

## **Term Information**

Effective Term Summer 2017

## **General Information**

Course Bulletin Listing/Subject Area Music  
Fiscal Unit/Academic Org School Of Music - D0262  
College/Academic Group Arts and Sciences  
Level/Career Undergraduate  
Course Number/Catalog 2254  
Course Title Video Game Music  
Transcript Abbreviation Video Game Music  
Course Description An introduction to the history and function of musical sound in video games.  
Semester Credit Hours/Units Fixed: 3

## **Offering Information**

Length Of Course 12 Week, 6 Week, 4 Week  
Flexibly Scheduled Course Never  
Does any section of this course have a distance education component? Yes  
Is any section of the course offered 100% at a distance  
Grading Basis Letter Grade  
Repeatable No  
Course Components Lecture  
Grade Roster Component Lecture  
Credit Available by Exam No  
Admission Condition Course No  
Off Campus Never  
Campus of Offering Columbus

## **Prerequisites and Exclusions**

Prerequisites/Corequisites  
Exclusions

## **Cross-Listings**

Cross-Listings

## **Subject/CIP Code**

Subject/CIP Code 50.0901  
Subsidy Level General Studies Course  
Intended Rank Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior

## Requirement/Elective Designation

General Education course:  
Visual and Performing Arts

## Course Details

### Course goals or learning objectives/outcomes

- This course will encourage students to think critically about video games and the sounds that bring these virtual worlds to life.
- This course will encourage critical listening

### Content Topic List

- Introduction to game music
- 8 bit sound and musical stereotyping
- Silence and Disruption

## Attachments

- Music 2254 Distance Learning Technical checklist.pdf: Distance Learning Course component check list  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- 2254 Game Music syllabus 4 19 16.pdf  
*(Syllabus. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- 2254 GE statement revised rationale and assessment plan.pdf: GE statement and assessment plan  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*

## Comments

## Workflow Information

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Banks, Eva-Marie	04/25/2016 01:30 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Leasure, Timothy Lee	04/25/2016 01:40 PM	Unit Approval
Approved	Heysel, Garrett Robert	04/27/2016 05:29 PM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Nolen, Dawn Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal Hanlin, Deborah Kay Jenkins, Mary Ellen Bigler Hogle, Danielle Nicole	04/27/2016 05:29 PM	ASCCAO Approval



## Music 2254: Video Game Music

Instructor: Dana Plank-Blasko

Email: [plank-blasko.1@osu.edu](mailto:plank-blasko.1@osu.edu); Skype ID: DanaPlankBlasko

Virtual Office Hours via Skype, the message boards, and email: by appointment

**Format of Instruction:** Distance Learning

### Course Description

Video game sound has come a long way from the bleeps and bloops of the 1980s. Themes to iconic titles such as *Super Mario Bros.* and *Tetris* are as widely-known as any pop hit of the past three decades, entering our cultural imagination and becoming a new kind of folk music for the digital age. Today, many game development budgets rival those of Hollywood films. Composers create hours of lavish, fully orchestrated musical scores, and entire teams of programmers and audio engineers set themselves to the task of implementing game sound to create compelling, immersive experiences for the player. Players can hear their favorite tracks by pulling up fan-made arrangements of game music on YouTube, buying official soundtracks through the iTunes store, or attending Video Games Live concerts in symphonic venues. Clearly, game sound is a vibrant—even vital—part of our modern musical experience.

This course will encourage you to think critically about video games and the sounds that bring these virtual worlds to life. In this course we will seek to:

- **Contemplate** game music history and understand the audio consequences of technological evolution
- **Explore** how game sound functions: how it responds to, underscores, or conflicts with the image, how it responds to player input, and how it loops, fades, transitions, or otherwise accounts for inactivity and dynamic change
- **Think critically** about issues of genre and musical style in games and how sound creates meaning within the game
- **Develop** your musical vocabulary and strengthen your analytical skill, no matter your level of prior musical training

This course will also encourage critical listening. We will listen thoughtfully to game audio both in and out of context. Listening to isolated audio samples is valuable: it allows us to take a macro lens to the sound, focusing on particular elements in the musical texture in order to understand how each track is composed, layered, and looped. But we also need to hear game sounds in context: “zoomed out” from the musical details so that we understand how game audio functions in the dynamic processes of play.

Critical listening is one of the most important aspects of this course. Critical listening asks you to go beyond treating game music as wallpaper; it asks you to listen intently and thoughtfully, to discern structural features, instrumentation, and voicing, to consider the elements in relation to the whole, and to understand how these parts contribute to a particular effect. Through this process, we will ask: how is this music structured? How does it function in relation to the image and to the choices of the player? How does it create meaning within the game?

We will focus intently on analysis, examining individual elements and building blocks in music such as melody, harmony, rhythm, and form through repeated close listening. We will also examine the various social, historical, and artistic contexts that have shaped game audio.

