

## Term Information

Effective Term Spring 2024

## General Information

Course Bulletin Listing/Subject Area Music  
Fiscal Unit/Academic Org School Of Music - D0262  
College/Academic Group Arts and Sciences  
Level/Career Graduate, Undergraduate  
Course Number/Catalog 5801  
Course Title Analysis of Video Game Music  
Transcript Abbreviation Analysis Vid Music  
Course Description This course focuses on the theory and analysis of video-game music, focusing on topics such as functions of game audio, interactivity and immersion, game history and technology, comparisons between game music and film music, musical meaning and tropes, genres and styles, as well as fandom, song covers, and nostalgia.  
Semester Credit Hours/Units Fixed: 3

## Offering Information

Length Of Course 14 Week, 12 Week, 8 Week, 7 Week, 6 Week, 4 Week  
Flexibly Scheduled Course Never  
Does any section of this course have a distance education component? No  
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, Lima, Mansfield, Marion, Newark, Wooster

## Prerequisites and Exclusions

Prerequisites/Corequisites For graduate students: passing the graduate entrance assessment in music theory, or passing MUSIC4500.01, or permission of the instructor.  
For undergraduate students: passing Music 3422, or permission of the instructor.  
Exclusions none  
Electronically Enforced Yes

## Cross-Listings

Cross-Listings n/a

## Subject/CIP Code

Subject/CIP Code 50.0901  
Subsidy Level Doctoral Course  
Intended Rank Junior, Senior, Masters, Doctoral

## **Requirement/Elective Designation**

The course is an elective (for this or other units) or is a service course for other units

## **Course Details**

### **Course goals or learning objectives/outcomes**

- Students will learn how music is typically employed and structured in video games from the perspective of both players and composers.
- Students will develop critical thinking skills about the meaning of video-game music within specific games and within society more broadly.
- Student will obtain a broad knowledge of scholarship on the theory and analysis of video game music (ludomusicology)
- Students will apply this knowledge through weekly analysis practice, and the creation of an analytical piece of scholarship on a topic of the student's choosing relating to video game music.

### **Content Topic List**

- Introduction
- Interactivity and immersion
- Comparisons with film music
- The composer's perspective
- History and technology: 1. evolution over time; 2. old games
- Game genres
- Music games
- Musical meaning: semiotics and hermeneutics

### **Sought Concurrence**

No

**Attachments**

- Analysis of Video Game Music Syllabus Music 5801 5 10 23.pdf: proposed syllabus  
*(Syllabus. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- BA curriculum map with theory 5801 and 5802 6 1 23.xlsx: curriculum map  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- BM Orchestral Instruments curriculum map with Theory 5801 and 5802 6 1 23.xlsx: curriculum map  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- BME Choral map for Theory 5801 and 5802 6 1 23.xls: curriculum map  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- BME General map for Theory 5801 and 5802 6 1 23.xls: curriculum map  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- BM Performance - Piano map for Theory 5801 and 5802 6 1 23.xls: curriculum map  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- BM jazz Studies Composition map for Theory 5801 and 5802 6 1 23.xls: curriculum map  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- Copy of BME Instrumental map for Theory 5801 5802 6 1 23.xlsx: curriculum map  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- BM Musicology map for Theory 5801 and 5802 6 1 23.xls: curriculum map  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- BM jazz Studies Performance map for Theory 5801 and 5802 6 1 23.xls: curriculum map  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- BM Performance - Voice map for Theory 5801 and 5802 6 1 23.xls: curriculum map  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*
- BM Theory map for Theory 5801 and 5802 updated 6 1 23.xls: curriculum map  
*(Other Supporting Documentation. Owner: Banks, Eva-Marie)*

**Comments**

- If this course can count in one of your undergraduate majors (even as an elective), please provide updated curriculum map(s). *(by Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal on 05/31/2023 11:38 AM)*

