

Music 2704B: Music and Gaming

Instructor:
Dr. Aaron Lee
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Overview: An introduction to composing and producing music for video games using library-based sounds as well as an introduction to the history and evolution of video game music over the past 45 years. This course will address compositional and artistic considerations for composing for video games such as the non-linear aspects of interactive media and how that compares with other forms of music composition.

Course Prerequisites:

None. Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

****Please be advised:** students who have never used a digital audio workstation (DAW) before, such as Pro Tools, Logic, Ableton, Fruity Loops, or similar software applications, will find it more challenging to complete some assignments for this course. As a result, students should possess at least rudimentary DAW skills before signing up for this course. No alternate assignments will be given for students who do not have access to a DAW.**

Course Format: Online

- Access to a DAW for sound/music creation (Logic X, Reaper, Pro Tools, Ableton, Fruity Loops, others)
- FamiStudio (a free DAW specifically for 8-bit audio. Not a replacement for the DAW mentioned above)
- Access to a Sound Library of your choice (ComposerCloud, Splice, Loopcloud, Noiiz, Looperman [free], Forums, Free Repositories, Redbull Academy [free], etc)

Please note: If students cannot access the above course materials, they will not be able to complete assignments and will, as a result, receive a grade of 0 in this course. It is each student's responsibility to maintain consistent access to the required course materials throughout the term. The instructor and/or Western University are not responsible for the student's ability (or, inability) to access the required course materials outlined above.

In addition, it is *recommended* that students have access to a middleware software such as WWISE (free, non-commercial license is available), because they will be discussed in class, though no assignments will require their use.

Evaluation:

50% - Final Project
40% - Assignments (10% each)
10% - Weekly Journal Responses

Assignments:

Each of the four assignments will be due by Friday at 5:00PM of the week they are indicated on the course schedule. E.g., Assignment 1 is due by 5:00PM on Friday, Jan. 17th).

If for some reason you are unable to meet this deadline, please contact me ahead of time. Due to the class size, and in order to provide reasonably timely feedback and grading, I cannot guarantee that all requests for extensions will be granted.

Weekly Journal Responses:

The weekly journal responses are also due each week on Friday by 5:00PM.

Course Schedule

- Week 1** (Jan. 8 - 12): Themes, Motifs, and Leitmotifs
- Week 2** (Jan. 13 - 19): A brief history of video game music
- Week 3** (Jan. 20 - 26): How technical limitations defined video game aesthetics and the 8-bit era.
Assignment 1 is due.
- Week 4** (Jan. 27 - Feb. 2): Case Study: Adapting music into the 8-bit format in *Duck Tales* (NES)
- Week 5** (Feb. 3 - 9): MIDI Orchestration and Virtual Instruments
Assignment 2 is due.
- Week 6** (Feb. 10 - 16): Managing Time: Loops in video game music
- Week 7** (Feb. 17 - 25): *Reading Week. No Class.*
- Week 8** (Feb 26 - Mar. 2): Adaptive music and multi-layered scoring
Assignment 3 is due.
- Week 9** (Mar. 3 - 9): Mixing and mastering.
- Week 10** (Mar. 10 - 16): Middleware and its role in music and sound design
Assignment 4 is due.
- Week 11** (Mar. 17 - 23): Case studies
- Week 12** (Mar. 24 - 30): Case studies
- Week 13** (Mar. 31 - Apr. 4): *Final projects are due.*

Academic Policies

- i. **Course Prerequisites:** None. Unless you have either the prerequisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.
- ii. **Grading scale:** A+=90-100%, A=80-89%, B=70-79%, C=60-69%, D=50-59%, F=0-49%.
- iii. **Academic Consideration for Student Absence & Missing Work ($\geq 10\%$):** Students are responsible for making up any missed classes or assignments as soon as possible. The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Illness may be acute (short term), or it may be chronic (long term), or chronic with acute episodes. Academic Consideration provides students with consistent, fair, and pedagogically appropriate consideration, without compromising the academic integrity of the course or program, when they have been unable to complete some component of a course due to short-term extenuating circumstances.

