

University of North Texas
College of Music, Division of Jazz Studies

Course Syllabus

Introduction to Ableton Live

MUAE 3100-003 (19264), MUCE 5060-703 (19298), MUJS 5900-705 (10479)

T 1:00p-2:50pm, MU250
Fall 2021 — UNT College of Music

Instructor: Robert Trusko, MA: Robert.Trusko@unt.edu

Communicating With Your Instructors

Please check Canvas course announcements and your UNT email daily, as these are the means by which the instructors will contact you with important information, updates and reminders.

Please **use email** to contact your instructor and assistant instructor with any questions, concerns, planned absence consultation or office hours appointments:

- Always address emails to Robert.Trusko@unt.edu
- Expect an email response by the next work day.
- Zoom Number for class or office hours: 273 154 8243
- Expect emails you send after 5pm or on weekends to be seen the next work day.

Course Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, and/or Other Restrictions:

None.

Course Description: Introduction through intermediate skill development in MIDI sequencing, recording, editing, mixing and audio mastering using the Ableton Live Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) software for Mac.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Demonstrate basic proficiency as a digital audio engineer, making effective use of the most common tools and keyboard shortcuts in the industry standard software interface.
- Apply a professional workflow and techniques to produce tracks in any genre using software instruments, MIDI, loops and audio.
- Plan and execute a recording session using microphones and direct line input of musical performances on common instruments.
- Illustrate understanding of basic terms and concepts of sound propagation science, transduction, acoustics, psychoacoustics and signal processing through application to production and post-production techniques.
- Command basic mixing abilities using levels, panning, corrective signal processing (EQ, compression, etc.) and creative signal processing (reverb, delay, distortion, modulation).
- Implement a basic mastering chain on your stereo output for finalizing your tracks to MIDI Sequencing Using Ableton Live commercial specs.
- Compile a shareable portfolio of audio projects, including full-length song arrangements.

Teaching Philosophy

You will learn by doing in this course. The instructor will present tools and demonstrate their applications, then you will practice applying the same techniques to create your own original music. Each student will produce something unique for every lab assignment and project.

Format (Canvas-Driven, Flipped)

Canvas will be the hub for everything in this course. All lectures will be delivered as step-by-step instructional videos accompanied by PDFs. All lab and project assignments will be submitted online via Canvas. All quizzes will be administered online via Canvas.

“Flipped” means that the lecture material and assignment will all be given *before* our weekly class-meeting. Our class time will be used for follow-up group work, individual work with instructor support, asking and answering questions and/or sharing drafts of your work with the instructor and your classmates.

★ Technical troubleshooting (important): It is very difficult to diagnose software issues and answer technical questions through email. When you run into a problem, try first to solve it yourself through online searches and/or Ableton tech support (<https://www.ableton.com/en/help/>). Tuesday’s class is where you can get in-person instructor help with anything you cannot resolve otherwise. ★

Typical weekly schedule:

- Thursday 8am - New module opens on Canvas with all lecture videos and lab assignment material
- Following Tuesday 12pm - Lab rough draft due at the start of class. Class time used to work out any technical kinks with instructor help, receive instructor and/or classmate feedback on your lab, continue your individual work on your lab.
- Tuesday 12:59pm - Lab due to Canvas
- Wednesday (break)
- Thursday 8am - New module opens on Canvas...

Smartest way to do this class:

1. Look over the new module materials Thursday.
 2. Watch the videos, complete reading, and get to work on your Lab early (Thursday-Sunday).
 3. Give yourself an extra day (Monday) for dealing with any unforeseen issues that arise (computer crashing, internet drama, trouble understanding the Lab techniques, life-problems...).
 4. Bring your completed Lab to class Tuesday to share, get feedback and continue working during class time.
 5. Finish and submit your Lab by Tuesday night.
 6. Take Wednesday off from this class.
- Even if you want to get an early start on next week, know that it is very common in professional audio work to need to wait on someone else before

you can start your work. If you're always ready for the new Lab on Tuesday, think of the wait until Thursday as good practice for the real world.

Minimum Technical Skills Needed

Using the Canvas learning management system, using email with attachments, creating and submitting Ableton session files.