### Prerequisites

**There are no prerequisites**, musical or otherwise. The first few lectures are designed to immerse us in some of the most important technical elements for the sake of illuminating the inner workings of any music that we hear. However, I do not expect complete mastery of this jargon in your analyses, particularly if you have had little or no formal musical training in the past; I *do* expect that all of you will be able to grow and develop critical listening skills throughout the course, no matter where you're starting from. Sometimes those without any formal musical training have the most interesting and valuable insights to contribute to our discussions!

**Do I have to be a "gamer?"** You do not! If you're interested in the interaction of music and media, then this course is for you. Whether you're a casual gamer with *Tetris* and *Two Dots* on your phone, a *Mario Maker* tinkerer, or a diehard fan of the first-person shooter, you should find the material interesting and accessible.

### Textbook

Collins, Karen. *Game Sound: An Introduction to the History, Theory, and Practice of Video Game Music and Sound Design*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2008. It is available at campus book stores and on reserve in the Music and Dance Library (ML3540.7 .C65 2008).

### Additional Required Materials

In addition, we will read articles and chapters in the burgeoning field of ludomusicology (game music studies). All articles and chapters will be provided as Carmen e-reserves, and many are also available in eBook format through University Libraries.

You will not have to purchase or play any games or purchase consoles for this course: all of the media examples will be provided for you on Carmen, whether they are mp3 tracks of the game sound, Spotify playlists of modern tracks, or video captures of actual gameplay for analysis.

## **Online Course Format**

This course will be delivered entirely online. You will need to have regular access to a computer and a reliable internet connection in order to access course materials and complete the assignments in Carmen.

The online format can be quite challenging to students who have never taken a course like this before. The two biggest challenges are communicating well while learning at a distance, and taking responsibility for the due dates on the course calendar without the benefit of in-class reminders from your professor. While I will post regular news updates, it is your responsibility to log in regularly, stay on top of the material, and complete the work on time.

You will be expected to put in an amount of time equivalent to what you would for a face-to-face course—i.e., the time that you would spend in lectures, preparing for class, and completing assignments. That said, the flow of the course will not be constant, since it is not structured around a set weekly meeting time. To some extent, you can set your own schedule as to when you complete the weekly readings and assignments.

Not all participants will be online at the same time, so discussions will take place over the course of a week; you may log on and participate at the times that are most convenient for you, so long as you keep up with deadlines. See the course calendar for all due dates.

I strive to answer all communications from students within 12 hours on weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. However, if you experience a technical difficulty that is preventing you from completing your coursework, contact the OIT Technology Support Center directly, either by phone at 688-HELP, or by email at [8help.osu.edu](mailto:8help.osu.edu). Please also take a screenshot of the issue to document the problem and let me know as soon as possible via email.

## **Course Technology Requirements**

Below are the basic technology requirements for this course, as well as information about technical support and accessibility features for the various applications.

### **Baseline technical skills necessary for online courses**

- Basic computer and web-browsing skills

## Necessary equipment

- Computer: current mac (OSX) or PC (Windows 7+) with high-speed internet connection
- Webcam: built-in or external webcam, fully installed
- Microphone: built-in laptop or tablet mic or external microphone

## Recommended software

- Spotify (to access modern game soundtracks for analysis posts)
- Skype (to contact the professor)

## Privacy

Both Skype and Spotify require non-OSU user accounts. Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the privacy policies for these applications:

- Spotify privacy policy: <https://www.spotify.com/us/legal/privacy-policy/>
- Skype privacy policy: <https://privacy.microsoft.com/en-us/privacystatement>

## Technical Support

If you require technical support for Carmen, Spotify, or Skype, please refer to the links below:

- Carmen: <http://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmen>
- Skype: <https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA1170/how-do-i-contact-skype-customer-service>
- Spotify: <https://www.spotify.com/us/about-us/contact/>

## Accessibility

Here are links to information about accessibility features for the various platforms:

- OSU/Carmen: <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu>
- Skype: <https://support.skype.com/en/skype/windows-desktop/everythingelse/accessibility/>
- Spotify does not currently have an official accessibility page, but this AppleVis blog post details the accessibility features of the platform for users with visual impairments: <http://www.applevis.com/apps/ios/music/spotify-music>

## GE Category: Visual & Performing Arts

Goals: Students evaluate significant works of art in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Students analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art.
- Students engage in informed observation and/or active participation in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts.

This course will satisfy the expected learning outcomes by meeting the critical thinking and critical listening objectives given in the course description above.

### **Academic Misconduct**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

See also the explanation of plagiarism provided by the University Writing Center: <https://cstw.osu.edu/sites/cstw.osu.edu/files/handouts-plagiarism.pdf>.

### **Disability Services**

**Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office of Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.**

### **Academic Support Services**

OSU has a variety of academic support services that can help you to succeed in this course. On the Arts and Sciences page under the Academic Support and Learning tab, you can find links to useful resources such as one-on-one tutoring services and the writing center:

- <http://artsandsciences.osu.edu/academics/current-students/resources>

You may find additional resources at the Student Service Center page (for example, links to Military and Veteran Resources and the Younkin Success Center, which hosts many workshops on effective study skills).

