COMM 4405: SOUND DESIGN

Fall 2013  3 hrs.  TR 12:30 – 1:50 PM

INSTRUCTOR: Christopher Renaud
Office Hours: M/W 12:30 -4 PM and T/Th 2 -4 PM (also by appt.)  Office:  HUM 143
Contact: crenaud@westga.edu  (preferred – not D2L)  Phone: 678-839-4929

PREREQUISITES:  COMM 3351, 3352 or 3353. You must also have earned a minimum of “C” in
COMM 1154 and ENGL 1102 to take this course.

REQUIRED MATERIALS
Readings and Supporting Materials will be distributed electronically via CourseDen.
*A class-10 SD card for making recordings.
*USB 2.0 Hard Drive to store your work
*Headphones for use in the editing lab and with our sound recorders
   At least one contemporary theatrical listening experience (movie ticket)

* These are one-time purchases, which you may already own. You will use them over the duration of your course of study in Mass
   Communications. See the Mass Communications Required Materials handout.

COURSE OVERVIEW
This intensive skills course will guide students in understanding and exploring the unique
communicative and expressive potential of layered sound in the many realms of audio-visual
production. Through critical listening and viewing, analysis, reading, and a number of exercises and
creative projects, students will learn to harness and develop the resources of carefully considered
sound recording, sound manipulation and sound mixing for a broad range of applications in audio-
visual media.

A major aim of this course is to normalize the idea of early and intentional decision-making about
sound, a vital but generally overlooked part of broader communicative strategies in a given
medium. Students will learn to make deliberate choices at every stage of the process of
constructing a sound-track, including microphone selection, recording techniques and post-
production editing, layering and mixing in Adobe Audition. Along the way, we will examine the
history of sound recording practice and exhibition in the field of sound design, study the work and
writings of practitioners in the field and technical concepts related to the gathering and polished
mixing of quality sound recordings.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES  (this course meets Mass Communications Learning Objective #3)
“Students will demonstrate ability to relate and/or apply concepts, theory/research, and professional principles to
analyze and synthesize information, create, develop, produce, and/or write convergence journalism, film and media
arts, and/or public relations communications for converging digital, multi-media, and traditional media.”

Students will analyze and explore strategies of communication through sound.
Students will collect sounds to build a library from which to create complex sonic environments and effects.
Students will practice advanced techniques and apply various technical and conceptual factors to the design of sound
constructions and soundtracks for moving images.
Students will plan and execute design strategies to construct systems of sound that deliver information and produce
intended effects for viewers.
Students will synthesize technical and aesthetic concepts to produce portfolio-quality work.
ASSIGNMENTS
This will be an intensive workshop. You should expect and plan for a combination of reading, listening, writing or creative work every week.

Learning is doing. Much of the doing will happen outside of class. Learning software and tools require time and attention; you need to factor this into your schedule to complete assignments. Doing assignments well means applying the concepts we discuss (both technical and abstract) to your own work and process, but also empowering yourself to experiment and take risks. Success in the course finally depends upon your own drive and engagement, and an interest in discovery. We will talk about your discoveries in class.

Reading the handouts that accompany each project will answer many of your questions. Don’t wait until the last minute to begin. There will be approximately 6 weeks worth of readings, but the bulk of your grade will come from creative projects.

Discussion Questions 10%
Reading/Listening Responses 15%
Exercises 30%
Exam – Terms and Concepts 10%
Final Project 30%
Final Portfolio 5%
TOTAL 100%

Discussion Questions – Emailed (10%)
Due weekly with every assigned reading or viewing. Unless superseded by instructions in a dedicated handout, you will submit three written questions that the reading makes you think about. What ideas does the reading ask you to consider? These can be specific points on which you’d like clarification (points of discussion for us in class), or broader questions, still related directly to the reading.

E-mail these to me 3 hours prior to class (by 2:30 PM) at crenaud@westga.edu. Copy yourself on the e-mail to verify they have been sent. Use “4405 QUESTIONS” as the subject line of your e-mail, and paste your text into the body. Following these directions is critical to receiving credit. Please use your campus Gmail account, NOT D2L.

Exam on Terminology and Concepts (10%)
This will occur towards mid-semester and will be fill-in-the-blank and short answer.

Final Portfolio of Projects (5%)
This will be an organized electronic folder with of all of your creative work for the course that you will submit with your final project on the last day of the course. You are responsible for tracking and maintaining this archive.

Final Project (30%)
The final project for this class will be a short audio-visual piece, with particular emphasis on the soundtrack, to be pitched and developed around mid-semester. Applying the skills, concepts and principles that you’ve developed in the course, you will plan and execute this piece for your capstone work in this class. Details will be given later in a separate handout, but you should begin gathering ideas and inspiration as soon as possible.

