

Music & Film: The Art of the Score

Course Description

This course explores the powerful relationship between music and motion picture storytelling. Students will watch a variety of films from different genres, eras, and cultures while studying how musical scores shape narrative, develop character, and evoke emotion. Through guided listening, analysis, discussion, and creative projects, students will learn to identify compositional techniques, thematic development, and stylistic choices used by film composers. By the end of the course, students will understand how music enhances visual storytelling and will be able to articulate the artistic and emotional impact of a film score.

Course Objectives

1. **Analyze and Interpret:** Identify and analyze the role of music in film scenes, discussing how tempo, instrumentation, harmony, and motif contribute to storytelling and mood.
 2. **Connect Music and Narrative:** Explain how musical elements support character development, plot progression, and thematic material.
 3. **Recognize Historical and Stylistic Contexts:** Describe how film scoring has evolved over time and recognize major composers and stylistic trends.
 4. **Critically Evaluate:** Engage in thoughtful discussions and written analyses of film scores, demonstrating an understanding of musical vocabulary and cinematic techniques.
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Required Materials

- A dedicated folder for materials
 - A writing utensil
 - Optional: a highlighter
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Grading Policy

- Student performance in this course will be evaluated based on:
 - **Weekly Engagement** - Class Discussion Participation & Active Film Watching
 - **Film Quizzes** - Including information about the composer, film, and a written analysis of the score (bi-weekly)
 - **Video & Reading Comprehension Assessments** - Based on what is watched and read in class
 - **Soundtrack vs. Score Project**
 - Quality of written work — **particularly depth of musical insight, clarity of thought, and use of appropriate vocabulary** — is a major factor in the overall grade. This course is recommended for students in 10th-12th grade who are able to express themselves via their writing.
 - There will be a quiz following each film watched (bi-weekly).
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Class Policies and Expectations

- Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions of the films and music studied.
 - Students should actively watch the films viewed in class.
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Covered Composers

- John Williams
 - Bernard Herrmann
 - Danny Elfman
 - Hans Zimmer
 - James Horner
 - Alan Menken
 - Pasek & Paul
 - Howard Shore
 - Michael Giacchino
 - Thomas Newman
 - Trent Reznor & Atticus Ross
 - Ludwig Göransson
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The following list of films are to be used in the Music and Film class this term. Each film listed will provide specific examples of important content to be covered throughout the class. This list of films will be used to ignite class discussions regarding specific film score elements. Numerous genres of films will be addressed as we will spend time critiquing film scores on a weekly basis. Although some films listed are rated R, please understand many of the films will only be used to show specific examples of the score compositional process.

Please keep in mind each movie has been selected for several different reasons. We are studying not only basic technical aspects of filmmaking, but the composers' use of score to emit emotion in their viewer. The reasons why these films have been chosen range from the impact it has had on the audience, the effects of the film on society as a whole, as well as a multitude of compositional techniques used in the creative process. Films students will be exposed to throughout the term are listed below.

- Jaws (PG)
- Star Wars: Return of the Jedi (PG)
- Jurassic Park (PG-13)
- The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (PG-13)
- Batman (PG-13)
- Edward Scissorhands (PG-13)
- Psycho (R)
- The Shawshank Redemption (R)
- Finding Nemo (G)
- Interstellar (PG-13)
- Gladiator (R)
- Apollo 13 (PG)
- Avatar (PG-13)
- The Hunchback of Notre Dame (G)
- The Greatest Showman (PG)
- Up (PG)
- The Social Network (PG-13)
- Soul (PG)
- Black Panther (PG-13)

Please sign on the line below to let me know you have read the above details, and, in doing so, approve of your student viewing the movies listed. If by chance there are one or two films you prefer them not to watch, please circle them and I will come up with a doable alternative. Note: There will not be any negative repercussions whatsoever if someone decides to opt out of viewing a film, but there will be an additional assignment.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at eldredm@dewittschools.net. Understand each one of the movies we view in full will be discussed in detail. A variety of writing activities, speaking opportunities, and reflective analysis will also be implemented. In moving forward, I am confident your student will find each one of the movies and the activities presented to be relevant and artistically enlightening and rewarding. This class undoubtedly has the potential to provide students with meaningful connections and purposeful tools to analyze and better appreciate films as well as their scores.

Student Name

Parent Signature