Introduction to Audio Production

Fall 2023 - COMM130.201

Instructor: Chris Batte

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Office Hours: by appointment via Zoom

Course Information

Room: School of Communication, Water Tower Campus, 51 E. Pearson, Room 003.

Time: Tuesdays from 4:15PM to 6:45PM from August 29th through December 5th, 2023.

Materials: 16 GB or larger USB3.0 external hard drive (formatted MacOS) & quality headphones (Sony MDR7506 or equivalent, no Bluetooth, no noise cancelling). The cost of these items is under $100. There are no books to purchase for this class. You must buy these items for this class. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Course Description

This is an introduction to the world of audio production. It is meant for undergraduate students with an interest in audio and its applications in modern media and art. Students will learn to employ audio as a creative tool for documentary storytelling, fiction filmmaking, news media, radio production, podcasting, commercials, and internet productions. Creativity and careful execution are major factors in the grading of all projects.

Course Goals

• Understand basic audio concepts and terminology.

• Develop critical listening skills, learn how to effectively discuss sound.

• Gain a working knowledge of signal flow and basic audio technology including microphones, recorders, mixers, and DAWs.

• Conceptualize, plan, and execute effective sound designs.

• Familiarity with audio editing, mixing, and design processes and methods.

• Practice the art of storytelling using sound.

• Develop directing and writing skills for audio production.

• Understand audio workflows, practices, and standards.

• Develop interviewing and field recording skills.

• Learn basic music editing and concepts.

• Learn how sound and image work in tandem to tell stories.

• Provide and incorporate constructive criticism to and from your classmates.

Assignments, Grading, and Due Dates

Production Assignments (70 Points)

Interview I: Record, log, and edit a short 2-minute-long audio interview of a subject of your choosing, using a recording ratio of at least 10:1. Provide 2 wave (.wav) files. 1 edited and mixed audio clip, plus 1 RAW clip (5 Points) Due Week 4.

Sound Effects: Create a library of at least 100 sound effects profiling no fewer than 10 different objects and/or places (5 Points) Due Week 5.

Soundscape: Plan and produce a 2-minute-long audio soundscape using only sound effects; no voices or music. Provide 1 wave file (5 Points) Due Week 6.

Interview II: Record and edit a 3-minute-long interview into a fully produced, radio-ready audio project incorporating music and SFX. Apply standards learned in previous assignments. Provide 1 wave file (10 Points) Due Week 9.

Video Sound Design Project: Students will spot, design and build the soundtrack for a short video. Provide 1 .mp4 file containing both audio and video (20 Points) Due Week 12, Rough Cuts will be critiqued Week 11.

Final Project: Plan, record, edit and mix a short (5-7 minute) creative audio project of your choosing. It could be a short story, poem, comedy sketch show, abstract, drama – you name it. Projects should be a demonstration of your fluency in the concepts and techniques taught throughout the course. (25 Points) Due Week 15, Rough Cuts will be critiqued Week 14.

Writing Assignment (5 Points)

Analysis Paper: Critical analysis of sound design of a film - (5 Points) Due Week 8

Tests and Participation (25 Points)

Peer feedback: Ongoing – especially critical during group critiques. (12 Points)

Midterm Exam: (13 Points) Week 7

Grading Rubric: Generally assignments are divided into 5 categories: record quality, edit, mix, sfx/music, and Q (creativity, subject, class reaction).

Grading Scale

93-100%	A=4.0		77-79%	C+= 2.33
90-92%	A- = 3.67		73-76%	C=2.00
87-89%	B+= 3.33		70-72%	C-=1.67
83-86%	B=3.00		60-69%	D=1.00
80-82%	B-= 2.67		0-59%	F =0

Session Schedule

Week 1 (Aug 29) – Class Overview, Intros, Computer Basics, Basics of Audio

Introductions

Syllabus review, class expectations

Computer basics, MacOS, organizing, Zoom, Sakai

Fundamentals of Audio

ASSIGN: Interview I Due Week 4

Week 2 (Sept 5) – Basic Field Recording, How a microphone works, Interview Techniques

Gear – Microphone basics and recording in a nutshell

Proper recording techniques – how to capture good audio

Mono vs Stereo

Handheld mics, boom mics

What's available in the OWL Lab

How to conduct an effective interview

ASSIGN: Sound Effects Due Week 5

Week 3 (Sept 12) – Basics of Digital Audio Workstations

Basics of DAWs, an introduction to Audition

Transitions and basic editing techniques (RAW vs Edit tracks)

Mono/stereo in DAW

Recording in a DAW

ASSIGN: Soundscape Due Week 8

Week 4 (Sept 19) – Storytelling & Dramatic Structure, Basics of Copyright Law, Group Critique

Telling stories using sound.

