

MUAE 3400 — Album Making: Pre- to Post-Production

University of North Texas • College of Music – Commercial Music Division

Instructor: Professor Jonathan "Jon-John" Robinson

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Office Hours: By appointment

Meeting Days: Tuesdays & Thursdays

Location: TBA

Course Overview

This senior-level course immerses students in the complete workflow of contemporary album creation as practiced in today's commercial music industry. Students will function as members of a professional label environment, with the instructor serving as Executive Producer and Head of A&R. The class will collaboratively develop and deliver an album project consisting of 3–8 songs, moving through concept development, songwriting, A&R meetings, pre-production, recording, mixing, mastering, visual branding, and final release preparation. Emphasis is placed on professionalism, communication, meeting deadlines, and delivering industry-standard materials rather than subjective evaluation of musical taste.

Credit Load

This is a 3-credit-hour course. Students should expect to spend approximately 3–6 hours per week outside of class writing, producing, editing, recording, scheduling sessions, coordinating with collaborators, and preparing deliverables.

Course Objectives & Student Learning Outcomes

- Develop and articulate an album concept and artistic direction.
- Conduct A&R-style evaluation of songs and productions using professional criteria.
- Prepare professional-quality demos, session files, stems, and mixes suitable for label review.
- Plan and execute organized recording, overdub, and editing sessions.
- Prepare tracks for mixing and mastering according to current industry standards.
- Communicate effectively within collaborative production environments and creative teams.
- Demonstrate reliability through punctuality, meeting deadlines, and honoring commitments.
- Understand professional roles: producer, engineer, A&R, session musician, designer, marketing.
- Interpret educational artist/producer/split agreements designed to simulate industry contracts.
- Deliver a complete release package including masters, stems, credits, splits, artwork, photos, one-sheet, and rollout plan.

Course Organization (Modules)

- Module 1 — Orientation + Label Formation (Weeks 1–2): skill mapping, role identification, contracts, overview of workflow.
- Module 2 — A&R + Album Concept (Weeks 2–4): A&R listening sessions, song selection, songwriting sprint, concept development.
- Module 3 — Production Cycle (Weeks 4–10): pre-production, tracking, overdubs, editing, weekly A&R check-ins.
- Module 4 — Visuals + Branding (Weeks 10–14): collaboration with visual arts and design, photo shoots, artwork, branding, marketing plan.
- Module 5 — Final Delivery + Label Quality Control (Weeks 15–16): file audits, credits, final masters, release folder preparation, presentations.

Course Format (Canvas-Driven + Production-Based)

Canvas will be the central hub for this course. Assignment instructions, due dates, contract templates, and key documents will be posted there, and all major deliverables will be submitted via Canvas. Most creative and technical work—songwriting, recording, editing, and mixing—will occur outside scheduled class time. In-class meetings are primarily used for A&R sessions, planning, check-ins, and problem solving in a label-style environment.

Required Materials

- Reliable access to a DAW (e.g., Pro Tools, Logic, Ableton, Reaper) on a personal or lab computer.
- Headphones suitable for critical listening.
- External storage (portable hard drive or large-capacity flash drive) for session files and stems.
- Access to email and Canvas on a regular basis.

Grading Summary

This course evaluates professional performance and growth rather than stylistic preference. You are graded on the quality, completeness, and timeliness of your work, your reliability as a collaborator, and your ability to deliver what a label or client would expect in a real-world setting.

- Professional Deliverables & Deadlines – 50% (session files, mixes, masters, stems, credits, metadata, A&R notes, schedules).
- Collaboration & Professionalism – 20% (attendance, communication, respect, responsiveness, reliability in group work).
- Visuals & Branding Deliverables – 15% (artwork, photos, one-sheet, basic marketing and release plan).
- Final Album Presentation Package – 15% (complete, organized, label-ready release folder and final presentation).