- <http://ssc.osu.edu>

## Requirements and Grading

In video games, you often gain experience by navigating the game world and solving puzzles. This experience leads the player to unlock new skills. I think of this class in similar terms. Therefore, I am going to treat grading for the course like a video game.

As you complete assignments, you earn experience points that contribute to your personal best score. There are side quests that award bonus points. The experience points you earn will translate to a letter grade.

In games, points are earned, not given. Grades work the same way. This course is all about timely, thoughtful completion of the different kinds of assignments. Complete all of the work on time showing analytic rigor and critical thinking, and you will likely earn an A.

### Experience Points (XP)

Quizzes (4)	10,000 XP (2,500 XP each)
Group Discussions (4)	20,000XP (5,000 XP each)
Article Summary (2)	20,000XP (10,000 XP each)
Game Audio Analysis (2)	20,000XP (10,000 XP each)
Final Boss (1)	25,0000XP
Final Survey	5,000XP

### XP to Letter Grade Equivalents

94,000-100,000	A
90,000-93,000	A-
87,000-89,000	B+
84,000-86,000	B
80,000-83,000	B-
77,000-79,000	C+
74,000-76,000	C
70,000-73,000	C-
67,000-69,000	D+
60,000-66,000	D
<59,000	E: Game Over

### Late Work, Rounding Up, and Extra Credit

Quizzes will close automatically. However, before the deadline, you will have the opportunity to



retake the quiz as many times as you like in the course of the week to earn a top score.

The Group Discussion posts are rare opportunities to engage with your peers in the online format. Because the discussions are meant to stimulate discourse with your peers, timely completion of posts is essential to help you come together and further your own thinking about the topics. Contributing to a discussion after it is over is fruitless; your classmates will have moved on, and so they will not have the benefit of your perspective. The idea is to contribute and share, discuss and think through your responses *with* your classmates. **Thus, late discussion posts will automatically be docked 50%.**

You will not have to complete article summary posts or game audio analysis posts every single week, so long as you complete a minimum number by the end of the semester. Therefore, **no late article summary or game audio analysis posts will be accepted.**

You cannot run from the Final Boss in a video game, nor can you decide to fight him later. The final papers will thus face **a steep deduction of 10%** for each day the paper is late.

Just as in a video game, experience is not “rounded up”; for example, 89,700 XP means that you have earned a B+ in the course. You can’t level up until you’ve attained the necessary experience and mastered the necessary skills.

### **Side Quests: Bonus Points**

There are also opportunities to complete side quests that can award the player with bonus points. These quests will take time and energy, but the extra points can help you in your quest.

**Exploring the Ruins:** Posting a response to one Discussion forum topic that explores the topic in greater depth and is at least twice as long as the required word count. Be aware, that the hidden forces of the ruins will not award you the bonus if the post is not deemed to be a worthy offering!

**Master of Lore:** Creating **five** or more full article summary posts.

**Wandering Troubadour:** Completing **five** or more game sound analyses.

**Roving Bard:** Going above and beyond with response posts (e.g. showing ownership of the material and leadership of the discussion in a Group Discussion beyond the two-response post minimum, or reading and responding to a article summary).

**Completionist:** Completing **all** of the Side Quests.

### **Types of Assignments**

#### **Quizzes (10,000XP)**

There is a syllabus quiz at the beginning of class (easy points) to make sure you have read and

understood the expectations for the course. You can retake the quiz as many times as necessary to earn a perfect score, rather like completing the Tutorial level of a video game.

There will be three short quizzes consisting of game audio identification, multiple-choice questions on key terms, and short answers about the course readings. Quizzes will be available on Carmen for one week: you may re-take each quiz—with Carmen supplying a new set of questions—as many times as you like before the deadline.

### **Group Discussions: “It’s Dangerous to Go Alone!” (40,000 XP)**

Weekly discussions will take place in groups of 10-15 students. The group listing should appear for you under the Project Groups master list in the Contents menu of Carmen, and you will have access to the thread for your particular group under each week’s discussion forum.

For each discussion topic, you will be asked to submit three posts to your group’s thread: an original post that responds thoughtfully to the prompt, and two posts responding to your classmates. Of course, you can post more than three times a week if the topic moves you, with the possibility of earning extra experience points for particularly vibrant discussions (see the Side Quests section, below)! **Suggested length of each post: two or three paragraphs.**

While short statements like “Wow!” “Cool” or “Thanks for posting” can be part of your comments to your classmates, they will not count as a response unless you also add something new to the conversation, ask clarifying questions, introduce new ideas or examples, or otherwise further the discussion.

The week’s prompts will be posted the Sunday before the initial post is due. The original post will always be due by **11:59pm on Wednesday** of that week; two responses to your classmates are due by **11:59pm on Friday**. For more detailed guidelines as to what is expected of you in discussion, please see the *Guidelines and Criteria for Online Discussion* in the Content menu. For precise due dates for all discussions, see the *Course Calendar*.

### **Article Summary: Mapping the Dungeon (20,000XP)**

In addition to the required reading, I will also provide many articles in the field of ludomusicology. Over the course of the semester, you will be expected to engage with at least two of these supplemental articles.

Then you will craft an article summary post in which you summarize the important points, evaluate the arguments, state your opinions on the subject, and devise potential discussion questions that could help your classmates make their way through the maze themselves. It’s like drawing a map of the dungeon for future travelers! You will need to complete **two** substantive article summary posts by the end of the semester to earn all of the XP! You will not be *required*

to formally respond to your classmates' Article summary Posts, but you may enjoy reading and commenting on the summaries—and extra participation is rewarded in this course (see Side Quests, above).

For more detailed guidelines as to what is expected of you in a article summary post, please see the *Guidelines and Criteria for Article Summary* in the Content menu. Suggested length of each Article summary post: two or three paragraphs.

### **Game Audio Analysis (20,000XP)**

These are posts in which you will be given a snippet of game audio in context. You will listen and watch intently several times, and then outline the sample's musical attributes and examine how it functions in the game and responds to the image. As you will soon see, the first few readings present a great deal of information and technical terminology. The lingo can be confusing at first, and so the goal of these kinds of posts is to make you more comfortable with analytical listening and the terminology of musical analysis, and to help you synthesize the material and develop skills that will serve you well in later discussion quests and the final boss.

Under the Course Information tab on Carmen, you will find a document called *Framework for Listening* that will serve as a guide for structuring these posts—you will answer a series of questions about what you hear and see and then distill your analysis into a short prose post. Suggested length of each Game Audio Analysis post: two or three paragraphs.

These posts are completed individually—you will not be required to respond to your classmates' analyses. Game Audio snippets will be available every week (chosen to reflect the content of that week's readings and Article summary articles), but you are required to complete only a minimum of **two** analysis posts in order to earn all of the XP!

**Note on Game Audio Analyses:** I *do not* compare your posts against your classmates', because everybody will start at a different level depending on their amount of formal musical training. I do look for evidence that you put time and thought into listening, and that you tried to capture as much detail as possible in the analysis. I also look for personal growth; I expect that you will improve throughout the course as you respond to any comments and critiques, and as you spend more time doing this kind of deep listening analysis.

### **Final Boss (25,000XP)**

The final boss will be a 6-8 page paper incorporating musical analysis from a game of your choosing. You will select a 15-minute passage of continuous gameplay and complete two in-depth analyses: a Game Audio Analysis examining the track as an independent musical entity, and a Timeline of Audio Events connecting the sound to gameplay and visuals. The analysis will

consider all of the elements of the soundscape (music, sound effects, voice acting) in and out of the gameplay context, crafting an argument for the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of the overall game sound design and implementation. You will also consider how the player experiences the sound *in situ* through a discussion of the music's role in creating interactivity, immersion, and haptic feedback.

### Final Survey (5,000XP)

The final survey is my attempt to glean substantive, actionable feedback from my students. The SEIs provided by the University tend to be very general: students often provide criticisms or praise without suggestions for how to improve. The survey responses will help me to improve the course and my teaching and allow you to reflect on your experience and learning. Instead of a generic comment box, the survey asks specific questions about the content, pace, assignments, etc.

Grading for the Survey is based on participation; if you submit the survey, you will receive full credit. Your responses will remain anonymous: though I will not know who wrote what, I am able to track who completed the survey and award participation points accordingly.

### Course Calendar

Orange	Group Discussion Board Post Due
Yellow	Game Audio Analysis Due (if completing that week): 2 required
Green	Article summary Due (if completing that week): 2 required
Blue	Final Paper Due
Purple	Quiz Due
Not shown	Final Survey due on the last day of class
(Date)	Holiday

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	7 June	8 June	9 June	10 June
13 June	14 June	15 June	16 June	17 June
20 June	21 June	22 June	23 June	24 June
27 June	28 June	29 June	30 June	1 July
(4 July)	5 July	6 July	7 July	8 July
11 July	12 July	13 July	14 July	15 July
18 July	19 July	20 July	21 July	22 July
25 July	26 July	27 July	28 July	29 July

## Course Calendar: by Assignment Type

### Group Discussion Board Posts

Discussion Title	Topic Opens	Original Post Due	Response Posts Due
Discussion #1: 8-bit Sound and Musical Stereotyping	Sunday, June 12 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Wednesday, June 15 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm	Friday, June 17 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Discussion #2: Silence & Disruption	Sunday, June 26 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Wednesday, June 29 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm	Friday, July 1 <sup>st</sup> , 11:59pm
Discussion #3: Pre-existing Music in Games	Sunday, July 10 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Wednesday, July 13 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm	Friday, July 15 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Discussion #4: Gender & Game Sound	Sunday, July 24 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Wednesday, July 27 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm	Friday, July 29 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm

### Quizzes

Quiz Title	Quiz Opens	Quiz Closes
Syllabus Quiz	Tuesday, June 7 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Monday, June 13 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Quiz #1	Tuesday, June 14 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Monday, June 20 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Quiz #2	Tuesday, June 28 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Tuesday, July 5 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Quiz #3	Tuesday, July 12 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Monday, July 18 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm

### Game Audio Analysis

Post	Topic Opens	Post Due (if completing that week)
Game Audio Analysis #1	Tuesday, June 7 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Tuesday, June 14 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Game Audio Analysis #2	Tuesday, June 14 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Tuesday, June 21 <sup>st</sup> , 11:59pm
Game Audio Analysis #3	Tuesday, June 21 <sup>st</sup> , 12:00am	Tuesday, June 28 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Game Audio Analysis #4	Tuesday, June 28 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Wednesday, July 6 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Game Audio Analysis #5	Tuesday, July 5 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Tuesday, July 12 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Game Audio Analysis #6	Tuesday, July 12 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Tuesday, July 19 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Game Audio Analysis #7	Tuesday, July 19 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Tuesday, July 26 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm

## Literature Review

<b>Post</b>	<b>Topic Opens</b>	<b>Post Due (if completing that week)</b>
Literature Review #1	Thursday, June 9 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Thursday, June 16 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Literature Review #2	Thursday, June 16 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Thursday, June 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 11:59pm
Literature Review #3	Thursday, June 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 12:00am	Thursday, June 30 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Literature Review #4	Thursday, June 30 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Thursday, July 7 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Literature Review #5	Thursday, July 7 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Thursday, July 14 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm
Literature Review #6	Thursday, July 14 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Thursday, July 21 <sup>st</sup> , 11:59pm
Literature Review #7	Thursday, July 21 <sup>st</sup> , 12:00am	Thursday, July 28 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm

## Final Paper

<b>Title</b>	<b>Posted By</b>	<b>Turned in to Dropbox by</b>
Final Boss	Wednesday, June 29 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Monday, July 25 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm

## Course Evaluation

<b>Title</b>	<b>Posted By</b>	<b>Turned in to Dropbox by</b>
Final Survey	Sunday, July 24 <sup>th</sup> , 12:00am	Friday, July 29 <sup>th</sup> , 11:59pm

## Course Calendar: Weekly Topics

Week	Topic	Readings	Game Audio Analysis
June 7-10	Introduction to Game Music	Collins <i>Game Sound</i> ch. 1, 7 p. 1-6 and 123-138 Grimshaw "Sound" p. 117-124 Whalen "Play Along" excerpt *Lerner, "Mario's Dynamic Leaps" 1-29	<i>Super Mario Bros.</i> (1985) <i>Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time</i> (1998) <i>Silent Hill</i> (1999)
*Denotes Literature Review Post Readings—optional unless completing one of your Literature Posts			
<b>Level One: History of Game Sound</b>			
June 13-17	Discussion #1: 8-bit Sound and Musical Stereotyping Syllabus Quiz due June 13 <sup>th</sup>	Collins <i>Game Sound</i> ch. 2 p. 7-36 Gibbons "Blip Bloop Bach" 40-52 *Plank-Blasko "Tetris and the Ludic Soviet" p. 7-24 *Plank-Blasko "8-bit Translation of BWV 565" 1-18	<i>Tetris</i> (1984) <i>Captain Comic</i> (1988) <i>Battle of Olympus</i> (1988)
June 20-24	16-bit and Beyond Quiz 1 due June 20 <sup>th</sup>	Collins <i>Game Sound</i> ch. 3 1-60 Cheng <i>Sound Play</i> ch. 2 57-92 *Collins <i>Game Sound</i> ch. 4-5 63-106	<i>Final Fantasy VI</i> (1994) Dream Oath Opera Sequence
<b>Level Two: Interesting Functions of Game Sound</b>			
Jn 27- July 1	Discussion #2: Silence and Disruption	Plank-Blasko "On Silence" 1-12 *Gibbons "Wandering" 122-137	<i>Super Metroid</i> (1994) <i>Shadow of the Colossus</i> (2005)
July 4-8	Interactivity Quiz 2 due July 5 <sup>th</sup>	Collins <i>Playing with Sound</i> ch. 1 19-38 Landay "Interactivity" 173-184 *Medina-Gray "Meaningful Modular Combinations" 104-121	<i>The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker</i> (2003) <i>The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword</i> (2011)

<b>Level Three: Games and the Real World</b>			
July 11-15	Discussion #3: Pre-existing Music in Games	Collins "Grand Theft Audio" 35-48 Summers "Parsifal to the Playstation" 199-216 *Plank-Blasko "MPC and Musical (Re)Play on YouTube" 43-82 *Gibbons "Wrap Your Troubles" *Cook "Music History and Progress" 166-182	<i>Grand Theft Auto</i> (1997-2016) <i>Mario Paint</i> (1992) <i>Civilization IV</i> (2005)
July 18-22	Game Over: Death, Garbage, and other Game Afters Quiz 3 due July 18 <sup>th</sup>	Newman <i>Best Before</i> intro 1-40 Guins <i>Game After</i> intro 1-30 Wenz, "Death" 310-316 *Juul "The Art of Failure" 1-54	<i>Final Fantasy VII</i> (1997) VG Death Scene of Your Choice
July 25-29	Discussion #4 Gender and Game Sound Final Paper due July 25 <sup>th</sup> Course Evaluation due July 29 <sup>th</sup>	Cheng, <i>Sound Play</i> ch. 5 139-166 Heeter "Femininity" 373-379 Newman/Vanderhoef "Masculinity" 380-387 Consalvo "Hot Dates" 171-194	<i>Team Fortress 2</i> (2007) <i>The Sims</i> (2000)

### Course Bibliography

Austin, Michael, ed. *Music Video Games: Performance, Politics, and Play*. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016.

