

The Ohio State University
First-Year Seminar Program
Course Proposal

Course Information

1. Attach a sample syllabus that includes the following. (Sample syllabi can be found at <http://freshmanseminars.osu.edu>).
 - the course goals
 - a brief description of the content
 - the distribution of meeting times
 - a weekly topical outline
 - a listing of assignments
 - grade assessment information (A-E or S/U)
 - required textbooks and/or reading list
 - the academic misconduct and disability services statements (sample statements can be found at <http://asccas.osu.edu/curriculum/asc-syllabus-elements>)
2. Attach a brief biographical paragraph that includes the current research interests, teaching awards and honors, and undergraduate courses taught by the participating instructor(s). The paragraph will be included in materials for first-year students.

David Brewer, Dept. of English
Proposer's Name and Primary Academic Unit (please print)

Associate Professor
Proposer's Title

brewer.126@osu.edu
Proposer's e-mail Address

614/603-9549
Contact Phone Number

March 5, 2018
Submission Date

Rodyn Warhol [Signature]
Approval of Department Chair of Academic Unit (please print)

Please indicate the semester you would like to offer the seminar: AU' 8 SP' _____ (first half)

This form and any attachments should be mailed to First-Year Seminar Program, 100 Denney Hall, 164 Annie & John Glenn Avenue, ATTN: Todd Bitters or e-mailed to bitters.4@osu.edu.

Professor David Brewer
514 Denney Hall (mailbox is in 421 Denney)
brewer.126@osu.edu
Office Hours: whatever they are that semester and by appointment

Freshman Seminar (Arts and Sciences 1137.XX): Listening to Film

WHATEVER THE DAYS, TIMES, AND LOCATION OF THE COURSE ARE

It's so obvious that film is a visual medium that it's presumed in our slang: we talk about "movies" (short for "moving pictures") and "flicks" (a reference to the flickering optical experience produced by the projection speed of early film). But at least since the late 1920s (and arguably before then), film has also been a sonic medium and that's what this seminar will investigate. We'll consider how dialogue, voiceovers, music, sound effects, and silence interact with one another. We'll explore how sound is used to tell stories, and how crucial it is (in some ways even more than images) to creating the experiences that draw most of us to film again and again. As we do this, we'll cross back and forth between the ways that the academic discipline of Film Studies thinks about sound and the ways in which ordinary viewers and auditors do, in the hope that the combination will enhance both your future movie-watching (and listening) and your ability to think about film in an intellectually rigorous way.

A word about my teaching style seems in order. I regard all of the questions driving this course as both important and open to debate. I have certainly thought about them extensively, but my primary role in the classroom is to give you the tools necessary to answer them for yourselves and to pose your own questions. Accordingly, when I offer up a theory, I will ask you immediately to assess its strengths and weaknesses, what it illuminates and what it fails to explain. Similarly, when you proffer your own ideas, they will be subject to the same scrutiny, both from your colleagues and from me. This is all to say that your success in this course will hinge upon the explanations that you devise to best account for the films and phenomena we're studying, rather than your ability to parrot back my ideas. I certainly hope and expect that your ideas will engage with what your colleagues and I put forth, but ultimately I want you to be able to explain and enjoy these films in the ways that make the most sense to you and your own particular set of interests and commitments.

Your grade for the course will be comprised of your grades on two questions you pose in advance for our discussion (15%), a polished oral presentation (3 minutes) on some aspect of film sound (15%), a short (3-5 pp.) paper on some aspect of film sound and/or its reception (30%), and active participation in our discussions (40%). You will sign up for a day for which to pose questions and for a (probably different) day on which to present. I am always happy to meet with you to discuss your ideas or to take a look at a good draft. I will employ the OSU Standard Grade Scheme in which 93-100 is an A, 90-92.9 an A minus, 87-89.9 a B plus, and so on.