Critical analysis and spotting.

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WLUW (Podcast studio visit)

Group Critique

DUE: Interview I

Week 5 (Sept 26)– The Elements of a Soundtrack Part 1: Dialogue & Sound Effects

What makes up a soundtrack?

Types and Aesthetics of Dialogue and Sound Effects

Audition: EQ, SFX, Compressing, DeEssing, Reverb and presence

Simple overview of copyright.

ASSIGN: Interview II Due Week 10

DUE: SFX

Week 6 (Oct 3) – The Elements of the Soundtrack Part 2: Music,

Types and Aesthetics of Music

Music editing workshop

Critique

Assign: Analysis Paper

DUE: Soundscape

Week 7 (Oct 10) – Mid Semester Break, no class

Week 8 (Oct 17) – Midterm, Working with Video, Spotting, Sync

Video and timecode.

Spotting to sync.

Syncing & Editing dialogue, Automation & Keyframes

Assign: Video Sound Design project

DUE: Midterm

Week 9 (Oct 24) – Advanced Audition: Bussing, Subgroups, Group Critique

Organization and flow of a session; Compression & Bussing

Foley & ADR on the cheap

Group Critique

Assign: Final Project

DUE: Analysis Paper

Week 10 (Oct 31) – Group Critique

Flex lecture day

DUE: Interview II

Week 11 (Nov 7) – Additional Odds and Ends, How-to

Types of audio engineering jobs

Explore different microphone types, portable mixers, lav techniques, etc

Formats and media, Mastering

How-to Q&A in Adobe Audition, recording, etc.

Week 12 (Nov 14) – Video Sound Design 1st Minute

DUE: Video Sound Design Project Rough Cut

Week 13 (Nov 21) – Video Sound Design Critique

DUE: Video Sound Design Project

Week 14 (Nov 28) – Final Project 1st Minute

DUE: Final project Rough Cut

Week 15 (Dec 5) – Final Project Critique

DUE: Final Project

Policies and Expectations

Policy on Late Work: Late work will not be accepted. It will receive a zero. You are allowed to redo most projects if they are turned in on time. There will be no makeup exams.

Policy on Absences: Attendance is crucial. We will be covering a large amount of information and work each session. Since this is a production class that meets only once a week, if you are to miss more than two classes without a reasonable excuse (illness, family emergency, etc.) you will receive one letter grade reduction on your final grade. Any further absences will equal a full grade reduction per missed class. It is the responsibility of the student to acquire notes or materials for any missed class.

Rough Cuts: The days we go over rough cuts are for you. They are meant to help you complete the best possible project with the peer feedback you receive. They are mandatory for the Sound Design and Final Project.

Redoing Projects: You are almost always allowed to redo any project for a better grade, barring the final project or the mid-term. Please check with me before you do this.

School of Communication Statement on Academic Integrity

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work, and submitting false documents. These examples of academic dishonesty apply to both individual and group assignments.
Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;
- Providing information to another student during an examination;
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;
- Taking an examination by proxy. Taking or attempting to take an exam for someone else is a violation by both the student enrolled in the course and the proxy.
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or

- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.;
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.
- Submitting the same work for credit in two or more classes, even if the classes are taken in different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at
https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml .

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication. Instructors must provide the appropriate information and documentation when they suspect an instance of academic misconduct has occurred. The instructor must also notify the student of their findings and sanction.

The Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board to review these instances. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SOC. If the student is not a member of the SOC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml .

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to similar organizations.