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**Music 2254**  
**Video Game Music**  
**GE Rationale and Assessment Plan**

**Rationale:**

*Throughout this rationale the Expected Learning Outcomes are referred to by number:*

*ELO 1: Students analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art.*

*ELO 2: Students engage in informed observation and/or active participation in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts.*

*It should be noted that the ELOs overlap: “informed observation” entails “analyzing, appreciating, and interpreting.”*

The course objectives (given under “Course Description” on p. 1 of the syllabus) address the Visual and Performing Arts Expected Learning outcomes by introducing students to the function of game audio throughout the history of the medium and across multiple platforms. Students are encouraged to think critically about the sounds that bring these virtual worlds to life by examining how game sound enhances, underscores, or conflicts with the images, as well as how it responds to the dynamic processes of play. (ELO 2) The beginning of the course emphasizes musical vocabulary, and short analysis assignments are designed to bolster students’ ability to recognize structural features of the sound no matter their level of prior musical training. (ELO 1).

It is expected that most students will already know what it means to be involved in the highly participatory, interactive medium of video games before they enroll in this course, allowing for focused attention to the sounds that contribute to this experience. Most students have played at least some form of video games, and so are already conversant in many gameplay conventions and genres. The course intends to raise new awareness in students by asking them to apply visual, aural, and narrative modes of observation to familiar franchises as well as to more obscure games from independent developers. (ELO 1, ELO 2) The class will present games as complex works of art that demonstrate visual, aural, and ludic originality,<sup>1</sup> carry and impart implicit and explicit cultural attitudes, and demand analytic participation in real time. (ELO 1, ELO 2) This class intends to show students that many of them are already invested in, and pleasurably understanding of, canonical “works” and reified “texts,” even in this relatively young medium. (ELO 1)

The course emphasizes critical listening to game music both in and out of its gameplay context, considering the structural features of the music as well as its ability to create meaning as a part of a broader ludic experience. (ELO 1, ELO 2) Listening to the audio isolated from play helps students focus on what they hear, allowing them to better discern melody, harmony, rhythm, and other elements that contribute to a particular effect. (ELO 1) However, students will also view the music in context in order to witness dynamic change in the interactive medium—sudden shifts, loops, and triggered sound effects that might enhance or obscure the purely musical features. (ELO 2)

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<sup>1</sup> “Ludic originality” refers to innovative game mechanics—affordances and limitations in the source code that allow for certain types of actions in the game world.

The course readings introduce the terms for ludomusicological features to be discussed and the theoretical approaches for studying the interactive experience, and give additional examples and case studies beyond those treated in the weekly online discussions. Course readings further contextualize the sound by exploring the various social, historical, and artistic contexts that have shaped game audio, connecting these experiences to broader trends in film, television, and other closely-related media. (ELO 2) They also present the idea of a burgeoning ludomusicological canon. (ELO 1, ELO 2) The “supplemental readings” take the students beyond the textbook’s purview into critical directions and cutting-edge scholarship, questioning assumptions about genre and musical meaning as necessary to understand recent video game trends. (ELO 2) Additionally, these extra readings serve to expand the class discussion. (ELO 1, ELO 2) Throughout the course, engaging with the readings is inextricably linked with viewing and listening to actual clips of gameplay. (ELO 1)

Some of the course topics relate directly to critical evaluation of the ludomusical experience. While the course has no prerequisites, the instructor anticipates that most students will enter the class already literate in mainstream video game styles and genres—whether or not they consider themselves “hardcore gamers.” The course constantly asks students to analyze, understand, and even critique their own ludic literacy in order to go beyond it—by bringing their personal knowledge to bear on discussions and analysis projects. (ELO 1, ELO 2) In short, the instructor hopes to use familiarity with games first as a way of teaching students about cultural fluency, before encouraging them to entertain, explore, and appreciate associative and cultural difference. (ELO 2) Because the course will be taught by an instructor from the School of Music, music will be key in students familiarizing themselves with constructions of difference. The course aims to instill new stylistic, perceptual, and structural understandings of music itself, at the same time students gain an enhanced familiarity with games more broadly. (ELO 1, ELO 2)

