University of North Texas

College of Music, Division of Jazz Studies

Course Syllabus

Introduction to Ableton Live 10

MUAE 3100-003 (18121) INTRO TO DIGITAL AUDIO (Credit), MUJS 5900-704 (5442) SPECIAL PROBLEMS (Credit)

Asynchronous Online (2hrs)
Spring 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 the discussion board** to contact your instructor about any technical questions, advice, or help. This can allow students to learn from each others questions and also help each other. Please **use e-mail to** contact your instructor with any concerns, planned absence consultation or office hours appointments:

- Always address emails to Robert.Trusko@my.unt.edu
- Expect an email response by the next work day.
- 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 10 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 10 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 office hour (not required attendance) 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/

 (Links to an external site.)
). 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 office hour 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 11:59pm - 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 the Zoom Office Hour and post your draft on the Discussion Board to share, get feedback.
5. Comment on Three others drafts.
6. Finish and submit your Lab by Tuesday night.
7. 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 Wednesday, 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

 (Links to an external site.)

Ableton Live 10 tech support: https://www.ableton.com/en/help/

 (Links to an external site.)

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 10 Suite installed** . An academic version of Ableton Live 10 Suite (Links to an external site.) is available for $449 or 6 monthly payments of $75. There are less expensive versions of Live including the Standard version, but you may not be able to complete all assignments in this course using Standard. Suite offers a variety of instruments not available in Standard. It is well worth the investment. Please note that Live 11 will be releasing during this semester. If you purchase Live 10 right now, you will receive a free upgrade.

3. **MIDI keyboard controller** . If you want to input notes and control other Ableton Live 10 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 (Links to an external site.)

, Novation Launchkey 25 (Links to an external site.)

, M-Audio Oxygen 25 (Links to an external site.)

, Arturia MiniLab MkII (Links to an external site.)

, IK Multimedia iRig Keys I/O 25 (Links to an external site.)

, 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 (Links to an external site.)

 (And its series (Links to an external site.)

 ), Novation Launchpad Series (Links to an external site.)

, and if one has a larger budget you may want to consider the Ableton Push 2 (Links to an external site.)

. For a Complete list of Ableton Controllers click here (Links to an external site.)

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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 (Links to an external site.)
  or PreSonus AudioBox 96 Studio USB 2.0 Hardware/Software Recording (Links

to an external site.)
Kit (includes reference headphones and a microphone as well)

- (a little more expensive) Focusrite Scarlett 2i2 (Links to an external site.)

- (expensive and high quality) Apogee Duet (Links to an external site.)
  is great. Or an Apollo Twin (Links to an external site.)

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 (Links to an external site.)
. 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 (Links to an external site.)
  (be sure to check the length)
- You probably need a mic stand: full-size (Links to an external site.)
  / desktop (Links to an external site.)

- And for recording vocals you'll want a pop filter (Links to an external site.)

Grading Summary:

36% Lab Exercises (9)

15% Quizzes (4)
15% Participation (15)

12% Midterm Project

22% Final Project

100% Total

Lab exercises rough drafts will always be due in on the Discussion 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 into your submission "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.

Participation each week is required and necessary to learn the material well. This will occur through the discussion boards. Each wee when you post your rough drafts, listen

to 3 other students work and give constructive feedback. Please be sure to listen and comment on submissions that do not currently have feedback so that everyone gets critique. This will

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 10 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 participation each week is on a 7-point scale:

7 pts: ***Commenting on three submissions.*** *In-depth critique and display of technical understanding.*

5 pts: Commenting on two submissions.

3 pts: Commenting on one submission or not writing in-depth critique.

0 pts: No work completed.

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.

<u>Zero Late Work</u> : 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 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.