Technical Assistance

UIT Help Desk: <http://www.unt.edu/helpdesk/index.htm>

The University of North Texas provides student technical support in the use of Canvas and supported resources. The student help desk may be reached at:

Email: helpdesk@unt.edu Phone: 940.565-2324

In Person: Sage Hall, Room 130 Hours are:

- Monday-Thursday 8am-midnight
- Friday 8am-8pm
- Saturday 9am-5p
- Sunday 8am-midnight

Canvas technical requirements:

<https://clear.unt.edu/supported-technologies/canvas/requirements>

Ableton Live 11 tech support: <https://www.ableton.com/en/help/>

Materials

LEVEL 1: Required

1. Dropbox (or Google Drive, iCloud, OneDrive or another online storage option) where you can create a folder to upload and share all your projects via download links that you will paste into the assignment submission.

○ **TIP:** Audio session folders are typically hundreds of megabytes to several gigabytes in size. You will not upload these files directly to Canvas, but to cloud storage you can share via links.

- **By submitting assignments this way, you will keep your portfolio in your own online space rather than on the Canvas course so you don't lose access to your portfolio after the semester.**
- This also gives you practice sharing Live sets online, which every professional engineer must do *a lot*.

LEVEL 2: Highly Recommended but Not Required

The following materials are supplied in the Computer Music Lab Media Collaboration Suite (<https://lab.music.unt.edu/media>), in which you can reserve time between classes. As such you are **not required** to purchase any materials for this class.

Purchase of the following materials is *recommended* so that you can work on audio projects at home.

1. **Reference headphones** are required for all audio work. Ear buds and any other headphones you already own are almost assuredly not reference headphones. There are many companies and options, but be sure to choose headphones that *explicitly specify* they have a **flat frequency response for studio reference monitoring**. A popular, affordable option are [Sony MDR 7506](#) reference headphones.

2. **Computer with Ableton Live 11 Suite installed.** An academic version of [Ableton Live 10 Suite](#) is available for \$449 or 6 monthly payments of \$75. There are less expensive versions of Live including the Standard version. Suite offers a variety of instruments not available in Standard. Suite is well worth the investment.

3. MIDI keyboard controller. If you want to input notes and control other Ableton Live 11 parameters not only using your mouse and laptop's keyboard, consider spending \$80-150 on a small USB MIDI controller. E.g. [Akai Pro MPK Mini mk II](#), [Novation Launchkey 25](#), [M-Audio Oxygen 25](#), [Arturia MiniLab MkII](#), [IK Multimedia iRig Keys I/O 25](#), others. Compare the features and pick what suits you best. Some have smaller/larger keys. Some work with iOS as well as Mac OS. Some have bundled software or even built-in USB audio interface capabilities. There are also dedicated Ableton Live Controllers that can control more aspects of the software without any setup or installation. Some of them include the AKAI [APC40 MKII \(And its series\)](#), [Novation Launchpad Series](#), and if one has a larger budget you may want to consider the [Ableton Push 2](#). For a Complete list of Ableton Controllers [click here](#).

LEVEL 3: Recommended but Not Required

You may want to use the following two items to complete some assignments for this class, but both can be accessed in the Computer Music Lab Media Collaboration Suite. Visit <https://lab.music.unt.edu/media> for information and to schedule a time.

5. Audio recording interface. This is needed to plug an instrument or microphone into your computer for recording audio into a Ableton Live Session. There are **MANY** available options, ranging from inexpensive to very expensive. A few high quality options I can personally recommend:

- (least expensive but still high quality) [PreSonus AudioBox USB 96](#) or [PreSonus AudioBox 96 Studio USB 2.0 Hardware/Software Recording Kit](#) (includes reference headphones and a microphone as well)
- (a little more expensive) [Focusrite Scarlett 2i2](#)
- (expensive and high quality) [Apogee Duet](#) is great. Or an [Apollo Twin](#)

6. Microphone, cable, stand and pop filter. There are many, MANY microphone options for all budgets. A great mic to start with for studio recording is a [Large-diaphragm condenser microphone](#). I recommend you first set your budget then compare reviews of mics in that budget.