The last three weeks of the course focus on moving beyond the game context to critically interrogate students’ assumptions about ludomusical meaning in the real world, in order to highlight how games participate in broader cultural discourses. (ELO 2) The topic of gender and game sound (week 8) considers masculine vs. feminine character leitmotifs, gender conventions in voice acting, and real-time communication in multiplayer online games, where female players often choose not to speak at all for fear of being harassed by male players. Week 8 also speaks to the recent #GamerGate controversy, in which female game journalists and developers received rape and death threats for criticizing the misogyny of mainstream games. Detailed discussion of Nina Freedman’s interactive novel *Cybele* (2015) and the hypermasculine *Broforce* (2015) demonstrate how modern games are grappling with the issue of gender through sound. (ELO 1) Freedman’s female character is not an avatar for the player to inhabit; she leads the player through the story without presenting many choices for action upon the gameworld. Her assertion of agency is surprising in a medium that relies on interactivity and player choice. The character has a low voice with frequent vocal fry, challenging students’ assumptions about how a romantic female lead “should” sound, what she should say, and how she should behave in the context of a romantic narrative. *Broforce*, on the other hand, exaggerates stereotypically masculine traits to the point of parody, using the sound of gravelly low male voices and Van Halen-esque guitar solos to

explore and critique modern masculinity. Both games demonstrate the complexity of the relationship between visual-narrative and musical aspects of the ludic experience, and show how developers can call into question players' assumptions about gender by manipulating gameplay conventions. (ELO 1, ELO 2) Sound helps to replicate many problematic gender roles. It carries palpable consequences in the real world, and students will be asked to explore these uncomfortable truths in order to call into question norms and conventions that hold the medium back. Students will also be asked to speculate how sound might be used to create safer and more inclusive experiences in future titles, and how the medium might already be changing to incorporate diverse voices that could shape the future of games as an art form. (ELO 2)

The central writing experience of the course, the research paper, will deal with a particular game and encourage students to think critically and write clearly about the ludomusical experience; the required proposal for the paper gives them an opportunity for feedback on their ideas; and finding sources for the paper will improve their information literacy. In addition to the research paper, essay questions on exams will sharpen their written communication skills. (ELO 1, ELO 2)

### **Assessment Plan:**

See chart below.

### **Appendix**

#### **Examples of Assessment Methods**

##### ELO 1

##### Direct assessment (related to week 3, "Silence and Disruption")

You will be given a short clip of gameplay from the introduction to *Super Metroid* (Nintendo, 1994). Write a paragraph describing how composers Kenji Yamamoto and Minako Hamano use silences to cultivate anxiety in the player—to influence the atmosphere, narrative, and emotional timbre of the game. In what ways is this lack of sound even *more* immediate, invasive, and integral to the experience of play than the music and sound effects, and what kinds of emotional or physiological responses might it invoke in the player?

##### Indirect assessment

*(Likert scale: not at all, not very much, a fair amount, a good amount, a great deal)*

Has this course enhanced your personal gameplay experience by helping you to consider the relationship(s) between music and the visual aspects of video games?

## ELO 2

Direct assessment (related to week 1 “8-Bit Sound and Musical Stereotyping,” and week 6, “Pre-Existing Music in Games”)

This week we read several chapters exploring how video games incorporate pre-existing music to shape the player’s experience by drawing on their cultural musical literacy outside of the immediate gameplay. Two short video clips from *Captain Comic* (1988) and *Battle of Olympus* (1988) demonstrate how a well-known piece of classical music (the organ Toccata and Fugue BWV 565 by Bach), is used in games whose plots, characters, and scenarios have seemingly little to do with the chosen track. How do these games differ in their use of the Toccata? How is the piece used to either support the overall narrative themes of the game or serve as counterpoint and juxtaposition to the image?

Indirect assessment

*(Likert scale: not at all, not very much, a fair amount, a good amount, a great deal)*

Did this course improve your insight into how different art forms can work together to create a synergistic, inclusive, and altogether different form of audiovisual entertainment?

<b>GE Expected Learning Outcomes</b>	<b>Methods of Assessment</b> <i>*Direct methods are required. Additional Indirect methods are encouraged.</i>	<b>Level of student achievement expected for the GE ELO</b> <i>(for example define percentage of students achieving a specified level on a scoring rubric)</i>	<b>What is the process that will be used to review the data and potentially change the course to improve student learning of GE ELOs?</b>
<b><u>ELO 1</u></b>  Students analyze, appreciate, and interpret significant works of art.	Direct: One or two embedded questions in each Group Discussion  Indirect: Several questions embedded on the Final Survey	Direct: Mean value of grades at 75% or higher  Indirect: >25%: "a good amount" or "a great deal" <25%: "not very much" or "not at all"	Instructor will collect and archive the data. She will use the data and the SEI process to evaluate the success of the course and make adjustments accordingly. She will share the data with the Head of the Musicology Area, School of Music.
<b><u>ELO 2</u></b>  Students engage in informed observation and/or active participation in a discipline within the visual, spatial, and performing arts.	Direct: One or two embedded questions in each Group Discussion  Indirect: Several questions embedded on the Final Survey	Direct: Mean value of grades at 75% or higher  Indirect: >25%: "a good amount" or "a great deal" <25%: "not very much" or "not at all"	



