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MUST 410.01: Computer Music Programming

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MUST 410
University of Montana

Dr. Emilie LeBel
emilie.lebel@umontana.edu
Office: Room 203
Office hours : By appointment
Class times: MW 10:10- 11:00AM, Room 203

Course description:

This course explores electronic music composition, focusing on contemporary art music traditions. Students will create two original works that utilize music technology. Students will study composition techniques and repertoire from the past century, and gain knowledge of a broad range of repertoire, aesthetics, and compositional techniques.

Course objectives:

- To understand the fundamentals of computer composition and sonic art
- To develop one's own compositional voice and artistic interests
- To develop knowledge of a broad range of contemporary art music repertoire
- To gain experience thinking critically about contemporary music

Required materials:

- Backup media: USB flash drive, or a portable hard drive
- Headphones: good quality, over-the-ear headphones with a 1/4" adapter
- Listening assignments, readings, and additional materials will be handed out in class, or made available on-line

General expectations:

- Regular attendance and active participation in weekly class activities
- Reviewing any assigned listening and reading, so that you are able to actively participate in class discussions and activities
- Please check your email regularly for updates / communications
- Attendance at concerts and special events related to the composition program is ***mandatory***
- Treat the recording studio facilities with respect and care – clean up after yourself, no unauthorized guests, no sharing the door code, and always leave the studio in better condition than when you found it

Evaluation:

30% Presentation Project
30% Composition Project 1
30% Composition Project 2
10% Participation and professionalism

Assignment submission:

The two composition projects are due via email on their due date by midnight (i.e. via yousendit, dropbox, or similar service to emilie.lebel@umontana.edu). Do not leave submitting your projects until the last minute – slow internet, or other such problems, are not an acceptable excuses for lateness.

- Late projects will be subject to a penalty of 2% per day (or partial day) of the week (including weekends)

Attendance, professionalism and participation:

Attendance and participation in all classes is required, and excessive absences will be reflected in your final grade. Attendance at concerts and special events related to the composition program is **mandatory** (see course outline for important dates). The following rubric gives a general indication of expectations:

- 9-10% - No problems with attendance; Very strong evidence of professionalism and participation
- 7-8.99% - No problems with attendance; Strong evidence of professionalism and participation
- 5-6.99% - Minor problems with attendance, lack of professionalism and/or participation
- below 5% - Major problems with attendance, lack of professionalism and/or participation

Laptop policy:

I do not permit the use of laptop computers, cell phones, etc. during the lecture and discussion portions of the class. Our department is very interested in technology and its artistic and academic applications, but laptops are not appropriate for taking notes in this class, and we wish to avoid the potential for distraction to both laptop users and nearby students. Additionally, students may not use cellular phones in class. If you disrupt class by using these devices, you will be asked to quietly gather up your belongings and leave class for the day.

Academic honesty:

All work submitted in this course must be your own and produced exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. For the consequences of academic dishonesty, refer to the “Student Conduct Code” available here: http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php.

We take violations very seriously and they will be noted on student disciplinary records. We will not tolerate any dishonesty or plagiarism. If you are in doubt regarding any aspect of these issues as they pertain to this course, please consult with me before you complete any relevant requirements of the course.

Disability services:

If you are a student with a disability who will require reasonable program modifications in this course, please meet with Disability Services for Students in Lommasson 154 for assistance in developing a plan to address program modifications. If you are already working with Disability Services arrange to meet with me during my office hours to discuss reasonable modifications that may be necessary. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at <http://www.umt.edu/disability>.

Course Schedule & Important Dates:

- Week 1: January 25

- Week 2: February 1

- Week 3: February 8

Guest Mitch Renaud visiting Thursday and Friday (February 11 & 12)

Thursday February 11, 2pm special guest lecture with Mitch Renaud

Friday February 12, 5pm composer concert in recital hall

- Week 4: February 15

In class presentations (2 people)

- Week 5: February 22

In class presentations (2 people)

- Week 6: February 29

In class presentations (2 people)

- Week 7: March 7

Composition Project 1 Due Sunday March 6 by midnight

Informal in class presentations of Composition Project 1

- Week 8: March 14

In class presentations (2 people)

- Week 9: March 21

In class presentations (2 people)

- Week 10: March 28

No classes this week!

- Week 11: April 4

**Spring Break!*

- Week 12: April 11

- Week 13: April 18

- Week 14: April 25

No classes this week!

Guest Adam Vidiksis visiting Monday and Tuesday (April 25 & 26)

April 25 and 26 – Composers Showcase – concerts at 2 pm and 7:30 pm each day, plus guest lecturer Adam Vidiksis

- Week 15: May 3

**Last week of classes!*

Composition Project 2 due Sunday May 2 by midnight

Informal in class presentations of Composition Project 2

Assignment Descriptions:

Presentation Project

Due on assigned presentation date

30% of your final grade

**Presentation dates will be chosen by lottery during first week of the semester.*

The assignment is to create a presentation and information handout about an artist's body of work, or artistic concept relevant to music technology, of your choosing. This could mean either exploring the body of work of a specific artist, or several different artists approach to a particular artistic concept. For instance, you could choose to explore the sound installations of Janet Cardiff, or choose to look at several different approaches to spatialization in sound installations. The assignment objective is to gain in-depth insight into your chosen artist or concept, and to share this information with your classmates. Your 15-20 minute class presentation should contain some audio and visual examples, and also a handout with a summary of your presentation information.

Assignment components:

- Presentation
- Information handout (have ____ copies printed for your presentation)

Composition Project 1

Site-specific work

Due Sunday March 6 by midnight

30% of your final grade

The assignment is to create a site-specific sonic work. The composition will be created for a specific site or context, designed to react, interact, or reflect some aspect of the chosen place. The work should be shaped around how it will be presented in the chosen space. This could mean a specific location on campus, such as the elevator in the music building, or something more general such as any parking garage in a city. You may incorporate any aspects of music technology, and may also include live performers. The final piece should be approximately be 5 to 10 minutes in length, and must demonstrate refined skills with the chosen medium.

Create a complete score and/or instructions for your work. This will likely include a time-line and set-up instructions, and must include performance instructions, and a program note. Finally, include a short written essay/descriptive document containing meta-commentary on 3-5 composition decisions you made over the course of the project. For each decision, point specifically to the time-point in your project where the decision is demonstrated.

All text files should be submitted as PDFs, and sound files should be .wav or .aif. Check all files to ensure that they function properly before you submit your work. Clearly label all project elements with your name and submit to Dr. LeBel via email.

Composition Project 2

Multi-speaker work

Due Sunday May 2 by midnight

30% of your final grade

The assignment is to create a sonic work that uses 4 (or more) speakers/amplifiers. How you choose to approach a multi-speaker or multi-channel set-up is entirely up to you. We will explore some possible approaches in class. You may incorporate any aspects of music technology, and live performers. The final piece should be approximately 5 to 10 minutes in length, and must demonstrate refined skills with music technology.

Create a complete score and/or instructions for your work. This *must* include set-up instructions, performance instructions, and a program note. Finally, include a short written essay/descriptive document containing meta-commentary on 3-5 composition decisions you made over the course of the project. For each decision, point specifically to the time-point in your project where the decision is demonstrated.

All text files should be submitted as PDFs, and sound files should be .wav or .aif. Check all files to ensure that they function properly before you submit your work. Clearly label all project elements with your name and submit to Dr. LeBel via email.