

Syllabus

Tandon School of Engineering of New York University

Technology, Culture and Society

Integrated Design & Media

DM-UY-3113 A Contemporary Techniques in Sound Art

Fall 2023 – Professor Effie J. Rieper

Tuesday + Thursday 4:00 PM EST - 5:50 PM EST

To contact professor: er129@nyu.edu

A note about this syllabus

This is a living document, as are the materials in this course repository. There are certain aspects of our course, such as our calendar or grading criteria, that will not differ from this syllabus unless there are extenuating circumstances. However, the pacing of this course may vary depending on student need, comprehension and technologies that are sometimes rapidly changing in the midst of our learning process. I will do everything in my power to update you on any changes ASAP and to stay fully transparent about what you are expected to learn, produce, and share. Please engage in open communication, as I will do the same.

Course Prerequisites

DM-UY 1113 (Audio Foundations Studio) or MPATE-UE 1001

Course Description

This course invites students to find their unique voice and perspective through composing unconventional sound, music, and performance tools. Introducing Ableton Live as their primary toolkit students will learn experimental workflow and techniques to express emotion, sensation, and social commentary. A focus on subverting the norms of contemporary production and engaging in "non-genred" thinking will be developed through training active listening, focused technical and conceptual exercises, and a historic overview of the technical and ideological explorations found in the birth of underground electronic music and hip-hop, and various forms of fine art composition, installation, and performance.

Program Learning Objectives

Students will:

- 1 – Learn to use Ableton Live for composing static, generative, and real-time music and sound.
- 2 – Develop an innate understanding of the technical and creative components of synthesis, sampling, sequencing, and space.
- 3 – Cultivate a historical understanding of significant eras and movements within experimental electronic music and sound as a fine art medium.
- 4 – Learn the conventions and techniques of “well produced” music, and the many ways to subvert them.
- 5 – Learn to integrate Ableton Live into an art / performance piece when driven externally by custom software projects.
- 6 – Learn various online services available for publishing their work, and both a historic and contemporary understanding of online music communities and movements.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- 1 – Compose static, generative, and real-time sound and music.
- 2 – Approach production software as something to be creatively “broken”— finding and embracing their unique ways of manipulating said software.

3 – Learn how to develop and focus a concept in order to communicate feelings, sensations, and perspectives through sound by avoiding “genred” thinking and “music theory”.

4 – Create compositions entirely from scratch rather than relying on presets, prepared loops and samples, or technical tutorials.

5 – Consider music a potent and accessible medium for social commentary and poetic expression.

Course Objectives**

Synthesis (subtractive, FM, wavetable), Sampling (editing, granular, semiotics), Sequencing (static, generative), Spatial (reverb, delay, panning), Mixing and Dynamics Processing, Semiotics / Poetic Expression, Mastering, virtual MIDI

Software Requirements

Ableton Live 11 or 10 – A 90 day, fully functional trial is available from <https://www.ableton.com/>

Processing – Free, available at <https://processing.org/>

Virtual MIDI – Built in to MacOS, A free option for Windows:
<http://www.tobias-erichsen.de/software/loopmidi.html>

Hardware Requirements

A high quality pair of wired headphones are strongly recommended both for composing your projects and active listening assignments.

Course Structure

Class time will be spent as a combination of lecture, review, and in-class exercises. Homework will consist of weekly projects that build on each week’s topics of discussion.

Discussion / Conduct

As an *art class* our focus will be on your art and your perspectives. There will be a heavy emphasis on freeform in-class collaborative discussions, providing time and space for individual students to both present and reflect on their own work and perspectives, as well as receive feedback and inquiry from fellow students.

The most important mark of your success in this course is finding ways to express yourself personally and poetically using these tools.

Readings

There is no required textbook for this course, however there will be listening assignments where students will be expected to spend time reflecting on the music / sound compositions of particular artists and be prepared to speak about them in following classes.

Grading

Grades will be determined according to the following breakdown:

Regular Assignments 25%

We will have weekly assignments that are relevant to material from the previous class. When it is assigned, each assignment will have specific technical requirements and restrictions, as well as conceptual goals to explore.

Mid-Term Project 20%

The midterm assignment will be a project that demonstrates a working knowledge of production techniques learned to date, and require you to first establish your own conceptual goals to execute.

Participation and Attendance 20%

While attendance in the Zoom session will not be mandatory, participating in discussion about your assignments and providing feedback to your peers on their assignments is an extremely valuable part of your education. For those unable to attend class in real-time, your participation grade will be derived from coordinating with me directly and providing feedback to other students via our Google Doc.

Final Project 20%

Class will culminate with final projects. It is expected that these will be both technology and content driven. The final project will be built over the course of several weeks. This project must be completed, published, and presented.

Documentation / Self-Assessments 15%

5% - Students will be expected to document their work on Github. This will involve regular publishing of source code and assignments, using comments and README files as necessary. (Github will be a topic we cover in class.)

10% - Students will perform three self assessments on their work throughout the semester. Specific instructions and deadlines on these assessments will be provided when they are assigned.

Qualitative Grading Overview

Each student will be judged on the quality, experimentation, and improvement that their work shows.

A. Excellent (90-100)

Performance, participation, and attendance of the student has been of the highest level, showing sustained excellence in meeting course responsibilities. Work clearly differentiates itself from other work, has memorable impact, pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class. The student thoroughly understands the web design and development process.

B. Very Good / Good (80-89)

Performance, participation, and attendance of the student has been good, though not of the highest level. Work demonstrates a better than average web design and development process.

C. Satisfactory (70-79)

Performance and attendance of the student has been adequate, satisfactorily meeting the course requirements. Work is average and competent, showing a basic understanding of the web design and development process.

D. Poor; Below Average (60-69)

Performance and attendance of the student has been less than adequate. Work is lacking in many or most areas that show any understanding of visual foundation. Problems may include lack of interest, procrastination, poor planning and poor craft.

F. Unacceptable (59 & Below)

Performance and attendance of the student has been such that course requirements have not been met. Work shows no overall understanding of the course material on many levels or either a severe lack of interest.

Accommodations

If you are a student with a disability who is requesting accommodations, please contact New York University's Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 1-212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu. You must be registered with CSD to receive accommodations. Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

Inclusive Learning

The NYU Tandon School values an inclusive and equitable environment for all our students. I hope to foster a sense of community in this class and consider it a place where individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations, and abilities will be treated with respect. It is my intent that all students' learning needs be addressed, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. If this standard is not being upheld, please feel free to speak with me.