COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE: MUSI 4458 Computer Music Composition

CREDITS & HOURS: 3 credit hours: lecture 3 hours

REQUIRED PREREQUISITE: MUSI 2013 Fundamentals of Musicianship IV

PURPOSE: The focus of this seminar is on individual computer music composition projects. Through class discussions, we will discuss works-in-progress with each other and explore related theory, aesthetics, repertoire, and tools.

This course is not an historical overview of computer music, an introduction to music theory, or a practical lab in using specific languages or software applications. Composition is by its nature an individualized pursuit, and every composer needs to discover his or her own unique approach to planning, writing, and realizing musical ideas.

I expect each of you to come to this course with different backgrounds, levels of experience, and personal goals. This class, then, is a forum for us to share our ideas and try out new approaches, strategies, and tools.

Our class time will focus on three different tasks: discussing assigned reading and listening; exploring techniques and tools; and sharing and discussing projects in progress.

EXPECTATIONS:

**Composition projects (3)**: Pieces that you will write within the parameters of specific instructions. These projects receive letter grades. I expect that you will share one of these projects in a public setting, e.g. an online album released by the class.

OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

* Create original musical compositions using digital audio workstation software.
* Create original musical compositions using algorithmic approaches within a computer music programming environment.
* Describe compositional approaches to managing time, timbre, texture, pitch, melody, and harmony and incorporate these organizational ideas into their own compositions.
* Analyze a computer-composed composition in terms of its aesthetic approach and technical realization.

**Reading and listening assignments** are available on this web site. (There is no textbook for the course.)

**Analysis Presentation**: Towards the end of the semester, each student will choose a piece of music and lead in-class discussion of it.

**Participation** in class discussions is vital to the success of the course.

GRADING POLICIES:

Homework assignments are due *by the beginning of class* ON THE DUE DATE. A penalty of one letter grade per day will be applied to all late assignments. Documented illnesses and family emergencies are excepted, of course. Quizzes and exams cannot be made up unless you have a valid, documented excuse.

GRADING BREAKDOWN:

The following evaluative tools will be utilized in measuring progress towards obtaining the class objectives:

Composition Projects (3) 84%

Analysis Presentation 8%

Attendance and Participation 8%

TOTAL 100%

All assignments, quizzes, and tests will be graded by points. The final grade for the course will be determined by dividing the total points earned by the number of points possible for each of the categories listed in Method of Evaluation. These numbers will be converted into a grade according to the following scale: A=100-90%, B=89-80%, C=79-70%, D= 69-60%, F= 59% and below.

GRADUATE STUDENT EXPECTATIONS:

* Graduate students have additional requirements for each composition project, including the composition of works that are longer in duration and more ambitious in scope than their undergraduate counterparts.
* Graduate student projects are evaluated with a greater expectation for precise technical execution, artistic originality, and aesthetic coherence.
* Graduate students are expected to write an extended self-reflection with each project that (like undergraduates) considers the music’s strengths and weaknesses and any deviations from the original plan but (unlike undergraduates) includes a contextualization of the work in appropriate technical and aesthetic historical contexts with appropriate references to primary and secondary sources.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Students must do their own work on assignments, projects, and tests unless collaboration is previously specified and approved by the instructor. Students caught cheating will receive zero credit for that assignment/quiz/test and may be subject to further sanctions through the Office of Student Integrity. Students are expected to abide by the Georgia Tech Honor Code and avoid any instances of academic misconduct, including but not limited to:

1. Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or oral information in the preparation of a paper or for an exam.
2. Substitution of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another individual or individuals.
3. False claims of performance or work that has been submitted by the student.

Please refer to the published Georgia Institute of Technology Academic Honor Code for further information:

* osi.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=46

STATEMENT REGARDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with bona fide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodation. The ADAPTS Office will certify a disability and advise faculty members of reasonable accommodations. The web site for a student requesting accommodation is:

* <http://www.adapts.gatech.edu/plugins/content/index.php?id=12>

MATERIALS:

This course is software and hardware agnostic. I do not require you to use particular software programs or hardware platforms to complete projects. And for the most part, I will not dedicate a significant amount of class time to teaching particular tools. I expect you to have the ability to read documentation, experiment with applications, and learn how to use them on your own. I am available as a resource when you run into technical problems or have questions, but the responsibility to learn the tools you use is yours alone.

You can expected to use your own laptop and headphones to complete projects for this course. Free and open source software is readily available to complete all course projects, and a limited number of commercial programs are available to use via the School of Music license keyserver. Please back up your work often to an external or remote storage location.

There are no textbooks for this course; all reading and listening assignments will be posted on t-square.

AESTHETICS

This course is aesthetically neutral. You may write pop music. You may write electronica. You may write in one of the many sound art, experimental music, and electroacoustic traditions. You may write polka-infused heavy metal with a hint of medieval organum. It does not matter to me.

As a human being, I am not aesthetically neutral. My preference for certain musical styles and traditions will inevitably be revealed through the music and topics I choose to cover, and through the ways in which I approach analyzing and commenting upon music. I am counting on each of you, in turn, to bring your own musical backgrounds to bear on the course: to challenge my assumptions and those of your colleagues, to help us explore a broader stylistic range of music in the course, and to bring your own unique perspective to bear on everything we do.

But it is also important to me that you use this course as an opportunity to broaden your perspective, to take risks and try new things. So do not be surprised if I encourage you to try a new software tool, to experiment with a new compositional process, or to employ a new compositional device in your work.

COURSE OUTLINE:

*Part I: Organised Sound*

Aug 20: Course Intro

Aug 22: Organised Sound – Aesthetics and Tools

Aug 27: Timbre, Texture, Pitch, Melody, Harmony & Project 1 conceptual outline due

Aug 29: Analysis: Ow, My Head by Christopher Bailey

Sept 3: Musical Time

Sept 5-12: in-class discussion of Project 1 works in progress

Sept 17-19: final project 1 music and self-reflection due; in-class presentations

*Part II: Algorithmic Composition*

Sept 24: Algorithmic Composition Tools

Sept 26: Algorithmic Composition Techniques

Oct 1: Process Music

Oct 3: High-Level Strategies

Oct 8-10: in-class discussion of Project 2 works in progress

Oct 17-24: case-study analysis of Arvo Pärt, Game of Life, and Brad Garton

Oct 29-Nov 5: final Project 2 music and self-reflection due; in-class presentations

*Part III: Expansion*

Nov 7: Project 3 conceptual proposal due; in-class discussion

Nov 12-21: student presentations of works analyses

Nov 26-Dec 5: in-class discussion of Project 3 works in progress

Dec 12: final Project 3 due; class album released