# Music 290: Winter 2024 Special Topics: Introduction to Video Game Music Course Outline

# Instructor and TA Information

Instructor: Dr. Marina Gallagher

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Office Hours: by appointment

# **Course Description**

# Calendar Description for MUSIC 290:

A special study of a selected topic in music. Consult department for details. [Note: This is a repeatable course, subject to different content; it may be completed a total of three times.]

Prerequisite: Level at least 2A

## Course Description:

A survey of the history and conventions of video game music and how game music affects players. Topics include narrative, immersion and interactivity; characterization of protagonists and antagonists; and how music shapes players' perceptions of different types of landscapes.

# **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course students should be able to:

- Describe the history of video game music and how game music has developed over time
- Situate video game music within broader historical trends in popular and film music as well as Western art music (instrumental and opera)
- Identify similarities and differences between films and video games and discuss the role that music plays in shaping the player's gaming experience
- Analyse video game music in terms of form, harmony, instrumentation, melody, etc. and discuss how these characteristics shape the player's experience and contribute to a game's narrative
- Compare and contrast the conventions and characteristics of different types of video game music, including but not limited to characters' themes, battle themes, and location/landscape themes, and discuss the effect that they have on players
- Discuss the social contexts and reception of game music in modern society through phenomena such as video game music concerts as well as performances and arrangements of game music by fans

## Tentative Course Schedule

Week of	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignments/ Assessments
8 January	Introduction & History of Video Game Music Part 1: Beginnings to 8- Bit	Alyssa Aska, Introduction to the Study of Video Game Music, pp. 13-20	
15 January	History of Video Game Music Part 2: 16-Bit to the Introduction of 64-Bit (including PlayStation and Nintendo 64)	Alyssa Aska, Introduction to the Study of Video Game Music, pp. 20-36	
22 January	History of Video Game Music Part 3: GameCube PS2, and Xbox; the Early HD Generation (PS3, Xbox 360, Wii)	Alyssa Aska, Introduction to the Study of Video Game Music, pp. 36-43, 45-47, and 48- 54	

Week of	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignments/ Assessments
29 January	History of Video Game Music Part 4: Recent History to the Present	Alyssa Aska, Introduction to the Study of Video Game Music, pp. 54-68	
5 February	Music, Immersion, and Interactivity in Video Games	Alyssa Aska, Introduction to the Study of Video Game Music, pp. 70-85	Discussion Post #1: due on Sunday, 11 February at 11:59 p.m. EST
12 February	Music, Immersion, and Interactivity in Video Games (continued) & Midterm Exam		Midterm Exam Listening Portion: Wednesday, 14 February (in class) Written Portion: Friday, 16 February (in class)
19 February	Reading Week: No Class		
26 February	Methods of Analysing & Discussing Video Game Music		Research Paper Proposal due on Sunday, 3 March by 11:59 p.m. EST
4 March	Characterization and Narrative in Video Game Music	Tim Summers, <i>Understanding Game Music</i> , Chapter 6, especially pp. 150-177	Discussion Post #2: due on Sunday, 10 March at 11:59 p.m. EST
11 March	How Music Creates a Sense of Place in Games: Location Music Part One	Marina Gallagher, "Pastoral and Anti- Pastoral Music and Landscapes in <i>Final</i> Fantasy X, XII, XIII, and XV," pp. 36-43, 11-13, and 113-119  William Cheng, Sound Play, pp. 93-99 and 103- 108	
18 March	How Music Creates a Sense of Place in Games: Location Music Part Two	100	

Week of	Topic(s)	Readings	Assignments/
		~ .	Assessments
25 March	Battle Music in Games	Stephen Armstrong,	
		"Sounding the Grind:	
		Musicospatial Stasis in	
		JRPG Battle Themes,"	
		Journal of Sound and	
		Music in Games 2, no. 2	
		(2021): 1-21.	
1 April	Reception of Game Music Outside of	William Gibbons,	Research Papers due
_	Video Games	Unlimited Replays: Video	on Sunday, 7 April
		Games and Classical	by 11:59 p.m. EST
		<i>Music</i> , pp. 157-171	<i>y</i> 1
		1710510, pp. 10 / 171	
8 April	Concluding thoughts, wrap-up, the		
	future of video game music		
	5		

# Texts/Materials

**Required Text:** Alyssa Aska, *Introduction to the Study of Video Game Music* (available on Amazon.ca).

Links to required readings outside of Alyssa Aska's *Introduction to the Study of Video Game Music* will be posted on LEARN. A list of required listening pieces will be posted on LEARN every Saturday for the upcoming week.

