

## 025:250 COMPOSITION: ELECTRONIC MEDIA I

Lawrence Fritts

621-6651 cell (for immediate issues; texting is fine)

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Except when teaching, I am usually at my computer, so email is the best way to reach me, especially if you need anything. This helps me keep track of things better than the phone. My cell phone is best used if you are expected in a lesson or for a class presentation and will be late or not able to make it. For brief messages, I like texting. Office hours: MW, 1:30-3:30 and after class. Best to email for appointments.

Staff: Shane Hoose at [shane-hoose@uiowa.edu](mailto:shane-hoose@uiowa.edu)  
Zach Zubow at [zachariah-zubow@uiowa.edu](mailto:zachariah-zubow@uiowa.edu)

Goals: This class will be devoted to learning and applying compositional tools in the fixed digital sound media domain. While some discussion time will be spent on software tools provided by **Peak**, **Pro Tools**, **Kyma**, and **Max/MSP**, the focus of the course will be on composition. The compositional theory that will be explored is primarily concerned with sound-classes, sound-objects, gestures, narrative, pacing, presentation, and form. Practical issues covered in class include sample recording in the studios, field, and anechoic chamber, as well as mixing, EQing, and mastering for laptop listening, studio presentations, and large venues for concerts and festivals. The techniques learned in this class will be developed in works for fixed media alone, although other forms such as algorithmically-generated fixed media, instruments and fixed or algorithmically-generated fixed media, and instruments and live computer interaction may be explored by suitably prepared students. The compositional format of each student's final project will be decided as the semester progresses. Additionally, students with appropriate backgrounds may explore in this semester the software tools provided by **Kyma**, and **Max/MSP** that will be the focus of next semester's course. While the calendar of topics and events will be developed according to student background, progress, and interests, the activities of the class will include participation in the two EMS concerts, presentation of assignments and works in progress, and listening presentations and optional individual class teaching presentations as interests and needs arise as the course develops.

Preparation for the Course: Since the class is comprised mostly of composition students at the PhD level, they are expected to be acquainted with the fundamentals of acoustics, the history of electronic music, and current compositional practices. These topics will be reviewed as needed.

Teaching Experience: Because many academic jobs for composers include teaching of music technology, students will be given the opportunity to develop their teaching skills in this class, primarily through listening presentations, discussed below. On an optional basis, qualified students will be given opportunities to prepare a handout and lead a short discussion of a technical nature, usually pertaining to some aspect of the software used in class.

Grading: Grades are based on participation/attendance (5%), assignments (30%), listening presentations (10%), mid-term critique (15%), final critique (15%) and the final composition (25%). Poor attendance will result in a lower grade.

Assignments: Several assignments will be given primarily to guide the student through the compositional process of creating electronic music. The assignments are cumulative, in the sense that each assignment develops or extends the work done in the previous assignment. One word of caution. Some assignments are more specific than others, which can result in the final pieces in class sounding similar in texture. I will try to counter this by offering students specific ideas for making their pieces different from others. In general, I believe that the good that is accomplished by working through the assignments offsets the situational problem of works sounding similar.

Listening Presentation: Each student will present a work by an important composer in the field of electronic music. The electronics can be either fixed or interactive. This presentation will be worth 10% of the final grade.

Mid-term Class Critique: Students will present their work for class discussion and critique. This music will be worth 15% of the final grade. A good length at this point is 1 minute. Other factors will be quality and concept development, working method, and materials.

Final Class Critique: Students will present their work for class discussion and critique. This music will be worth 15% of the final grade. A good length at this point is 4 minutes. Other factors will be quality, originality, and technique.

Final Project: The final project should be at least 5 minutes in length, unless the critiques suggest otherwise. We will set up individual ½-hour meeting times early in the finals week to play and discuss the final work.

EMS Concerts: Students are expected to attend each EMS concert and to assist with set-up or tear-down. Each concert will count as one class.

EMS Hard Drives: Students can use hard drives in Studios 1 and 2. Since these drives are not secure, students are responsible for backing up their work after each session on their own flash drives or hard drives.

Studio Access: Students can obtain keys to the studios by talking with Shane or Zach. Students can sign up for studio time on a permanent and weekly basis. The permanent schedule will be determined in Week 2 of class.

Studio Maintenance: The studios should be kept clean at all times. Furniture and equipment should be symmetrically arranged and dust-free. To keep surfaces clear of pens and papers left behind, we should try to put them in one of the drawers in the racks. I'll also put old handouts there, so if you miss a class, you can find the handout there.

Studio Problems: Please report any problems to Shane and Zach as soon as they occur. Most problems are incredibly easy to solve, but they have to know about them to fix them.

Equipment Check-out: A wide range of very high quality microphones, Apple laptops, Digidesign interfaces, video cameras, and recording devices can be checked out. When you check out something that comes with cables, power supply, etc., please double check that you return everything.

Administrative Home: The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

Electronic Communication: University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences. (Operations Manual, III.15.2. Scroll down to k.11.)

Accommodations for Disabilities: A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See [www.uiowa.edu/~sds/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/) for more information.

Academic Fraud: Plagiarism and any other activities when students present work that is not their own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is a serious matter and is reported to the departmental DEO and to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum. Instructors and DEOs decide on appropriate consequences at the departmental level while the Associate Dean enforces additional consequences at the collegiate level. See the CLAS Academic Fraud section of the Student Academic Handbook.

CLAS Final Examination Policies: Final exams may be offered only during finals week. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. Students should not ask their instructor to reschedule a final exam since the College does not permit rescheduling of a final exam once the semester has begun. Questions should be addressed to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint: Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor, and then the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident. See the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

Understanding Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather: In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Public Safety web site.

## Calendar

Aug. 23-25	Overview of course, definitions, microphones, recording, intro to Peak and Pro Tools
Aug. 30-Sept. 1	Compositional theory and techniques in the electronic medium. Working with Peak and Pro Tools. Assignment 1 given to class.
Sept. 6	Labor Day. No class
Sept. 8	Working with shading to give shape and create context for sounds.
Sept. 13-15	In-class presentations of Assignment 1
Sept. 20-22	Listening Presentations. Assignment 2 given to class.
Sept. 27-29	Transformation and processing techniques and their use in composition.
Oct. 4-6	In-class presentations of Assignment 2. Assignment 3 given.
Oct. 11-13	Exploring gestures, phrases, and sound-masses.
Oct. 18-20	In-class presentations of Assignment 3
Oct. 25-28	Controlling pitch and rhythm.
Oct. 31	EMS Concert. 7:30 PM, Becker Auditorium.
Nov. 1-3	Pre- Critiques
Nov. 8-10	Midterm Critiques
Nov. 15-17	Midterm Critiques and responses.
Nov. 22-24	Thanksgiving. No class
Nov. 29-Dec. 1	Pre-Critiques
Dec. 6-8	Final Critiques
Dec. 12	EMS Concert. 7:30 PM, Becker Auditorium.
Dec. 13-15	Finals Week. Presentation of the final work in one-on-one meetings with Prof. Fritts.