

SONIC-VISUAL AESTHETICS

MUCP 4550, MUCP 5550

T, Th, 11AM-12:20PM, MEIT

UNT College of Music

Fall 2025

Professor Drew Schnurr, PhD

Email: drew.schnurr@unt.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00-11:00 AM, and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores and addresses the relationship of sound to picture. We will be outlining the correlative esthetic components, discussing their impact on perception, and putting them into practice by creating original sound scores for a collection of visual works.

Topics will include Hz partials; sound mapping; sonic texture vs. content; tonal and timbral divergence; timing and phrasing; sonic frequency partitions; advanced audio plugin processing; audio mixing and mastering.

Class meetings will involve the review and discussion of contemporary sound scores, and the sound design techniques used in those works. Students will produce original works at regular intervals to be presented and reviewed during class.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Analyze and apply sonic-visual correlative relationships in multimedia works
- Develop proficiency in sound design techniques for visual media
- Create original sound scores demonstrating understanding of aesthetic principles
- Critically evaluate contemporary sound design in various media formats
- Master technical skills in audio recording, synthesis, mixing, and mastering

"MEETS WITH" PARAMETERS

The class carries a "meets with" designation. All students are required to execute on the standard class requirements with additional requirements for students enrolled at graduate level outlined in the addendum to follow.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

Students will produce and submit 4 original sound scores. The projects will require conceptualization, live field recording, digital audio synthesis, mixing, mastering, syncing to video, and digital delivery of the projects. Each project will go through one round of classroom critique before final submission.

There will be regular viewing of critical reference works during class. Students will be required to write reviews of these works. Written reviews must demonstrate an understanding of the sonic-visual correlative relationships in each work.

ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

Attendance and participation are expected for all class sessions. Class participation accounts for 20% of your grade. Students must not schedule end-of-semester juries against regularly scheduled class times. If you must miss class due to illness or emergency, please notify the instructor as soon as possible.

GRADING CRITERIA

Assessment Components and Percentages

- 3 preliminary sound score projects: 25%
- Written reviews: 30%*
- Final exam: 10%
- Class/lab participation (attendance is expected): 20%
- Final sound score project: 15%

*Graduate students will write an analysis paper in addition to the standard written reviews (see addendum).

Grading Scale

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89%
- C = 70-79%
- D = 60-69%
- F = Below 60%

Timely Return of Student Work

All assignments will be graded and returned within two weeks of submission. Final projects and exams will be available for review during finals week or by appointment.

REFERENCE BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Altman, Rick. *Sound Theory Sound Practice* (AFI Film Readers).
- Dowling, W. J. and Harwood, D. L. *Music Cognition*.
- Holman, Tomlinson. *Sound for Film and Television*.
- Sonnenschein, David. *Sound Design: The Expressive Power of Music, Voice and Sound Effects in Cinema*.

PROJECTS AND SCHEDULE

Project No. 1: Using Frequency Partitions

Analyze esthetic components of provided black and white still image. Consider potential sonic correlative relationships. Design and implement 2 minute sound design recording using only white noise as source audio material. Primary techniques should include: timing, articulation, timbre, loudness, and phrase.

- Version 1 due week 4
- Version 2 due week 5

Project No. 2: Understanding Mood and Articulation

Select a digitally generated moving image sequence two minutes in length. Conceive and implement sound score. Pay special attention to articulation elements, and explore the effect non-conjunctive sonic articulation has on visual articulation.

- Version 1 due week 7
- Version 2 due week 8

Project No. 3: Understanding Foley, Content, and Texture

Obtain or create two minute visual sequence involving moving images of a real life environment. Conceive and implement sound score. Foley techniques should be employed to generate source sounds. Sounds from source video may not be used in sound score. The score must contain content elements both conjunctive and non-conjunctive in nature. The purpose of the exercise is to explore the esthetic components of content and texture, how the two relate, and how they effect our perception of image.

- Version 1 due week 10
- Version 2 due week 11

Final Project

Obtain or create 4-6 minute visual sequence. Conceive, map, and implement sound score. Projects will be graded on the following: originality, coherence, recording quality, mix quality, composition, phrasing, dynamics, sonic-visual conjunction, and overall impact.

- Version 1 due week 13
- Version 2 due week 14

UNIVERSITY INFORMATION AND POLICIES

HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION

Emergency Defibrillator Locations in the College of Music:

- **Music Building:** Across from west side of Music Commons (by elevator)
- **Music Building:** Third floor hallway, across from staircase (next to Room 322)
- **Music Building:** Across from Copy Room (next to Room 293)
- **Music Building:** Voertman Lobby by courtyard doors
- **Music Building:** Main Office (247) under student worker's desk
- **Music Annex:** Next to room MA117, near east side doors
- **Music Practice Building North:** First floor, Avenue C side
- **Music Practice Building South:** First floor, Avenue C side
- **Bain Hall:** First floor by restrooms
- **Murchison PAC:** Off main lobby, beyond grand staircase

For additional health and safety information: <https://music.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students (Office of Academic Integrity), who may impose further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to: a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university; d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or e. any other act designed to give a student

an unfair advantage. The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to: a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

Link: <https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>

PLAGIARISM POLICY FOR SONIC-VISUAL AESTHETICS

Original Work Requirements

All sound recordings submitted for this course must represent original work, meaning that the synthesis and transformation of sonic materials must be hands-on work by the composer/student. Think of yourself as a sculptor working with clay—external sources may provide the raw clay, but you must be the sculptor who shapes, molds, and transforms that material into your artistic vision through direct manipulation and creative decision-making.

