ed., Cambridge University Press, 2008.
2. Desjardins, Christian *Inside Film Music: Composers Speak*. 1st ed., Silman-James Press, 2007.
3. Larsen, Peter *Film Music*. 1st ed., Reaktion Books, 2008.
4. Wierzbicki, James *Film Music: A History*. 1st ed., Routledge, 2008.

X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: