FU|BEST

Freie Universität Berlin

Music in the Digital Age (Fall only)

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Time Slot:	Wednesdays, 1:30 p.m.
Language of Instruction:	English
Contact Hours:	45
ECTS Credits:	6

Course Description

Digitalization has significantly transformed and affected musical practices and aesthetics. New means of recording, processing, analysis and reproduction have profoundly changed the ways in which music is composed, produced, performed, disseminated and consumed. Sound synthesis and computational methods of structure generation have opened up new compositional possibilities. In this course, we will examine the development of electronic and computer music and sound art as well as more general shifts in the consumption and production of music. Through specific case studies, we will tackle the following questions: How have digital technologies enabled unprecedented modes of making, using and perceiving music? In what ways has digital mediatization shaped our experiences with musical content and style? How have technological developments influenced and challenged musical aesthetics and ideas of sound? And how do we reconcile the long-established connections between music, performance and liveness in an era when the paradigm of reproduction seems to be omnipresent?

In the first five sessions, we will consider the impact of digital technologies on the composition and production of music. After examining how analog and digital technologies have influenced musical practices, we will look at concrete examples and aesthetic developments in order to understand the influence of digital technologies both on the creative process of music-making and on its aesthetic reflection.

The second half of the course will focus on a number of broader implications of digitalization related to listening and performance practices, as well as music-related genres such as sound art, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality audio.

At the end of the semester, we will extend the scope and consider cultural issues that arise by digital possibilities of sharing, disseminating and consuming music. In particular, we will discuss the intertwining of digitization and commodification.

Learning Objectives

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

- identify main aesthetic tendencies in contemporary music employing (digital) technology
- describe the impact of digital technology and digitalization on music listening, publication, performing and composing
- understand the fundamentals of digital audio processing, recording and synthesis
- demonstrate their understanding of principal music historical developments in the late 20th and early 21st century
- critically listen to and discuss examples of contemporary classical music and sound art

Student Profile

Should be in their fourth semester of college/university education or beyond.

Assignments and Grading

Midterm Exam: 250 Points
Term-Paper: 250 Points
Term-Paper oral presentation: 100 Points

Class participation: 250 Points
Independent Project report: 150 Points

FU Grade	Points of 1,000
1.0	980-1,000
1.3	950-979
1.7	900-949
2.0	850-899
2.3	800-849
2.7	750-799
3.0	700-749
3.3	650-699
3.7	600-649
4.0	500-599
5.0	< 500

Literature
Readings posted on the online learning platform Blackboard.

Course Schedule

Calendar	Topics, Reading, etc.
Session 1	**Topic: Introduction: Overview of the Course.** **Transformations of Musicianship in the Digital Age** **Readings** • Andrew Hugill, The Digital Musician (2012), pp. 221-257
Session 2	**Topic: Art and Digital Media** **Readings** • Chapter 1 from Cat Hope and John Ryan, Digital Arts: An Introduction to New Media (2014) • Johanna Drucker, "Art", from W.J.T. Mitchell and Mark B. Hansen, Critical Terms for Media Studies (2010) • Chapter 3 from Dan Laughey, Key Themes in Media Theory (2007)
Session 3	**Topic: Electronic Music and Computer Music** **Readings** • Chapter 11 from Joseph Auner, Music in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries (2013) • Douglas Keislar, "A historical view of computer music technology" from The Oxford Handbook of Computer Music (2009) Bring your computer and headphones to class. Download and install the open source VCV Rack (https://vcvrack.com/) before class.

Session 4	**Topic: Digital Signatures in Popular Music**
	Readings
	• Chapters 7 and 8 from Ragnhild Brøvig-Hanssen/Anne Danielsen, Digital Signatures (2016)

Session 5	**Topic: Glitch and Noise**
	Readings
	• Kim Cascone, "The Aesthetics of Failure: 'Post-Digital' Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music", from Computer Music Journal (2000), Vol. 24/4
	• John Latartara, "Laptop Composition at the Turn of the Millennium: Repetition and Noise in the Music of Oval, Merzbow, and Kid606", from twentieth-century music, Vol. 7/1 (2010)

Session 6	**MIDTERM EXAM**

Session 7	**Topic: Sound and Space**
	Readings
	• Peter Lennox, "Spatialization and Computer Music" from The Oxford Handbook of Computer Music (2009)
	• Jonathan Gillmurray, "Ecological Sound Art: Steps towards a new field" (2017) from Organised Sound 22(1)

Session 8	**Topic: Impacts of Digitalization I: Listening**
	Readings
	• Michael Chion, "The Three Listening Modes", from Jonathan Sterne, The Sound Studies Reader (2012)
	• Tobias Pontara and Ulrik Volgsten, "Domestic space, music technology and the emergence of solitary listening", from STM–SJM vol. 99 (2017)
	• Chapter 4 from Andy Hamilton, Aesthetics & Music (2007)

Session 9	**Topic: Impacts of Digitalization II: Liveness and Instrumentality**
	Readings
	• Atau Tanaka, "Sensor-Based Musical Instruments and Interactive Music", chapter 12 from The Oxford Handbook of Computer Music (2009)
	• Suk-Young Kim, "Liveness, Performance of Ideology and Technology in the Changing Media Environment", from Oxford Online Encyclopedia of Literature (2017)
	• Chapter 2 from Thor Magnusson, Sonic Writing: Technologies of Material, Symbolic, and Signal Inscriptions (2019)

Session 10	**Topic: Impacts of Digitalization III: Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality**
	Readings
	• Chapter 7 from Meredith Broussard, Artificial Unintelligence (2018)
	• Chapter 3 from Tom Garner, Echoes of Other Worlds: Sound In Virtual Reality (2018)

Session 11	**Topic: Impacts of Digitalization IV: Identities and Communities**
	Readings
	• Donna Haraway. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" Chapter 8, Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature (1991)
	• Chapter 10, 11 and 12 from Glitch feminism, Legacy Russell (2020)
Session 12	**Excursion or Guest Lecturer**
	TBD
Session 13	**Topic: Impacts of Digitalization V: Consumption**
	Readings
	• David Arditi, "Digital Subscriptions: The Unending Consumption of Music in the Digital Era", from Popular Music and Society, January 2017
	• Chapter 1 and chapter 2 from Raphaël Nowak, Consuming Music in the Digital Age (2016)