

## MHL 500, Star Wars: The Music, The Story

Fall Semester 2016

Class meeting time: Wednesday 6:45PM - 9:30PM, Maxwell Hall Auditorium

Dr. Nicolas Scherzinger, Professor

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Office Hours: please contact me via e-mail to make an appointment

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E-mail: [cetruelo@syr.edu](mailto:cetruelo@syr.edu)**OVERVIEW**

This class will explore the relationship that music has in the telling of a story, specifically the music of John Williams in the Star Wars films. Along the way we will learn what to listen for in music and how to develop better listening skills. We will examine opera, musical theater, and classical music in general to see how these art forms have influenced film, and particularly film composers such as John Williams.

You do not need to be able to read music to take this class, but we will be focusing our attention on music in films and other media. In order to be able to do well in this class, you must be able to recognize certain musical elements by ear (you cannot be tone deaf). In particular, you must be able to recognize the distinctness of musical melodies (how to distinguish one melody from another).

By the end of this course, you will:

1. Learn how and what to listen for in music. In short, to be able to listen attentively and critically to music.
2. Understand the relationship between music and storytelling (characters, emotions, objects, concepts, places and things). This will include film as well as opera and other art forms.
3. Understand the historical connection film music has to classical music (Western Art Music) as well as other storytelling art forms.
4. Explore the concept of serialized or multipart storytelling (trilogies, sagas, etc.) and the role music has in these works.
5. Learn to create a cue sheet for a scene in a movie or opera (or other art form)
6. Learn about the creative process for composers (and other artists)

**REQUIRED MATERIALS**

- There are no required texts for the class. All readings will be sent to you via email PDF attachments and/or posted on Blackboard
- You need to bring a pen/pencil to every class (for quizzes, in class exercises, and for taking notes).
- You will need a notebook or digital device (computer, tablet) with which to take class notes.

**GRADING**

50% weekly assignments, quizzes, in class work, participation and attendance

25% Midterm Exam

25% Final Exam

## EXAMS, QUIZZES AND PAPERS

There will be a quiz almost every class. If you have perfect attendance, your lowest two quiz grades will be changed to 100%. If you miss one class, only one quiz grade will be changed to 100%. If you miss two or more classes, your quiz grades will stay as is. If you are late or absent for a quiz, you will receive a zero grade for that quiz (no make up quizzes).

There will be a MIDTERM and FINAL exam for the class.

There are no large papers for this class. Some quizzes and weekly assignments will have a written component.

## ATTENDANCE

**Attendance** is mandatory at all classes. There are no make-up homework assignments or quizzes. If you miss a class, you will miss the quiz and class work for that class, and this will affect your final grade. If you do need to miss a class, you are responsible for getting the materials in order to be prepared for the next class.

## CLASS POLICIES

1. You are expected to attend all classes. If you need to miss a class, please contact the professor before the date in question. If you miss too many classes, it will affect your final grade (see section on quizzes). If you miss more than 2 classes for any reason, you will be in danger of failing the class.
2. Any student who misses a class is responsible for getting class notes and homework from his/her classmates (not the professor or the teaching assistant).
3. Late assignments will not be accepted unless you have made prior arrangements with the professor. There are no make-up quizzes or assignments.
4. No cell phones are allowed to be used in the classroom. If you must bring your cell phone to class, please turn it off. Anyone who uses a phone in class will be asked to leave and will receive a zero grade on that day's in class work (assignments, quizzes, etc.)

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Syracuse University's academic integrity policy reflects the high value that we, as a university community, place on honesty in academic work. The policy defines our expectations for academic honesty and holds students accountable for the integrity of all work they submit. Students should understand that it is their responsibility to learn about course-specific expectations, as well as about university-wide academic integrity expectations. The university policy governs appropriate citation and use of sources, the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments, and the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verification of participation in class activities. The policy also prohibits students from submitting the same written work in more than one class without receiving written authorization in advance from both instructors. The presumptive penalty for a first instance of academic dishonesty by an undergraduate student is course failure, accompanied by a transcript notation indicating that the failure resulted from a violation of academic integrity policy. The presumptive penalty for a first instance of academic dishonesty by a graduate student is suspension or expulsion. SU students are required to read an online summary of the university's academic integrity expectations and provide an electronic signature agreeing to abide by them twice a year during pre-term check-in on MySlice. For more information and the complete policy, see <http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/>.

## ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), [disabilityservices.syr.edu](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu), located at 804 University Avenue, room 309, or call [315.443.4498](tel:315.443.4498) for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue “Accommodation Authorization Letters” to students as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

Syracuse University values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. My goal is to create a learning environments that are useable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment or achievement, I invite any student to meet with me to discuss additional strategies beyond accommodations that may be helpful to your success.

## RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

SU’s religious observances policy, found at [supolicies.syr.edu/emp\\_ben/religious\\_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm), recognizes the diversity of faiths represented in the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students should have an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors no later than the end of the second week of classes. Student deadlines are posted in MySlice under Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances/Add a Notification. I ask you to include this information, as well as your expectations for how and when academic requirements will be made up, in your syllabus. I also ask you to remind students during the first week of classes about the notification deadline. Instructors may access a list of their students who have submitted a notification in the MySlice Faculty Center. Note that the religious observances icon will not appear unless a student in that class has submitted a notification.

## STUDENT ACADEMIC WORK POLICY

SU policy on student academic work may be found at:  
[http://coursecatalog.syr.edu/content.php?catoid=3&navoid=270#Student\\_Academic\\_Work](http://coursecatalog.syr.edu/content.php?catoid=3&navoid=270#Student_Academic_Work)

Student work prepared for University courses in any media may be used for educational purposes, if the course syllabus makes clear that such use may occur. You grant permission to have your work used in this manner by registering for, and by continuing to be enrolled in, courses where such use of student work is announced in the course syllabus.

I intend to use academic work that you complete this semester for educational purposes in this course during this semester. Your registration and continued enrollment constitute your permission.

## PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Below are some of the topics we will examine over the course of the semester.

Topics:

- **How to listen to music. What to listen for in music.**
- **Emotion and meaning in music**
- **Music and film/opera/theater**

- Cue sheets. What are they and what do they tell you?
- John Williams' music and its role in all 7 of the Star Wars films.
- The close link John Williams' music has to the Classical Music of the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries.
- Film music and classical music
- Music and Rhetoric
- The creative process: composing for film versus the concert hall.

TEXTS (RECOMMENDED – *NOT* REQUIRED)

*There are NO required texts for this class. Any reading assignments will be handed out in either electronic copies or photocopies. Below is a partial bibliography for the class. We will add to this list as the semester progresses.*

Bibliography

Copland, Aaron, *What to Listen for in Music*

Meyer, Leonard B., *Emotion and Meaning in Music*

Sunstein, Cass R., *The World According to Star Wars*