- If you have a mic, you need a [mic cable](#) (be sure to check the length)
- You probably need a mic stand: [full-size](#) / [desktop](#)

- And for recording vocals you'll want a [pop filter](#)

Grading Summary:

36% Lab Exercises (9)

15% Quizzes (4)

15% Attendance (15)

12% Midterm Project

22% Final Project

100% Total

Lab exercises rough drafts will always be due in class Tuesday at 12pm the week after they are assigned. Lab final draft submissions will always be due to Canvas by 11:59 pm Tuesday of the week after they are assigned. ★ **Late submissions are not accepted without advance request of extension** ★ . Extension requests are completed on Canvas and **not via email**. To request a deadline extension, you must enter the text "Extension requested. Reason: [*your reason*]" to the Canvas assignment submission by Tuesday 11:59pm. All extension requests made after the deadline will be denied. All requests made by the Tuesday 11:59pm deadline will be granted an extra 48-hours until Friday 11:59pm at the latest to submit your work.

Quizzes will be administered via Canvas throughout the semester, covering lecture content, lab techniques and assigned online reading and viewing content. These will be open-note and generally consist of multiple choice and true/false questions.

The **Midterm Project** will be a polished representation of your best MIDI sequencing work for the first half of the semester. You will compose and produce a complete song, at least 3:00 in length with at least 15 *Instrument* and/or *Drum* tracks. You will mix your song according to the specified process and requirements detailed in week 7 and will include a basic mastering chain on your stereo output to bring your song to professional sonic specifications. Your midterm project may include expanded and revised elements from previous lab exercises.

The **Final Project** will be a polished representation of your best MIDI sequencing and audio mixing work for the semester and may include audio tracks and/or video as well. The project will be assigned and completed in 5 parts, each part having specific requirements detailed week by week beginning week 11.

Attendance at all classes is required and necessary to learn the material well. Arrive early because attendance is **taken exactly at the top of the hour**. Physically being in the room is not enough. To be counted as present you need to participate, fully engaging in all in-class activities. Examples of not participating include: Using your phone; Checking email or doing any non-Ableton Live work on your computer; Talking to your neighbor or staring at the wall instead of working on in-class exercises; Any disruptive or disrespectful behavior.

Your attendance at each class is scored on a 7-point scale:

7 pts: **Exactly on-time** and present for the class period (i.e. paying attention during instructor demonstrations and doing Ableton Live work during work time)

5 pts: *A little late* and/or not fully present (e.g. not fully paying attention and/or not exclusively doing classwork for this course during work time)

3 pts: *Very late* and/or hardly present (e.g. being disruptive and/or spending half of the class doing unrelated work)

0 pts: *Absent* or not present (e.g. being repeatedly disruptive and/or spending most of the class doing unrelated work)

ATTENDANCE, LATE WORK AND EXTENSION POLICIES:

Absences are only excused for religious holidays, required performances, family emergencies or student illness. You must get documentation or a doctor's note for an absence to be excused. If you need to be absent for a reason that you are not sure fits into these categories, please let me know and we will discuss if it can be excused.

Zero Late Work: No late work is accepted without advance request of extension. If you are absent (excused or unexcused), your work is still due on time to Canvas. You are always responsible to check Canvas and complete any lab work or quizzes assigned in your absence. Consult the class schedule (pp. 6-7) for all due dates.

Requesting an Extension

Extension requests are completed on Canvas and **not via email**. To request a deadline extension, you must enter the text "Extension requested. Reason: [*your reason*]" to the Canvas assignment submission by Tuesday 11:59pm. All extension requests made after the deadline will be denied. All requests made by the Tuesday 11:59pm deadline will be granted an extra 48-hours until Thursday 11:59pm at the latest to submit your work.

IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING IN THIS CLASS:

If you are struggling for any reason please send me an email, talk to me in class or the halls or come by my office *whether or not we have an appointment*. I want to hear what you're experiencing and we will work together to fix it. Depending on your struggle, there might be immediate help from UNT's Office of Disability Accommodation (info and link below) and/or a medical note from a counselor or therapist that will authorize me to accommodate your needs. If your struggle doesn't match either of these, we will work to find another solution.

We will proceed through new material and assignments with a healthy momentum designed to be manageable and helpful. If for any reason you fall off the train and feel unable to catch up, talk to me right away and we'll get you back on board.