FINAL CLASS MEETING (“Exam” Period) – FINAL PROJECT and PORTFOLIO DUE
Thursday, Dec. 12, 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM
We will meet for this class period, and you are required to attend as for any exam.
You build your grade by earning points on assignments and exams. This begins with a zero. Your grade is not a reflection of how much I like you, how good of a person you are, or your potential. Grades are evaluations of your performance on the assignments in this course.

Good performance tends to correlate with being present and being engaged. It also correlates with cultivating your own interest in the subject matter, challenging yourself and working hard. Poor performance tends to correlate with giving yourself permission to miss class, tune out or be distracted. I will endeavor to make this one of the most interesting classes you take, but the reality is it’s a shared effort, one in which you have direct agency. Bring your “A” game.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Regular attendance is crucial in this workshop, but it’s only one element of participation. Presence (applied focus) determines your success. You will find that being aware and fully present, in the moment, is really the key to your success as a student, and will hold true in your professional life also.

Be vocal and be curious. This workshop depends upon your active conversation, active listening and analysis. Frankly, it’s a more lively and interesting place to be when you do. Please don’t hesitate to float an idea you are unsure about, or to ask questions when you don’t understand something. Ask follow up questions. You’re often not alone in looking for the answer, and the discussion will benefit the entire class.

In this course, engagement also means actively managing the part of your life entwined with your mobile device. Knowing the appropriate time to check or use your device should also be seen as a professional skill, and we will hold to a professional standard. The expectation is that during class you will keep your device put away. Using your device while the class is focused on its work will negate your participation for the day; you may be asked to leave.

Life happens. I understand this. However, you can’t participate if you are not here. You will be granted one absence without penalty, but you are still expected to meet deadlines for your work. After that, I won’t adjudicate excused or unexcused absences; you will simply lose 3% of your course grade for each absence, without a cap, as applied to your course grade.

MY ROLE

I am fundamentally committed to helping you understand concepts, principles, software and techniques. My method will be 1) to assign exercises and projects that will teach you both technical skills and their application, 2) to provide interesting examples and context, and 3) to facilitate lively in-class discussions.

I expect this to be an engaging and productive semester and I’m looking forward to working with you.

The last day to Drop/Add this class with a refund is Sept. 2 at midnight. This may impact your ability to receive financial aid. After Sept. 2 you may only withdraw, with a “W” for the course.
UNIVERSITY AND OTHER COURSE POLICIES
Policies applying to all courses at UWG can be found at the following link:

http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf

Americans With Disabilities Statement
If you are a student who is disabled as defined under the Americans With Disabilities Act and requires assistance or support services, first please seek assistance through the Center for Disability Services. A CDS Counselor will coordinate those services, and provide you with the necessary documentation to give to me. Students who need accommodations for learning or who have particular needs should then share these concerns or requests with me early in the term (no later than week 3 of the course). See the above link.

Late work
I do not accept late work. Assignments turned in after deadline will receive no credit (0). If you anticipate having to miss a deadline, please turn the assignment in to me before it is due. Deadlines are not negotiable in this course.

Classroom Etiquette
Exercising personal freedom is an appealing part of adult life. In order to create an atmosphere where individual expression and social interchange are respected, please observe the following guidelines: (1) address each other with respect; (2) contribute to discussions often, without dominating them; (3) stay focused on the topic being discussed. Side-chatter is distracting for everyone, especially myself, and is wasted energy; focus that energy into the discussion. Disruptive behavior in the classroom is not acceptable.

Mobile Devices
You have a direct impact on the classroom culture. Activity on your phone, laptop or other device that does not involve note-taking is both visible and disruptive to your neighbors and to myself. In this environment it is regarded as a decision not to participate. No social-networking or texting in class. Breaking with this policy will result in you being asked to leave the class for the day, with an attendant impact on your participation grade. If you have an issue that requires attention to your device, please notify me before class.

Academic Dishonesty
Academic dishonesty will NOT be tolerated in this or any other UWG course. It will result in failure on assignment(s) as well as possible disciplinary sanction(s) as stipulated by university rules. See the link above.

Equal Opportunity Statement
No person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, creed, national origin, age, or disability, be excluded from employment or participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity conducted by The University of West Georgia.

Affirmative Action Statement
The University of West Georgia adheres to affirmative action policies to promote diversity and equal opportunity for all faculty and students.

Contacting You
You are expected to have access to your westga.edu account for all communication regarding the course. While you may find my contact information or other students through D2L-CourseDen, I will reply to your regular westga account, not D2L.

Contacting Me
If you have questions, don’t hesitate to ask them in class. It’s best to get clarification in there, where everyone can benefit. With a class of this size, it’s best if you ask your peers before e-mailing questions about assignments. If you need to contact me, do not use D2L. E-mail me from your westga account at crenaud@westga.edu.