There are also four books on course reserve at Conrad Grebel University College's Milton Good Library in case you would like to consult them for your research paper. Each book is available on a three-hour loan from the library:

- 1. William Cheng, *Sound Play: Video Games and the Musical Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 2014)
- 2. Karen Collins, Game Sound: An Introduction to the History, Theory, and Practice of Video Game Music and Sound Design (MIT Press, 2008)
- 3. Melanie Fritsch and Tim Summers, editors, *The Cambridge Companion to Video Game Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2021)
- 4. Michiel Kamp, Tim Summers, and Mark Sweeney, editors, *Ludomusicology: Approaches to Video Game Music* (Equinox, 2016)

# Student Assessment

Component	Value
Midterm Exam	30%
Final Exam	40%
Research Paper Proposal	5%
Research Paper	20%
Participation	5%

### Midterm Exam

The Midterm Exam will be held in-class the week of 12 February and will include a listening component as well as short-answer questions and a brief essay. The listening portion will be completed on Wednesday, 14 February and the short answer/essay portion will be completed on Friday, 16 February. The midterm will cover topics up to and including 12 February. An outline and additional information about the exam structure will be provided closer to the midterm date.

### Final Exam

The Final Exam will be 2.5 hours long and will be held during the final exam period. It is non-cumulative and will only cover topics that were discussed after the midterm exam. It will include a listening component, short answer questions, and 1 or 2 longer essays. An outline and additional information will be provided later in the course.

### Research Paper

The research paper gives you an opportunity to explore an aspect of video game music that interests you. It will be between 5-7 double-spaced pages in length and may discuss one or more pieces of video game music, a complete video game soundtrack, or another topic related to video game music. All topics must be approved in advance by the instructor via the research paper proposal (see below). Additional information and guidelines for the research paper will be provided in class. Papers are due on Sunday, 7 April at 11:59 p.m. EST to the LEARN Dropbox. Late submissions will not be accepted.

### Research Paper Proposal

The research paper proposal is a short, one-page description of the topic you would like to explore in your paper and will also include a bibliography of 5 relevant sources. Additional information about content and formatting will be provided in class. The research paper proposal is due on Sunday, 3 March at 11:59 p.m. EST to the LEARN Dropbox. Late submissions will not be accepted.

# Participation

Your participation mark will be determined through your engagement in two online discussions on LEARN throughout the term. The first discussion will take place the week of 5 February and the second discussion will take place the week of 4 March. Each discussion will be worth 2.5% of your overall grade. Additional information about the topic and requirements for each discussion will be provided in class and a rubric outlining expectations for the discussion posts will be posted on LEARN. Due dates for each discussion post are listed in the course schedule (please see above). Posts made after the deadline for each discussion will not count towards your participation grade.

# **Assignment Screening**

No assignment screening will be used in this course.

# Administrative Policy

### **GENERATIVE AI**

This course includes the independent development and practice of specific skills, such as undertaking scholarly research on video game music, essay writing, and musical analysis. Therefore, the use of Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) trained using large language models (LLM) or other methods to produce text, images, music, or code, like Chat GPT, DALL-E, or GitHub CoPilot, is not permitted in this class. Unauthorized use in this course, such as running course materials through GenAI or using GenAI to complete a course assessment is considered a violation of Policy 71 (plagiarism or unauthorized aids or assistance). Work produced with the assistance of AI tools does not represent the author's original work and is therefore in violation of the fundamental values of academic integrity including honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and courage (ICAI, n.d.).

