Electronic and Computer Music
MUS 2661 sections 10 and 11
Phelan Hall, Room B111, Tuesday and Thursday 12:45-2 and 5-6:15
Instructor: Steve Hilmy
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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 4-5 PM or by appointment

Course description
This course covers the fundamentals of analog and digital electronic music. This is not a class on electronic dance music, commercial/ popular electronic music, commercial studio recording, beat production or the like. The principal emphasis of the course is on the composition of original experimental music using the equipment in the studio. In addition to sound synthesis techniques, this involves learning how to use the studio's recording and signal processing hardware and software. At the end of the semester each student will complete an experimental electronic composition that includes a live or visual component (video, solo acoustic instrument, dance etc.) for a formal public concert in the music department. Students are required to log in a minimum of two hours of studio time per week, most of which will be applied towards the final composition and learning their choice of tools. Concepts introduced in class may be applied to any of the software or hardware available in the studio. Initial studio time should be applied towards experimentation and tutorials/documentation of chosen tools with the intent to create an ambitious experimental composition by the end of the semester.

The current tools include Ableton Live, MOTU digital performer and a variety of Virtual Instruments, as well as legacy synthesizers and MIDI hardware. All students are expected to learn their tools of choice through tutorials, reading the documentation, and online resources. Note that this is not a class on Ableton Live or any specific software. While we will go over some aspects of the software and hardware, it is your responsibility to learn these tools well enough to compose a sophisticated polished piece by the end of the semester.

Texts
There is no single text used for the course. Students will have intermittent reading assignments collected from periodicals, manuals and books.

Fall semester grading: Studio assignments + quizzes 50%; Mid term composition 15%; Paper/presentation 15%; final piece 20%.

There will be a grade penalty of one half grade point for each day late. Three or more unexcused absences will result in a reduction of the final grade by one full grade point. Studio hours are expected to be a minimum of two hours per week, additional hours are available to sign up for on a shared calendar.

Topics to be covered:
Basic acoustics, subtractive synthesis, MIDI, DAW sequencing and setup, sampling theory and digital audio, basic recording techniques, signal processing, mixing and mastering techniques.

Partial Bibliography

DUE DATES FOR GRADED WORK – Fall

There will be four in class quizzes on all class material up to the quiz date. These dates will be announced via email, the first will be September 20.

Midterm compositions performed in class October 23 and 25. These are to be original, experimental, created using the studio instruments and software, 8 track minimum, duration 2-5 mins, and must include at least one original (programed) sound.

Papers and a 20 minute presentation in class November 13 and 15. Papers are to be 2-3 pages with references. Papers are due November 13.

Final pieces due December 4. These are to be 3-8 mins in length, original, and experimental, produced using hardware and software in the studio, and must include a live/visual element. This is an absolute deadline, no work will be accepted after this date.

Final Concert: TBA. This is an all day affair! Set up/bring over equipment in B120 at 11 AM, tech rehearsals all day, concert at 7:30, breakdown and take back equipment after autograph signing and the groupies and fans dissipate.

There may be additional studio projects to be done during your lab time assigned in class.
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/

UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER (UCC) 202-994-5300
The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:
crisis and emergency mental health consultations
confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices

SECURITY
In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.