**Workflow Information**

Status	User(s)	Date/Time	Step
Submitted	Banks, Eva-Marie	05/10/2023 09:01 AM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Leasure, Timothy Lee	05/10/2023 10:13 AM	Unit Approval
Revision Requested	Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal	05/31/2023 11:39 AM	College Approval
Submitted	Banks, Eva-Marie	06/01/2023 02:43 PM	Submitted for Approval
Approved	Leasure, Timothy Lee	08/03/2023 11:24 AM	Unit Approval
Approved	Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal	09/01/2023 12:09 PM	College Approval
Pending Approval	Jenkins, Mary Ellen Bigler Hanlin, Deborah Kay Hilty, Michael Neff, Jennifer Vankeerbergen, Bernadette Chantal Steele, Rachel Lea	09/01/2023 12:09 PM	ASCCAO Approval



## **Analysis of Video Game Music**

The Ohio State University School of Music: MUSIC 5801

Spring 2024

3 credit hours/units

Format of instruction: in-person lecture and discussions with active participation

**Location:** Timashev Family Music Building (Room TBD)

**Class Meetings Schedule:** Wednesdays and Fridays 3:55–5:15 p.m.

In most weeks, Wednesdays will be spent introducing the weekly topic and discussing assigned readings. Fridays will usually be spent discussing the assigned game of the week and practicing musical analysis.

**Instructor: Dr. Jeremy W. Smith (School of Music)**

- Email: [smith.15851@osu.edu](mailto:smith.15851@osu.edu)
- Phone: 614-780-4561
- Office: Timashev Music Building room N482
- Drop-in office hours: TBA, and by appointment

### **Course Description**

How does music work in video games? How do gamers and gaming fans interact with it? This course focuses on the theory and analysis of video-game music, focusing on topics such as functions of game audio, interactivity and immersion, game history and technology, comparisons between game music and film music, musical meaning and tropes, genres and styles, as well as fandom, song covers, and nostalgia. Each week students will read articles or book chapters and analyze some video-game music in relation to the weekly topic. We will engage directly with video-game music through close listening, watching others play games, and playing games ourselves.

### **Prerequisites**

For graduate students: passing the graduate entrance assessment in music theory, or passing MUSIC4500.01, or permission of the instructor.

For undergraduate students: passing Music Theory IV, or permission of the instructor.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Students will learn how music is typically employed and structured in video games, from the perspective of both game players and composers. They will develop their critical thinking skills about the meaning of video-game music within specific games and within society more broadly.

At the end of the course students will

- 1) Have a broad knowledge of scholarship on the theory and analysis of video game music (ludomusicology).
- 2) Apply this knowledge through weekly analysis practice, and the creation of an analytical piece of scholarship on a topic of the student's choosing relating to video game music.

## **Required Materials**

All required readings will be provided by the instructor in CarmenCanvas. The instructor will demonstrate playing each of the weekly games for analysis in class, and also provide links to soundtrack recordings and websites where students can watch others play the games.

## **Grading Overview**

All assignments for this class will be submitted via CarmenCanvas. Assignments are to be completed independently, not collaboratively with peers.

**Online Reading Responses (15%).** Most weeks, each student will write a response to the weekly readings, published to a discussion board in CarmenCanvas. These are due by 7am on the day the readings will be discussed in class, so that there is time for everyone to read the responses before class and prepare for in-class discussion. Each graduate student must complete a total of TEN (10) of these for the course, and each undergraduate student must complete a total of EIGHT (8), so you can choose to have a few “weeks off” from writing them.

Responses should address all the weekly readings (1–2 each week), and be 250–500 words total. The content should include some of the following: something you liked or didn’t like about a reading, a summary of something you learned, something that surprised you or interested you, a question or thought you had as you read or listened, a question you have for others in the class or for the instructor, or something that you were reminded of (feel free to post a link). You do not need to include formal citations, but references to the readings should be clear and include page numbers as necessary.

Each response will be graded out of 10, based on the criteria above for sufficiently addressing each reading, and the clarity of writing, including spelling, grammar, punctuation, and references.

