

Creative Work in Electronic (Music 326) Fall 2000
Instructor: Bob Gluck
Meeting Time: Monday, 4:00-7:00 p.m.

OVERVIEW:

The overarching goal of this course is to expand your creative vision and expressive possibilities as a composer of electronic music. If one dates electronic music to the Futurists (early 1900s), this field is approximately ninety years old. The major recording-based approach to electronic music, musique concrete (music composited on recording tape) is now over 50 years old. There are thus numerous traditions of electronic music, offering much to learn from, as well as many new avenues to explore.

It is assumed that in registering for this studio-based course, you already have a basic level of experience and knowledge in this field, theoretically, technically and aesthetically. Most people are strong in some areas and weaker in others. Thus, some reading, listening and seminar-style discussion will take place, so as to build upon your strengths and fill in the gaps.

CHOICES IN STUDIO ASSIGNMENTS:

There are four tracks from which you may choose in designing your program for this semester:

*working on assignment-based compositions, listed below;

*work on one or two large on-going projects of your own choosing;

*developing a live (and ideally interactive) performance piece. The most important interactive software application that we have for live performance is called "Max", with a real-time digital audio component called "MSP". Max and process MIDI information from any source that sends MIDI values; MSP allows processing of audio from live performed acoustical instruments, voices and sounds, and the playing and manipulating of samples in real time.

*You are welcome to devote your semester exclusively to mastering Max, MSP, or both of these applications for use in live or studio performance.

You may mix and match from the above tracks, but your plans must be finalized with the agreement of the instructor at the beginning of the semester. Whatever direction you choose, everyone will bring in at least one minute of music (or demonstrate one reasonably sophisticated Max patch) every week. Ongoing progress on your projects is assumed and a portion of regular classtime will be devoted to playing and discussing student projects. The goal is to have an enjoyable learning experience and to learn from one another's experiences.

The assignment-based track includes three compositions (additional possibilities may be explored with permission of the instructor):

1. A digital-audio composition based entirely upon one 2-5 second sample, manipulated, processed, cut and pasted in any way that you can imagine.
2. A soundscape: based upon live field recording of a chosen environment
3. A sound commentary upon an existing piece of music, preferably not one that is in song form.

Each of these completed pieces should be 3-5 minutes in duration. If you are working on a single semester-long project, it should be 10-15 minutes long.

One, but not more than one of these projects should have a beat.

Compositions should be recorded on DAT or cassette tape; data (at least two copies: back up your data!!) should be saved on zip cartridges.

REGARDING THE USE OF SAMPLES:

The ethics and legalities of sampling are actively debated topics at present. It is assumed in this class that this debate is a vital and important one. The instructor offers no particular prejudice in that debate. However, one goal of this course is to build skills in sculpting and shaping sound. Thus, students are expected, if they sample material from existing recordings, that those samples will generally be less than five seconds long, and quite possibly processed beyond recognition, and thus will not offer finished material for incorporation into pieces. Further, while remixes of existing recordings have become a venerable musical form, for the same reason, remixes will not be accepted as projects to fulfill class requirements for this course. Certainly the skills you will develop here can strengthen your abilities in working in that form outside of work for this class.

MUSICAL FORMS:

There are many ways to structure music that you compose. Only one of those many possibilities is the standard song form. The instructor wishes the you minimize your work within standard song forms and explore the many, many other possibilities. The result will be the likely substantial expansion of your musical vision.

SOFTWARE APPLICATIONS IN THE STUDIOS:

Peak 2.10 (digital audio sampler, processor and editor)
Cubase VST (Timeline-based MIDI and digital audio processor/sequencer)
Soundhack (digital audio sound processor)
Max/MSP (object oriented programming environment)

STUDIO TIME:

As a project-based course, students are expected to be engaged in on-going compositional work in the studio. This will require at least two hours of studio time every week. Clearly, there will be weeks when progress on a piece will require more than that. Like any musical instrument or artistic medium, the Electronic Music studio requires substantial, regular practice time and much effort when projects are undergoing development. There will be a formal sign-up and check-in system for use of the studio.

Security is an important concern for a lab containing sensitive and valuable instruments and equipment. Students may not bring people who are not registered for this class into the Lab, unless they are collaborators on a particular project (ie. playing an acoustic instrument for a live-electronic piece). Under no circumstances is a member of this class to leave the studio when someone who is not a registered class participant remains in the there.

Computer data security is another important concern. It is not uncommon for data disks and hard drives to become infected with highly destructive computer viruses when utilized in other computers or downloaded from the internet. Students are not to insert a data disk in a lab computer that has been used in another computer without running it through an anti-virus application. Studio computers are also not to be used for any purpose other than music (ie. no term paper writing, etc.). If difficulties arise with the computer system itself (ie. system crashes, data corruption, etc.), students will contact the instructor rather than attempting to fix problems on their own.

GRADING:

Class participation	30%
Preparation and engagement in discussion	
Attendance, promptness	
Attitude towards work, self, instructor and others	
Care for studio and courtesy in working with peers	
Ongoing compositional projects and weekly presentation of work in class	60%
Journal	10%

READING ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Those who have not taken Music 325 must read Joel Chadabe: *Electric Sound: The Past and Promise of Electronic Music*, Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1997 during the first three weeks of class.

2. Readings to be considered (some may be handed out in class):

On sensitive/self-reflective listening and composing:

Bruce Adolphe, *What to Listen for in the World*, 1996: Proscenium Publishers, Inc, New York (pp. 1-12, 15, 18-20, 24, 25, 29-32, 37, 38, 50, 51, 54, 56, 58)

J. Krishnamurti, *Total Freedom*, New York: Harper Collins, 1998

On the aesthetics and history of the roots of Electronic Music:

John Cage, "Credo," from *Silence*, London: Calder and Boyars, 1939, 1973 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1961), pp. xii (1952), 3-17 (1937).

Excerpts from Elliott Schwartz and Daniel Godfrey, *Music Since 1945: Issues, Materials, and Literature*, New York: Schirmer Books/Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1993.

Karlheinz Stockhausen, "Four Criteria of Electronic Music," in *Stockhausen on Music* (1971/1989) (on "Kontakte")

Partners or antagonists? Technology and Music

Roger Johnson, "Technology, Commodity, Power," *Computer Music Journal*, 18:3, Fall 1994, pp. 25-32

Laurie Spiegel, "That was Then--This is Now," *Computer Music Journal*, 20:1, Spring 1996, pp. 42-45

Johannes Goebel, "Freedom and Precision of Control," *Computer Music Journal*, 20:1, Spring 1996, pp. 46-49

John Pierce, "Computer Music, Coming and Going," *Computer Music Journal*, 20:1, Spring 1996, 49-51

The artist and society

Carol Becker, "Social Responsibility and the Place of the Artist in Society", "The Education of Young Artists and the Issue of Audience", *Zones of contention: essays on art, institutions, gender and anxiety*, pp. 27-36, 57-70

On Soundscapes and Composition:

R. Murray Schaffer, *The Soundscape*, Rochester, VT:Destiny Books, 1977, 1994, pp. 3-21, 29-33, 53-59, 78-81, 133-145, 182-183, 226-235.

Barry Truax, "Sound in Context: Soundscape Research and Composition at Simon Fraser University," *Proceedings of the International Computer Music Conference*, 1995, 1-4

Claude Schryer, "Searching for the Sharawadji Effect", *Musicworks* 70, pp. 22-29