## Arts and Sciences Distance Learning Course Component Technical Review Checklist

**Course:** Music 2254 Video Game Music

**Instructor:** Dana Plank-Blasko

**Summary:** Online Course

Standard - Course Technology	Yes	Yes with Revisions	No	Feedback/recommendations
6.1 The tools used in the course support the learning objectives and competencies.	✓			This course will be delivered online asynchronously. All tools used in the course; weekly topic quizzes, group discussions, audio analysis, literature reviews and the “gamification” of course activities support the overall learning objectives and course competencies.
6.2 Course tools promote learner engagement and active learning.	✓			Using “gamification” the course tools promote learner engagement and active learning in the following ways. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly topic quizzes which allow the learner to take the quiz as many time as they would like while earning game points for each quiz attempt to help reinforce learning objectives</li> <li>• Weekly group discussions based on prompts with the learner earning game points by meeting certain criteria for the discussion post</li> <li>• Posting two literature review posts summarizing provided ludomusicology articles; game points earned for the completion of this work</li> <li>• Audio analysis of a snippet of game audio (in context); game points earned for the completion of this work</li> <li>• “Side quest” activities such as completing five or more full literature review posts to earn additional game points also provides additional opportunities for learner engagement and active learning</li> </ul>
6.3 Technologies required in the course are readily obtainable.	✓			All technology platforms being used for this course are readily accessible to students (Carmen, Spotify, Skype). These technologies are accessible through a standard web browser.  Recommend that a “Course Technology” section be added to the syllabus explicitly listing the required technologies for the course. For example, a

				webcam and microphone will be required to use Skype. The “Course Technology” section of the syllabus also provides the students with the required technical skills needed to access all parts of this course. <b>Please see the example listed in the Notes section below.</b>
6.4 The course technologies are current.	✓			All technology platforms being used for this course are current. Carmen is a core common tool offered by the university. All external tools are available through a standard web browser.
6.5 Links are provided to privacy policies for all external tools required in the course.	✓			Both Spotify and Skype require non-OSU external user accounts.  Recommend that information be provided in the “Course Technology” section of the syllabus for the privacy policies for both Spotify and Skype.
<b>Standard - Learner Support</b>				
7.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to access it.	✓			Recommend that links be provided in the “Course Technology” section of the syllabus for the technical support resources available for all tools (Spotify, Skype) being used in the course. See below for the Carmen link.  <a href="http://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmen">http://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmen</a>
7.2 Course instructions articulate or link to the institution’s accessibility policies and services.	✓			<b>The below link should be included in the syllabus. The text for the accessibility statement should be in BOLD 18pt font.</b> <b><a href="http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu">http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu</a></b>
7.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution’s academic support services and resources can help learners succeed in the course and how learners can obtain them.	✓			Recommend to add to the syllabus an overview and contact information for the student academic services offered on the OSU main campus. <a href="http://artsandsciences.osu.edu/academics/current-students">http://artsandsciences.osu.edu/academics/current-students</a>

7.4 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the institution's student services and resources can help learners succeed and how learners can obtain them.	✓			<p>Recommend to add to the syllabus an overview and contact information for student services offered on the OSU main campus.  <a href="http://ssc.osu.edu">http://ssc.osu.edu</a></p> <p>Recommend that this link be included in the "Other Course Policies" section of the syllabus.</p>
<b>Standard – Accessibility and Usability</b>				
8.1 Course navigation facilitates ease of use.	✓			<p>Recommend using the Carmen Distance Learning Course Shell to provide a consistent student-user experience in terms of navigation and access to content.</p>
8.2 Information is provided about the accessibility of all technologies required in the course.	✓			<p>The OSU core common tool set used in this course meets the universities policies for accessibility.</p> <p>Recommend that links be provided on the syllabus for any accessibility information available for Spotify and Skype.</p>
8.3 The course provides alternative means of access to course materials in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners.	✓			<p>Recommend that resources be developed to address any requests for alternative means of access to course materials. These resources should be in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners.</p>
8.4 The course design facilitates readability	✓			<p>Recommend using the Carmen Distance Learning Course Shell to provide a consistent student-user experience in terms of navigation and access to content.</p>
8.5 Course multimedia facilitate ease of use.	✓			<p>All assignments and activities that use the OSU core common tool set at Ohio State facilitate ease of use with embedded multimedia. The external tools being used for this course also facilitate ease of use by being available through a standard web browser as well as stand alone applications.</p>

**Reviewer Information**

- Date Reviewed: 4/11/16
- Reviewed By: Mike Kaylor

- Notes: See below

#### “Course Technology”

*Amend this list according to your course technology requirements*

#### Baseline technical skills necessary for online courses

- Basic computer and web-browsing skills
- Navigating Carmen

#### Technology skills necessary for this specific course

- CarmenConnect text, audio, and video chat
- Collaborating in CarmenWiki
- Recording a slide presentation with audio narration
- Recording, editing, and uploading video

#### Necessary equipment

- Computer: current mac (OSX) or PC (Windows 7+) with high-speed internet connection
- Webcam: built-in or external webcam, fully installed
- Microphone: built-in laptop or tablet mic or external microphone

#### Necessary software

- Spotify
- Skype