Students who have long-term or chronic medical conditions (physical or mental) that may impede their ability to complete academic responsibilities are directed to seek Academic Accommodation through Accessible Education (Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities). Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the end of the period of absence covered, to the Academic Counselling unit or Office of the Associate Dean, Undergraduate (TC210), of the student's Home Faculty together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the academic consideration being requested. Students are directed to read the Senate Policy on Academic Consideration for Medical Illness at the following website for further details regarding various requirements and procedures for the supporting documentation: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration.pdf

Whenever possible, students who require academic consideration should provide notification and documentation in advance of due dates, examinations, etc. Students must follow up with their professors and their Academic Counselling office in a timely manner.

- iv. **Academic Consideration for Missing Work ($< 10\%$):** In cases where students miss work that is worth less than 10% of the total course grade (ie. two or fewer assignments) due to medical illness or compassionate grounds, if documentation is voluntarily submitted to the Associate Dean's office and the Associate Dean grants an accommodation, then the missed assignment(s) or quiz(zes) will be discounted in the calculation of the final grade for the course. If documentation is not voluntarily submitted then the missed assignment(s) will receive a grade of zero. Students who have been denied accommodation by an instructor may appeal this decision to the Associate Dean's office but will be required to present appropriate documentation.
- v. **Academic Offences:** Submission of work with which you have received help from someone else (other than the course instructor or TA) is an example of plagiarism, which is considered a major academic offence. Scholastic offences are taken seriously

and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found at: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

- vi. **Mental Health & Wellness:** Students that are in emotional/mental distress should refer to the Health and Wellness at Western page (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help or to go to the Wellness Education Centre located in Thames Hall room 2170. Students in crisis in need of immediate care are directed to go directly to Student Health Services in Thames Hall 2170 or to click on the big green “I Need Help Now” button on the Health and Wellness page above.
- vii. **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:** Students work with Accessible Education which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodation_disabilities.pdf
- viii. **Religious Accommodation:** Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays (other than statutory holidays), and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. The Diversity Calendar from the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion provides information on multifaith, multicultural and diversity related holidays and observances and links to resources for more information. <https://www.edi.uwo.ca/resources/2816-2023-Diversity-Calendar-PDF.pdf>
- ix. **Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:** Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, either recently or in the past, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html.

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca or call 519 661-3568.

- x. **Plagiarism Detection Software Usage:** All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism, which includes AI writing detection tools. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<https://www.turnitin.com/>).
- xi. **Recording of Online Activities:** Participants in this course are not permitted to record the remote learning sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

- xii. **Online Etiquette:** Some components of this course may involve online interactions. To ensure the best experience for both you and your classmates, please observe the following general considerations of “netiquette”:
- Keep in mind the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students in the course.
 - Be courteous toward the instructor, your colleagues, and authors whose work you are discussing.
 - Be respectful of the diversity of viewpoints that you will encounter in the class and in your readings. The exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment.
 - Note that disruptive behaviour of any type during online classes, including inappropriate use of the chat function, is unacceptable. Students found guilty of “Zoom-bombing” a class, or of other serious online offenses, may be subject to disciplinary measures under the Code of Student Conduct.

Listening List

Track	Video Game	Composer	Release Year
Theme from Space Invaders	Space Invaders	Tomohiro Nishikado	1978
Underground	Super Mario Bros.	Koji Kondo	1986
Opening Theme	Final Fantasy	Nobuo Uematsu	1987
LeChuck's Theme	The Secret of Monkey Island	Michael Land	1990
Aquatic Ambiance	Donkey Kong Country	David Wise	1994
Dire, Dire Docks	Super Mario 64	Koji Kondo	1996
Trainer Battle	Pokémon Red/Blue	Junichi Masuda	1996
Hyrule Field	The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time	Koji Kondo	1998
The Other Promise	Kingdom Hearts 2	Yoko Shimomura	2005
Blackout	Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	Stephen Barton	2007
Gusty Garden Galaxy	Super Mario Galaxy	Koji Kondo & Mahito Yokota	2007
Sarif Industries	Deux Ex: Human Revolution	Michael McCann	2011
Megalovania	Undertale	Toby Fox	2015
Kaer Morhen	The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt	Marcin Przybyłowicz	2015
The Smell of Mushroom	Stardew Valley	Eric Barone	2016
Tribalstack Tropics	Yooka-Laylee	Grant Kirkhope	2017
I Believe	Persona 5: Royal	Shoji Meguro	2019
The Only Thing They Fear Is You	Doom Eternal	Mick Gordon	2020
The Rebel Path	Cyberpunk 2077	P.T. Adamczyk	2020
Wind Temple	The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom	Manaka Kataoka	2023