

Music in Film

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Music in Film (Abbreviated/Sample Course Syllabus)

Course Prerequisites:

No prerequisites

Required Readings/Materials:

Hickman, Roger. Reel Music: Exploring 100 Years of Film Music. New York: Norton and Company, 2006.

Course Description

The class traces the history and development of film music through reading, lecture and film viewing. The class studies the process of film scoring and how music and its relationship to film have changed over the last century. Class includes discussion and evaluation of different compositional styles and learning to listen critically to film scores while viewing movies.

Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of this course, students will:

- Be able to identify major composers of film music from the 20th century - present.
- Be able to identify the characteristics and tendencies of film music from each decade of the 20th century - present.
- Be able to identify the role that music plays in key scenes in selected representative films from the 20th - present.

Week 1

Review of Syllabus
Intro to Film Music/Vocabulary for Music in Film

Week 2

King Kong (Steiner) (1933) (first full-length film score)
Robin Hood (Korngold) (1938) (leitmotif)

Week 3

Of Mice and Men (Copland) (1939) (reaction against leitmotif)
Casablanca (Steiner) (1942) (use of diegetic vs. non-diegetic music, score based on pre-written song)

Week 4

EXAM 1
Laura (Raksin) (1944) (mono-thematic)

Week 5

The Lost Weekend (1945) (Rosza) (Theremin)

Week 6

A Streetcar Named Desire (1951) (North) (first jazz score)
High Noon (Tiomkin) (1952) (score based on hit song - changed direction of future scoring)

Week 7

On The Waterfront (L. Bernstein) (1954) (great music - poor scoring)
Psycho (Herrmann) (1960) (string-only score)

Week 8

EXAM II
To Kill a Mockingbird(1962), The Man With the Golden Arm (1955), The Magnificent Seven (1960) (E. Bernstein) (Elmer Bernstein's incredible stylistic variety - he is such a great composer!)

Week 9

The Graduate (Grusin, Simon and Garfunkel, (1967) (first score by rock group, diegetic vs. non-diegetic), Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (Bacharach) (1969) (example of poor scoring)
2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) (we compare the original rejected score by Alex North vs. temp track score chosen by Kubrick)

Week 10

The Planet of the Apes (1968) Chinatown (1974) (Goldsmith) (modern techniques - atonality, pointillism)
Jaws (1975) Star Wars (1977) (John Williams) (reemergence of the romantic score)

Week 11

EXAM III
Koyaanisqatsi (Glass) (1982) (minimalism)
Witness (Jarre) (1985) (synthesized score)

Week 12

Shawshank Redemption (Thomas Newman) (1994)
The Matrix (Davis) (1999) (post-moderism, excellent music only/composer commentary track)

Week 13

Requiem for a Dream (2000) (with Kronos Quartet)

Week 14

A Beautiful Mind (James Horner) (2001), Rabbit Proof Fence (2002)
Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind (2004)

Week 15

Lord of the Rings (Shore) (2004)

Exam IV

Other films I have used in the class:

Captain Blood (another great Korngold film - Errol Flynn's first - he is amazing!)

The Forbidden Planet (first entirely electronic score - terrible movie!)

Sunset Boulevard (just a great movie!)

Ben Hur (composition for epic film)

American Graffiti (first compiled popular score)

Chinatown (modernism and jazz - and amazing movie and score)

Batman/Batman Begins (comparing same story, different scores)