Student Accommodations

Loyola University Chicago provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with the Student Accessibility Center (SAC). Professors will receive an accommodation notification from SAC, preferably within the first two weeks of class. Students are encouraged to meet with their professor individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential. Please note that in this class, software may be used to audio record class lectures in order to provide equitable access to students with disabilities. Students approved for this accommodation use recordings for their personal study only and recordings may not be shared with other people or used in any way against the faculty member, other lecturers, or students whose classroom comments are recorded as part of the class activity. Recordings are deleted at the end of the semester. For more information about registering with SAC or questions about accommodations, please contact SAC at 773-508-3700 or SAC@luc.edu.

Title IX Notice of Reporting Obligations for Responsible Campus Partners

As an instructor, I am considered a Responsible Campus Partner ("RCP") under Loyola's **Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation** (located at **www.luc.edu/equity**). While my goal is for you to be able to share information related to your life experiences through discussion and written work, I want to be transparent that as a RCP I am required to report certain disclosures of sexual misconduct (such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate partner and/or domestic violence, and/or stalking) to the University's **Title IX** Coordinator.

As an instructor, I also have a mandatory obligation under Illinois law to report disclosures of or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect (**https://www.luc.edu/hr/legal-notices/mandatedreportingofchildabuseandneglect/**).

The purpose of these reporting requirements is for the University to inform students who have experienced sexual/gender-based violence of available resources and support. Such a report **will not generate a report to law enforcement** (no student will ever be forced to file a report with the police). Furthermore, the University's resources and supports are available to all students even if a student chooses that they do not want any other action taken. Please note that in certain situations, based on the nature of the disclosure, the University may need to take additional action to ensure the safety of the University community. If you have any questions about this policy, you may contact the **Office for Equity & Compliance** at **equity@luc.edu** or 773-508-7766.

If you wish to speak with a confidential resource regarding gender-based violence, I encourage you to call **The Line** at 773-494-3810. The Line is staffed by confidential advocates from 8:30am-5pm M-F and 24 hours on the weekend when school is in session. Advocates can provide support, talk through your options (medical, legal, LUC reporting, safety planning, etc.), and connect you with additional resources as needed. More information can be found at **luc.edu/coalition** or **luc.edu/wellness**.

Use of Appropriate Names and Pronouns

Addressing one another at all times by using appropriate names and gender pronouns honors and affirms individuals of all gender identities and gender expressions. Misgendering and heteronormative language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth.

If you wish, please share your gender pronouns with me and the class when you introduce yourself; and/or on your name placard; and/or on your Zoom profile. If you do not wish to be called by the name that appears on the class roster or attendance sheet, please let me know. My goal is to create an affirming environment for all students with regard to their names and gender pronouns.

Privacy Statement

Assuring privacy among faculty and students engaged in online and face-to-face instructional activities helps promote open and robust conversations and mitigates concerns that comments made within the context of the class will be shared beyond the classroom. As such, recordings of instructional activities occurring in online or face-to-face classes may be used solely for internal class purposes by the faculty member and students registered for the course, and only during the period in which the course is offered. Instructors who wish to make subsequent use of recordings that include student activity may do so only with informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording.

Student Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

As Loyola's mission statement holds, "We are Chicago's Jesuit, Catholic University-a diverse community seeking God in all things." Together, as a community rich in diversity, we are called to "expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith." Recognizing and appreciating the diverse collection of identities, experiences, perspectives, and abilities of the students, faculty, staff, and community partners with whom we collaborate, the School of Communication commits itself to enriching academic experiences through the advancement of diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-racist, and anti-oppressive practices.

Managing Life Crises and Finding Support

Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral (LUC.edu/csaa) for yourself or a peer in need of support. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: LUC.edu/dos or LUC.edu/csaa; phone number 773-508-8840, email deanofstudents@luc.edu

Loyola COVID-19 Policies

Loyola University Chicago's Health, Safety, and Well-Being Update website helps keep our community informed on health and safety protocols that allow us to remain on campus as we continue to navigate the challenges of COVID-19 in our community. This site contains information on required practices for anyone on our campuses as well as resources for students, faculty, and staff.

https://www.luc.edu/healthsafetyandwellbeing/