Use of Source Materials

Most assignments will specify particular materials to be used (such as white noise for Project 1). In cases where students are given creative freedom to choose source sonic materials, you may draw from various sources including:

- Commercial sound libraries
- AI-generated audio (through prompt engineering)
- Field recordings
- Synthesized materials
- Found sounds

However, these materials must serve as beginning points for compositional development, synthesis, and/or mimetic transformation—not as finished products. External sources should be used as templates that inform your own creative process, rather than relying solely on transactional exchanges with music technology.

Artisanal Approach to Sound Design

This course emphasizes artisanal techniques in sound design and composition. We will extensively teach and discuss methods for:

- Sound synthesis and manipulation
- Spectral transformation

- Temporal restructuring
- Timbral development
- Spatial processing

Students are expected to demonstrate mastery of these hands-on techniques in all submitted work. Simply downloading pre-made loops, using unmodified AI-generated content, or submitting commercially produced sound effects without substantial transformation constitutes plagiarism in this course.

Documentation Requirements

When using external source materials as starting points, students must:

1. Document all source materials in project notes
2. Clearly describe the transformation processes applied
3. Demonstrate substantial creative contribution through synthesis and manipulation

The goal is to develop your unique sonic voice through direct engagement with sound materials, not to assemble pre-existing elements. Your role as the sonic sculptor—actively shaping and transforming raw materials—is central to the learning objectives of this course.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Link: <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>

ACCESS TO INFORMATION – EAGLE CONNECT

Your access point for business and academic services at UNT occurs at my.unt.edu. All official communication from the university will be delivered to your Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect.

Link: eagleconnect.unt.edu/

OFFICE OF DISABILITY ACCESS (ODA)

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter. You can now request your Letters of Accommodation ONLINE and ODA will mail your Letters of Accommodation to your instructors. You may wish to begin a private discussion with your professors regarding your specific needs in a course. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester.

Phone: (940) 565-4323

Link: disability.unt.edu

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Registration Information: <https://registrar.unt.edu/students>

Fall 2025 Academic Calendar: <https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-academic-calendar.html>

Final Exam Schedule: See Academic Calendar link above

Add/Drop Information: <https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-academic-calendar.html>

FINANCIAL AID AND SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Undergraduates

A student must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to continue to receive financial aid. Students must maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA in addition to successfully completing a required number of credit hours based on total hours registered. Students cannot exceed attempted credit hours above 150% of their required degree plan. If a student does not maintain the required standards, the student may lose their financial aid eligibility.

Students holding music scholarships must maintain a minimum 2.5 overall cumulative GPA and 3.0 cumulative GPA in music courses.

If at any point you consider dropping this or any other course, please be advised that the decision to do so may have the potential to affect your current and future financial aid eligibility. It is recommended that you schedule a meeting with an academic advisor in your college or visit the Student Financial Aid and Scholarships office to discuss dropping a course before doing so.

Link: <http://financialaid.unt.edu/sap>

Graduates

A student must maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to continue to receive financial aid. Students must maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA in addition to successfully completing a required number of credit hours based on total registered hours per term. Music scholarships require a 3.5 cumulative GPA. Students cannot exceed maximum timeframes established based on the

published length of the graduate program. If a student does not maintain the required standards, the student may lose their financial aid eligibility.

If at any point you consider dropping this or any other course, please be advised that the decision to do so may have the potential to affect your current and future financial aid eligibility. It is recommended you schedule a meeting with an academic advisor in your college, an advisor in UNT-International or visit the Student Financial Aid and Scholarships office to discuss dropping a course.

Link: <http://financialaid.unt.edu/sap>

RETENTION OF STUDENT RECORDS

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates.

Link: <http://ferpa.unt.edu/>

COUNSELING AND TESTING

UNT's Center for Counseling and Testing has an available counselor for students in need.

Link: <http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services>

For more information on mental health resources:

Link: <https://disparities.unt.edu/mental-health-resources>

Myriam Reynolds, College of Music Counselor

Chestnut Hall, Suite 311

(940) 565-2741

Myriam.reynolds@unt.edu

STUDENT RESOURCES

The University of North Texas has many resources available to students. For a complete list:

Link: <https://success.unt.edu/aa-sa-resources>

CARE TEAM

The Care Team is a collaborative interdisciplinary committee of university officials that meets regularly to provide a response to student, staff, and faculty whose behavior could be harmful to themselves or

others.

Link: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/care-team>

GRADUATE STUDENT ADDENDUM

Graduate students are responsible for the following additional requirements:

Supplemental Readings

Readings will be assigned from one or more of the following sources:

- Chion, Michel. *Audio Vision*
- Cook, Perry R., ed. *Music, Cognition, and Computerized Sound: An Introduction to Psychoacoustics*
- Cox, Christoph and Daniel Warner, ed. *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*
- Meyer, Leonard B. *Emotion and Meaning in Music*

Additional Requirements

1. **Group Meetings:** Four additional one-hour group meetings will be scheduled by instructor with enrolled graduate students to discuss selected reading assignments. Participation in these discussions will apply to each student's final "class/lab participation" percentage assessment.
2. **Analysis Paper:** Graduate students will write a four-to-six-page paper on correlative relationships between sound and image that includes analysis of existing works. Papers will conform to MLA formatting standards and will include at least two media analysis examples. Students will be required to present their findings to the class in lecture form. The paper analysis and lecture presentation will apply to the student's final "written reviews" percentage assessment.