University of Kentucky
School of Journalism and Telecommunications

MAS 432-401: AUDIO PRODUCTION
Spring 2014   115 Grehan Building
Tuesdays 6:00 PM – 8:45 PM

Professor: John F. Clark
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Office hours: MW 1:00 PM – 2:30 PM
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an upper-division major elective for Media Arts and Studies majors. It qualifies as an "applications" course when it comes time to count up the hours for graduation. Applications courses focus on professional knowledge and skills, as well as hands-on experience. We will spend about half of our meeting time on transmitting some of that knowledge from me and other sources to you, and the other half of our time developing those professional skills. You will spend some additional time each week honing those skills through a series of exercises, and will then employ them in a major final project.

Here's the hoary but time-honored description of the course in the official university bulletin: "Elements of audio production, including basic machines, microphones, patch panels, the production mixing *(sic).* Different audio products are discussed. Lecture, two hours; laboratory, two hours per week. Prereq: TEL 101, TEL 201, or major status in School of Journalism and Telecommunications."

With all that said, let me add that an updated version of the above description would certainly include some mention of digital audio formats for multimedia and the Web, and mention them we will, and more. You should also understand that this is a course in digital audio production. If you hope to encounter multitrack tape machines, splice blocks and razor blades, and other artifacts of bygone ages, you can go time-tripping on your own. Everything we record will go direct to hard drive and you'll be editing and applying effects with a mouse. Additionally, I hope to make this more than just a course in technical skills by also focusing on listening and on understanding sound. Most musicians, actors, and on-air personalities are excellent listeners, but it's not necessarily a skill with which they were born. They train themselves to listen critically, which is also the task of the sound designer – to develop critical and analytical listening skills that lead to more creative and effective productions. Along the way, we will also try to enjoy ourselves as much as possible.

REQUIRED READING

You are not required to buy a medium-sized, way-too-expensive textbook. But if you were, like my less fortunate students in the past, it would be:

Alten, S.R. (2010). *Audio in Media* (9th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

But I'll still be drawing heavily on that book in class because it has a lot of nice illustrations in it. I'll also be drawing from some material I wrote for a book on multimedia and from a couple of others:

Clark, J.F. (1998). Light and Sound, Seeing and Listening. In R.S. Tannenbaum, *Theoretical Foundations of Multimedia.* (pp. 41-143). New York: Computer Science Press. (wfh)

Moscal, T. (1994). *Soundcheck: The Basics of Sound and Sound Systems.* Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation.

I'll also make use of whatever I run across whenever it suits me. Some of this material (I'll let you know) will be posted on the class website.

EVALUATION EXPECTATIONS

Your grade for this course will be based on your weighted and averaged scores for a semester project, a midterm examination, a final examination, five exercises, and your attendance in class.

Semester Project	25%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	15%
Exercises	35%
Attendance	10%

Semester Project: The semester project will consist of a multitrack production of sufficient complexity to adequately demonstrate that you have mastered the core skills necessary to function effectively in a digital audio production environment. You will work on this project with another class member as a two-person production team. A more complete description of the project and its requirements will be distributed later in the semester.

Examinations: Both of the exams will consist of a number of multiple-choice, true or false, and/or matching questions, along with a few short answer questions. The exams will cover material from the textbook and additional information provided in class. They will not be performance-based. The final will not be comprehensive, and will cover only the second half of the semester. In the interests of fairness and higher academic success, I will provide you with whatever guidance seems appropriate in the week before the exams.

Exercises: There will be five exercises, each consisting of a discrete step in the evolution of your skills. These will all be technical in nature, and will include a variety of production environments, incorporating both analog and digital recording technology for various audio formats, as well as a live studio production atmosphere. Like the semester project, the exercises will be undertaken by two-person production teams. The only exception is Exercise One, which will be undertaken by individuals. Exercise Five is a studio production exercise and does not have a specific due date – more on that later.

Attendance: None you have to take this class, so I'm assuming that you have some vital interest in attending. Therefore, attendance for each class is strictly voluntary. It's not my responsibility to make sure you come to class. After all, each of you is old enough to drive, vote, serve in the military, think for yourself, and bear the consequences of your actions. With that said, the consequences of your actions if you miss class will be the loss of ten percent of your attendance grade for every absence, unless you notify me of your absence beforehand or have a verifiable excuse after the fact. You should at the very least be able to simply show up and make coherent comments, but it will be nice if you read the assigned readings and can actively and enthusiastically discuss them. In the interests of creating favorable impressions, wise students will let me know when and why they have to miss class before they miss it.

Grading Policy:

A   Excellent work, 90 – 100
B   Good work, 80 – 89
C   Barely satisfactory work, 70 – 79
D   Inferior work, 60 – 69
E   Unacceptable work, below 60

RESPECT FOR DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS

        As a member of the most commonly discriminated-against group throughout human history (I'm left-handed), I consider the diversity that students bring to this class a highly valuable resource and one of the benefits of your college experience. During the semester, we will discuss topics related to communication technology and social change that touch upon aspects of social and cultural diversity, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, politics, and religion. I encourage you to express your thoughts on those aspects relevant to your background, listen respectfully to your fellow students, and be open to learning from people who hold views different than yours.

THE USUAL WARNINGS

        Make-up exams and/or late exercises and projects will not be allowed without a valid and verifiable reason. The definition of valid and verifiable is left totally to my discretion. It is presumed that all work submitted for a grade is the original work of the student whose name appears on it, and that the work was prepared expressly for this course. Any student caught cheating or copying from another's exam or in any way plagiarizing from any source, whether published or not, will be sanctioned according to University rules.   At the very least, he or she will receive a failing grade for the course.

CLASS SCHEDULE

January 21   Introduction to the course, to each other, and to the technology

January 28   Lecture: Essential Terms and Concepts/Digital Performer Functions
                    WRFL Calendar Production Demonstration

February 4	Lecture: Digital Recording/Peak Functions **Exercise One Due** **WRFL Calendar Production**
February 11	Lecture: Music Production/Digital Performer Functions **WRFL Calendar Production**
February 18	Lecture: Music Production/Digital Performer Functions **Exercise Two Due** **WRFL Calendar Production**
February 25	Lecture: Mixers and Consoles/Digital Performer Functions/Live Recording Demo **WRFL Calendar Production**
March 4	Lecture: Signal Processing/Digital Effects Demonstration **Exercise Three Due** **WRFL Calendar Production**
March 11	**Midterm Exam** **WRFL Calendar Production**
March 13 (Thursday)	**WRFL Calendar Production**
March 17-22 (Spring Break)	**Academic Holidays** – show up only if you are completely clueless
March 25	Lecture: Back to the Basics /Project Consultations **WRFL Calendar Production**
April 1	Lecture: Back to the Basics /Project Consultations **WRFL Calendar Production**
April 8	Lecture: Editing/ Project Consultations **Exercise Four Due** **WRFL Calendar Production**
April 15	Lecture: Mixing and Rerecording/Project Consultations **WRFL Calendar Production**
April 22	Lecture: Microphones, Amps, and Loudspeakers/Project Consultations **WRFL Calendar Production**
April 29	Lecture: Sound Design/Video Viewing /Project Consultations
May 6	**Final Exam – The Usual Spatial and Temporal Coordinates** **Semester Project Due – Listening Session**