Attendance, Drafts, Late Work & Extensions

This is a highly interactive, project-based course. There is no substitute for the work that happens in class A&R sessions, planning meetings, and reviews. Attendance is integral to both project success and your own professional development. The instructor must be notified in advance of an absence or tardy whenever possible. In the event of an absence, students are still responsible for turning in assignments on time (unless prior arrangements have been made) and for staying caught up on what was missed. Work submitted more than one week late will not be accepted unless arrangements were made ahead of time. Repeated uncommunicated absences or missed deadlines will significantly impact your Collaboration & Professionalism grade and may affect your ability to participate fully in group work.

Note: There is no class on January 22, 2026.

Group Assignments & Roles

Group structures will be determined after the initial skills and interests assessment conducted during the first class meeting. Students may express preferences, but final group assignments will be made by the instructor to ensure balanced teams and successful project execution. Roles may include producers, artists, songwriters, engineers, musicians, project managers, marketing leads, and visual liaisons.

Album Requirements & Major Projects

The class will collectively produce an album project consisting of a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 8 tracks, depending on the distribution of skills and the feasibility determined during A&R and pre-production. All songs must be written or completed outside of class time. Every selected track must go through the full pipeline: A&R approval, pre-production, recording, mixing, mastering, and visual branding. Students will also participate in the creation of visual and promotional assets, including album artwork in collaboration with graphic/visual arts partners, photo assets, a one-sheet, and a basic marketing and release plan.

Canvas & Communication

Canvas will be used for distributing materials, posting announcements, collecting assignments, and sharing resources. Students are responsible for checking Canvas and their UNT email (EagleConnect) regularly. Email is the best way to reach the instructor for questions or to schedule office hours.

Tentative Course Schedule (High-Level Overview)

- Weeks 1–2: Orientation, skill mapping, contracts, label formation.
- Weeks 2–4: A&R listening sessions, album concept development, songwriting sprint.
- Weeks 4–6: Pre-production, arrangement decisions, scheduling sessions and musicians.
- Weeks 6–10: Tracking, overdubs, editing, ongoing A&R check-ins.
- Weeks 10–13: Mixing, revisions, mastering preparation, metadata, credits.
- Weeks 13–15: Visuals and branding, artwork, photos, one-sheet, rollout planning.

- Weeks 15–16: Final delivery, quality control, and album presentations.

Preferred Names, Preferred Gender Pronouns

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer a different name than what is on the class roster, please let me know (via email or in person). Please, feel free to correct us on your preferred gender pronouns either in person or in writing.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam [or specify alternative sanction, such as course failure]. 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.

See: Academic Integrity

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

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.

See: Student Code of Conduct

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.

See: Eagle Connect
LINK: eagleconnect.unt.edu/

ODA STATEMENT

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. For additional information see the Office of Disability Access.

See: ODA
LINK: disability.unt.edu. (Phone: (940) 565-4323)

Health and Safety Information

Students can access information about health and safety at: <https://music.unt.edu/student-health-and-wellness>

Registration Information for Students

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

Academic Calendar, Fall 2024

See: Fall 2024 Academic Calendar
Link: <https://registrar.unt.edu/sites/default/files/fall-2024-academic-calendar.pdf>
Final Exam Schedule, Fall 2024
See above

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 to 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.

See: Financial Aid
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.

See: Financial Aid

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.

See: FERPA

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

COUNSELING AND TESTING

UNT's Center for Counseling and Testing has an available counselor for students in need. Please visit the Center's website for further information:

See: Counseling and Testing

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

For more information on mental health resources, please visit:

See: Mental Health Resources

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

ADD/DROP POLICY

Please be reminded that dropping classes or failing to complete and pass registered hours may make you ineligible for financial aid. In addition, if you drop below half-time enrollment you may be required to begin paying back your student loans. See Academic Calendar (listed above) for additional add/drop Information.

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

STUDENT RESOURCES

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

See: Student Resources

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.

See: [Care Team](#)

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