**Online Listening Responses/Analyses (15%).** Similar to the reading responses, in most weeks each student will post a short analysis of some music from the game of the week. These are due by 7am on the day the game of the week will be discussed in class, so that there is time for everyone to read the analyses before class and prepare for in-class discussion. Each graduate student must complete a total of TEN (10) of these for the course, and each undergraduate student must complete a total of EIGHT (8), so you can choose to have a few “weeks off” from writing them.

The analysis should be 250–500 words long. It should include specific observations and descriptions of some music from the game, and thoughts about how the music is functioning in that part of the game or what it communicates to players and why. Optionally, you can include a visual diagram to supplement your written analysis, such as: a form chart or timeline, transcription into some kind of notation, DAW recreation, spectrogram or waveform, line graph or bar graph, or any other kind of visual representation. If you do this it should be uploaded directly into your discussion post as a .JPG or .PDF file. The idea is to practice making meaning of the music, and practice creating some analysis that could be used in an article or presentation.

Each analysis will be graded out of 10, based on completing the criteria above. The analysis does not need to be a polished, final product (it can be a “work in progress”) but it should provide some detailed description of one aspect or one section of the game’s music.

**Class Reading Presentation (5%).** Each student will do one presentation on an assigned reading (on Wednesday). Think of this as a more detailed/extended version of your usual online posting. Each presentation will be approximately 20–30 minutes long and involve leading the class in discussion. Start with providing some background on the author(s), then share some of your own thoughts/summary/analysis, then discuss other people’s online posts and ask questions for group discussion. You should be at the front presenting with audio and visuals on a screen (e.g. showing the reading, playing audio examples, etc.). Before class, you will submit a copy of your presentation notes and/or slides in CarmenCanvas. Each presentation will be graded out of 10 based on the criteria above.

**Attendance and Participation (15%).** Each week students are expected to be prepared to discuss all readings and games for listening. Students will receive a grade out of 5 for attendance and participation in each week’s class. They will receive full points if they arrive on time, participate to some degree in discussions, and participate in analytical class activities. Points may be deducted for a lack of any participation.

**Midterm Lesson-Plan Project (25%).** Students will write a detailed lesson plan that could be used for teaching an undergraduate class about the music of one game. The lesson plan should include background information on the game, some of your own analysis of the game’s music, and a detailed description of a student activity. You can choose whichever game you want, as long as it isn’t one of the weekly games for analysis in our class. On the day the project is due, each student will have a 10-minute presentation for our class that gives an overview of the lesson plan. More details will be in the assignment description.

**Final Analysis Paper OR Presentation Video (25%).** The end-of-semester project will involve each student producing a piece of analytical scholarship about a topic of their choosing relating to video-game music.

Option 1: Recorded Analysis Video (in the style of a conference presentation). For graduate students this must be a 20-minute video. For undergraduate students this must be a 10-minute video. The video should include slides with analytical diagrams, in-text citations, and a bibliography at the end.

Option 2: Analysis Paper. For graduate students this must be at least 2,500 words and for undergraduate students this must be at least 1,500 words (*in addition to* analytical diagrams and graphs, and *in addition to* footnotes and bibliography).

A one-page project proposal will be due about a month before the final project is due. More details will be in the assignment description.

### **Attendance Policy**

- Each student is entitled to two “free” unexcused absences. After that, each subsequent unexcused absence will result in a 0 for that week’s class in terms of the attendance and participation grading category.
- If you miss class for any reason, please email the instructor before or after the class session to check in. Emailing the instructor ensures that they can tell you about what you missed in class and any work you should do to catch up.
  - If your absence is due to illness, emergency, or professional opportunity, the instructor may grant you an excused absence if notified by email. If an excused

absence is granted then it will not affect your grade. The instructor may or may not also grant an extension on assignment deadlines depending on the circumstances.