Seminars depend on close engagement with the questions and ideas we're pursuing together in class. You cannot do well in the course without being present, prepared, and ready to listen and participate. Starting in the second week, I will send around a sign-up sheet for each session, so that your attendance can be documented. If you miss more than one session without a valid medical excuse, or are repeatedly and visibly unprepared (or

distracted by your electronics), I reserve the right to reduce your grade for the course by one grade increment per additional absence or conspicuous lack of preparation or engagement, regardless of the quality of your written or oral work. Please consider this fair warning. However, so long as you watch carefully, listen attentively, write and present thoughtfully, participate actively in discussion, and otherwise meet me at least halfway, there is no reason why you should not do very well in the course. There is no grading curve; there are no secret expectations or additional requirements. If at any point you feel as if you're struggling, please ask for help. The stupid questions are the ones that go unasked.

In order to ensure that our sessions are as useful and straightforward as possible, I will be posting study questions (both my own and those posed by you) to the announcements section of Carmen prior to each meeting. Those questions will then serve as a rough agenda for that session. If you have to miss a session, please arrange to get notes from one of your colleagues.

In the unlikely event that I need to cancel a class meeting, I will contact you by email and request that a note be placed on the classroom door. I will contact you by email again as soon as possible following the cancellation in order to let you know what will be expected of you for the following session.

One warning which should go without saying: University rules forbid "submitting plagiarized work for an academic requirement. Plagiarism is the representation of another's work or ideas as one's own; it includes the unacknowledged word-for-word use and/or paraphrase of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas." The key word here is "unacknowledged." All scholarly inquiry builds upon what has gone before it; the important thing is to distinguish between what you have borrowed and what you are contributing to the discussion. All cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. Penalties for plagiarism can range from failing the course in question to expulsion from the university. If you have any questions concerning plagiarism or proper citation, please do not hesitate to ask.

Students with documented disabilities who have registered with the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform me as soon as possible of their needs. SLDS is located in 98 Baker Hall, 113 West 12th Avenue. They can be reached by telephone at 614/292-3307 [VRS: 614/429-1334], via email at slds@osu.edu, or on the web at <http://slds.osu.edu/>

Ohio State has one of the finest writing centers in the country, which offers a range of services to all levels of writers. I encourage you to take advantage of their offerings. Their web address is <https://cstvw.osu.edu/writing-center>

There are no required books for the course. All of the films that you'll be watching over the course of the semester will be available through OSU's streaming service:

<https://drm.osu.edu/>

You're welcome to watch them elsewhere, so long as the quality is comparable or better to what OSU can provide. Please view them in HD or high quality, in their original aspect ratio, and on as large a screen as possible (and with as good speakers as possible) without any other visuals or soundtracks to distract you.

WEEK ONE [the basics]

Introduction

The basics of film sound (technologies and uses)

WEEK TWO [the advent of sound]

please watch and listen to *Singin' in the Rain*

we'll continue our discussion of *Singin' in the Rain*

WEEK THREE [sound and character]

please watch and listen to *Die Hard*

we'll continue our discussion of *Die Hard*

WEEK FOUR [sound and setting]

please watch and listen to *Dazed and Confused*

we'll continue our discussion of *Dazed and Confused*

WEEK FIVE [sound and setting continued]

please watch and listen to *L.A. Confidential*

we'll continue our discussion of *L.A. Confidential*

WEEK SIX [sound and character continued]

please watch and listen to *Juno*

we'll continue our discussion of *Juno*

WEEK SEVEN [sound and genre]

please watch and listen to *Guardians of the Galaxy*

we'll continue our discussion of *Guardians of the Galaxy*; Retrospect

FINAL ESSAY DUE BY 11:59 p.m. ON WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE FIRST MEETING OF WEEK EIGHT

David Brewer teaches film, eighteenth-century literature, and the history of the book in the Department of English. His other film courses include classes on musicals, teen comedies, the filmic use of Los Angeles, and (this autumn) the 1990s.