You should be prepared to show your work. To demonstrate your learning, you should keep your rough notes, including research notes, brainstorming, and drafting notes. You may be asked to

submit these notes along with earlier drafts of their work, either through saved drafts or saved versions of a document. If the use of GenAI is suspected where not permitted, you may be asked to meet with your instructor or TA to provide explanations to support the submitted material as being your original work. Through this process, if you have not sufficiently supported your work, academic misconduct allegations may be brought to the Associate Dean.

In addition, you should be aware that the legal/copyright status of generative AI inputs and outputs is unclear. More information is available from the Copyright Advisory Committee: <a href="https://uwaterloo.ca/copyright-at-waterloo/teaching/generative-artificial-intelligence">https://uwaterloo.ca/copyright-at-waterloo/teaching/generative-artificial-intelligence</a>

Students are encouraged to reach out to campus supports if they need help with their coursework including:

- Student Success Office for help with skills like notetaking and time management
- Writing and Communication Centre for assignments with writing or presentations
- AccessAbility Services for documented accommodations
- <u>Library</u> for research-based assignments

**Territorial Acknowledgement:** The University of Waterloo acknowledges that much of our work takes place on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our main campus is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place across our campuses through research, learning, teaching, and community building, and is centralized within the <u>Office of Indigenous Relations</u>

### **DECLARING ABSENCES**

For all of the following categories of absence students are responsible for getting in touch with their course instructors as soon as possible to discuss possible accommodations for the missed course component(s). The course instructor will determine how the missed work is accommodated. Absences will be accommodated according to the <u>academic regulations section</u> of the undergraduate calendar.

f you are unable to complete a course component due to <u>self-declared COVID-related</u> <u>reasons</u> or <u>a two-day short-term absence</u> then you should submit a self-declaration of absence through <u>Quest</u>.

If your absence is due to an <u>illness not pandemic-related</u>, then a <u>UW Verification of Illness form</u>, completed by a health professional, must be uploaded and submitted through the <u>Verification of Illness or Extenuating Circumstances Process</u>. The VIF is the only acceptable documentation for an absence due to illness. Do not submit the VIF or any other medical documentation to your instructors, teaching assistants, or other course personnel.

If your absence is due to other <u>extenuating circumstances</u> (e.g., bereavement), then you must submit all documentation related to the absence (e.g., obituary) through the <u>Verification of</u> Illness or Extenuating Circumstances Process.

Submission through the VIF or Extenuating Circumstances System, once approved, will notify your instructors of your absence.

If your absence is due to a <u>religious or spiritual observance</u> please inform the instructor within two weeks of the announcement of the due date for which the accommodation is being sought. However, you are responsible for contacting instructors to discuss accommodation arrangements.

### ACCOMMODATING RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES

The University of Waterloo has a duty to <u>accommodate religious</u>, <u>spiritual</u>, and other <u>creed-based beliefs and practices</u> under the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2015) <u>Policy on preventing discrimination based on creed</u>. Students may seek accommodations for missed course components on religious, spiritual, or other creed grounds. In such cases the students should please consult the instructor within two weeks of the announcement of the due date for which the accommodation is being sought.

### MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health support if they are needed.

# On campus supports

All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health and counselling if they are needed. For counselling (individual or group) reach out to <u>Campus Wellness and Counselling Services</u>. Counselling Services strives to provide a secure, supportive environment for students of all orientations and backgrounds. They offer confidential counselling for a variety of areas including anxiety, stress management, depression, grief, substance use, sexuality, relationship issues, and much more.

### Other on-campus supports

- <u>MATES</u>: one-to-one peer support program offered by the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) and Counselling Services
- Download the <u>WatSafe app</u> to your phone to quickly access mental health support information
- <u>Empower Me</u>: to access create an account on the Dialogue mobile app or on the web at <u>www.studentcare.ca/dialogue</u>

• <u>Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Centre</u> - supports all members of the University of Waterloo campus community who have experienced or been impacted by sexual violence.

### Off campus supports

- <u>Good2Talk</u>: Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-4300
- St. Mary's Hospital 519-744-3311
- Here 24/7: Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- 988 Suicide Crisis Helpline: a 24/7 urgent mental health care three-digit helpline
- OK2BME: set of support services for Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual (@SLGBTQIA+) and questioning kids, teens, adults, and their families in Waterloo Region. Phone: 519-884-0000 or e-mail ok2bme@caminowellbeing.ca
- <u>Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region</u> offers individual counselling to people of all genders, 16+ who have been sexually assaulted at any point in their lives. As well as short-term support for family members or friends of sexual assault survivors. Also, information and referrals

More information about resources and supports for students can be found online in on the <u>Faculty of Arts Student Support</u> page.