- If your absence is unexcused (including your “free” unexcused absence), homework assignments (such as the online reading responses) are still due at their regular times.

### **Late Assignments Policy**

Since we only meet twice per week, it is imperative that assignments are submitted on time. Therefore, late assignments will NOT be accepted for credit in this class. However, the instructor may grant an exemption if there are extenuating circumstances such as illness or emergency.

### **Semester Grading Scale**

A (93-100%) B+ (87-89%) C+ (77-79%) D+ (67-69%) E (0-62%)  
A- (90-92%) B (83-86%) C (73-76%) D (63-66%)  
B- (80-82%) C- (70-72%)

### **Instructor Feedback and Response Expectations**

Students will receive grading and feedback on assignments in CarmenCanvas, within one week of the assignment deadline. The instructor will respond to emails within 24 hours during the semester (apart from holidays).

### **Academic Misconduct Statement**

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/>.

### **Disability Services Statement**

The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. In light of the current pandemic, students seeking to request COVID-related accommodations may do so through the university’s request process, managed by Student Life Disability Services. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.



### **Mental Health Statement**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614- 292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th floor of the Younkin Success Center and the 10th floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available 24/7 **by dialing 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.**

### **Title IX Statement**

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu).

### **Diversity Statement**

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

## Schedule

Course materials for the following week will be made available on CarmenCanvas by the end of the last class of the current week.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings (Wednesday)</b>	<b>Game for listening &amp; analysis (Friday)</b>
Week 1 (1/9 & 1/11)	Introduction to the field.	Fernández-Cortés 2021. Summers 2016 chapter 1.	<i>Hades</i> (2020).
Week 2 (1/16 & 1/18)	Interactivity and immersion part 1.	Collins 2013 chapter 1. Roux-Girard 2014.	<i>Forge of Empires</i> (2012).
Week 3 (1/23 & 1/25)	Interactivity and immersion part 2.	Plank 2021. Medina-Gray 2019.	<i>Portal</i> (2007) and <i>Portal 2</i> (2011).
Week 4 (1/30 & 2/1)	Comparisons with film music.	Summers 2016 chapter 6. Elferen 2011.	<i>Final Fantasy VII</i> (1997).
Week 5 (2/6 & 2/8)	The composer's perspective part 1.	Kellman 2020 chapters 1 and 2.	<i>Pokémon Sword</i> and <i>Pokémon Shield</i> (2019).
Week 6 (2/13 & 2/15)	The composer's perspective part 2.	Michelmore 2021. Sweet 2015 chapter 1.	<i>Half-Life 2</i> (2004).
Week 7 (2/20 & 2/22)	History and technology part 1: evolution over time.	Fritsch 2013. Newman 2021.	<i>Super Mario Kart</i> (1992).
Week 8 (2/27 & 2/29)	History and technology part 2: old games.	Lerner 2013. Collins 2007.	<i>Super Mario Bros. 3</i> (1988).
Week 9 (3/5 & 3/7)	Game genres.	Collins 2008 chapter 7.	None (midterm project presentations instead).
Week 10 (3/19 & 3/21)	Music games.	Austin 2021. Shultz 2016.	<i>Rhythm Heaven Fever</i> (2011).
Week 11 (3/26 & 3/28)	Musical meaning: semiotics and hermeneutics.	Hart 2021. Kamp 2021.	<i>Bastion</i> (2011).

Week 12 (4/2 & 4/4)	Musical meaning: topic theory.	Atkinson 2019. Bradford 2020. *Final project proposal due.	<i>The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword</i> (2011).
Week 13 (4/9 & 4/11)	Musical meaning and cultural identities.	Tonelli 2021. Miller 2012 chapter 2.	<i>Sid Meier's Civilization V</i> (2010).
Week 14 (4/16 & 4/18)	Nostalgia and musical covers.	Smith 2020. Diaz-Gasca 2022.	<i>Undertale</i> (2015).

Final projects due April 30<sup>th</sup> (during the exam period).

## Bibliography

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