Class Schedule:

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| ★ Check Canvas for ALL course materials, assignment details and quizzes ★ | | |
| Week | TUES: Work Due | THURS: New Module Topics |

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| wk 1 | | <p>Syllabus and course introduction</p> <p>A Tour of Live</p> <p>Creating a song with Loops</p> <p>Lab 1 – Loop Sequence</p> |
| wk 2 | <p>Lab 1</p> <p><i>Lab and project rough drafts will always be due in class Tuesday at 12pm (noon) the week after they are assigned. Final draft submissions will always be due to Canvas by 11:59pm.</i></p> | <p>Simpler/Sampling Percussion/ Found Sound</p> <p>Lab 2 – Sampling Percussion/ FS</p> |
| wk 3 | Lab 2 & Quiz 1 | <p>Drums</p> <p>Creating a rhythm track with Drum Rack instrument</p> <p>Lab 3 – Drum Sequence</p> |
| wk 4 | Lab 3 | <p>Bass</p> <p>MIDI programming on software instrument tracks sampled and synthesized bass instruments</p> <p>Lab 4 - Drums and Bass Line Sequence</p> |
| wk 5 | Lab 4 | <p>Harmony</p> <p>Sampling Sources, Basic Synthesis</p> <p>Lab 5 - Drums, Bass and Chords Sequence</p> |
| wk 6 | Lab 5 & Quiz 2 | <p>Melodies</p> <p>Synthesis techniques for sculpting original sounds</p> <p>MIDI automation</p> <p>Lab 6 - Drums, Bass, Chords & Synth Melody Sequence</p> |

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| wk 7 | Lab 6 | Mixing and Rough Mastering Mixing workflow, signal processing with audio effects, basic mastering chain on the stereo output Midterm Project: 3:00+ complete song with at least 15 tracks, mixed and roughly mastered to specifications |
| wk 8 | Lab 7 | Digital Audio part 2 Recording instruments via mic and line Warping Audio Lab 8 - MIDI and Audio Sequence |
| wk 9 | Lab 8 & Quiz 3 | Live Performance Techniques, Clip Automation, Link, Synchronization Lab 9 – Live Performance Arrangement |
| wk 10 | Lab 9 | Final Project part 1 Create a full song (to assignment specifications) |
| wk 11 | Final Project part 1 | Final Project part 2 Add layers, arrange and pre-mix |
| wk 12 | Final Project part 2 | Final Project part 3 Corrective processing: EQ, gates, compressors and limiters |

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| wk 13 | Final Project part 3 | Final Project part 4 Creative processing: reverb, delay, modulation, distortion |
| wk 14 | Final Project part 4 | Final Project part 5 Mastering chain |
| wk 15 (Finals week) | Final Project part 5 & Quiz 4 (cumulative) | |

Topic schedule subject to change **with notice**.

UNT POLICIES AND RESOURCES:

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam and be placed on warning for course failure. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing a second time will receive an "F" for the course. <http://vpaa.unt.edu/dcgcover/resources/integrity>

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 classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. StudentCodeofConduct- <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>

ADA POLICY 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 Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation.

<http://disability.unt.edu> (Phone:(940)565-4323)

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION & PROCEDURES

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Federal laws (Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act) and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, and therefore prohibit sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking, and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. UNT's Survivor Advocates can assist a student who has been impacted by violence by filing protective orders, completing crime victim's compensation applications, contacting professors for absences

related to an assault, working with housing to facilitate a room change where appropriate, and connecting students to other resources available both on and off campus. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565- 2648. Additionally, alleged sexual misconduct can be non-confidentially reported to the Title IX Coordinator at oeo@unt.edu or at (940) 565 2759.

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. <http://eagleconnect.unt.edu/>

UNT CALENDARS

2019 Fall Add/Drop Calendar

<https://registrar.unt.edu/registration/fall-add-drop>

2019-2020 Academic Calendar at a Glance

<https://www.unt.edu/catalogs/2019-20/calendar>

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 registered hours per term. 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 being doing so.

<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.

<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 Blackboard/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.

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

COUNSELING AND TESTING

UNT's Center for Counseling and Testing has an available counselor whose position includes 16 hours per week of dedicated service to students in the College of Music and the College of Visual Arts and Design. Please visit the Center's website for further information: <http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/>

counseling-and-testing-services. For more information on mental health issues, please visit: <https://speakout.unt.edu> .

The counselor for music students is: Myriam Reynolds
Chestnut Hall, Suite 311
(940) 565-2741 Myriam.reynolds@unt.edu