#### **ANTI-RACISM STATEMENT**

The University of Waterloo does not tolerate racism or any other form of discrimination and expects campus community members to contribute to a culture where all members feel safe and valued. Any member of the campus community who has experienced racism or discrimination at the University is encouraged to review available processes for addressing their concerns under Policy 33 – Ethical Behaviour and to seek guidance from the Equity Office via email at equity@uwaterloo.ca or through their website

### ACADEMIC FREEDOM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

<u>Policy 33, Ethical Behaviour</u> states, as one of its general principles (Section 1), "The University supports academic freedom for all members of the University community. Academic freedom carries with it the duty to use that freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base teaching and research on an honest and ethical quest for knowledge. In the context of this policy, 'academic freedom' refers to academic activities, including teaching and scholarship, as is articulated in the principles set out in the Memorandum of Agreement between the FAUW and the University of Waterloo, 1998 (Article 6). The academic environment which fosters free debate may from time to time include the presentation or discussion of unpopular opinions or

controversial material. Such material shall be dealt with as openly, respectfully and sensitively as possible." This definition is repeated in Policies 70 and 71, and in the Memorandum of Agreement, Section 6.

### INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Students should be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of their instructor, TA, and/or the University of Waterloo.

Intellectual property includes items such as:

- Lecture content, spoken and written (and any audio/video recording thereof);
- Lecture handouts, presentations, and other materials prepared for the course (e.g., PowerPoint slides);
- Questions or solution sets from various types of assessments (e.g., assignments, quizzes, tests, final exams); and
- Work protected by copyright (e.g., any work authored by the instructor or TA or used by the instructor or TA with permission of the copyright owner).

Course materials and the intellectual property contained therein, are used to enhance a student's educational experience. However, sharing this intellectual property without the intellectual property owner's permission is a violation of intellectual property rights. For this reason, it is necessary to ask the instructor, TA and/or the University of Waterloo for permission before uploading and sharing the intellectual property of others online (e.g., to an online repository).

Permission from an instructor, TA or the University is also necessary before sharing the intellectual property of others from completed courses with students taking the same/similar courses in subsequent terms/years. In many cases, instructors might be happy to allow distribution of certain materials. However, doing so without expressed permission is considered a violation of intellectual property rights.

Please alert the instructor if you become aware of intellectual property belonging to others (past or present) circulating, either through the student body or online. The intellectual property rights owner deserves to know (and may have already given their consent).

### PRONOUNS AND CHOSEN OR PREFERRED FIRST NAME

Students can verify their chosen or preferred first name by logging into <u>WatIAM</u>. Your chosen or preferred first name listed in WatIAM will be used across campus (e.g., in LEARN, Quest, WaterlooWorks, WatCard, etc). Your legal first name will always be used on certain official documents, such as diplomas and transcripts.

Students can view and change their pronouns in <u>Quest</u>. Should you choose to include your pronouns in Quest, your pronouns will be accessible by instructors, advisors, and employees with access to Quest. If no pronoun is added, the field in Quest will remain blank.

### **UNIVERSITY POLICY**

**Academic integrity**: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check the Office of Academic Integrity for more information.]

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read <u>Policy 70</u>, <u>Student Petitions and Grievances</u>, <u>Section 4</u>. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department's administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check the Office of Academic Integrity for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline. For typical penalties, check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties.

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under <u>Policy 70</u>, <u>Student Petitions and Grievances</u> (other than a petition) or <u>Policy 71</u>, <u>Student Discipline</u> may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to <u>Policy 72</u>, <u>Student Appeals</u>.

**Note for students with disabilities:** AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

**Turnitin.com:** Text matching software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students' submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about their privacy and/or security. Students will be given due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin in this course.

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor if they, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided, wish to submit alternate assignment.