

Glasgow School of Art Course Specification

Course Title: Music for Picture – Theory and Practice

Please note that this course specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the 2026-27 Academic Year.

Course Code:	HECOS Code:	Academic Session:
PELC216		2026-27

1. Course Title:
Music for Picture – Theory and Practice

2. Date of Approval:	3. Lead School:	4. Other Schools:
PACAAG August 2023	The School of Innovation and Technology	This course is available to students on PGT programmes which include a Stage 2 elective.

5. Credits:	6. SCQF Level:	7. Course Leader:
20	11	Ronan Breslin

8. Associated Programmes:
This course is available to students on PGT programmes which include a Stage 2 elective.

9. When Taught:
Stage 2, On Site and In person – Glasgow Campus

10. Course Aims:
The overarching aims of the Stage 2 electives are to: • Encourage interdisciplinary, critical reflexivity from within an open set of choices; • Foster deep investigative approaches to new or unfamiliar areas of practice and theory; • Cultivate self-directed leadership and initiative-taking in both applied and abstract modes of practice/ study not necessarily associated with a student's particular creative specialism; • Enable flexible, ethical exploration and connection of diverse knowledge and understanding within a specialist programme of study. This course aims to provide a historical overview of music in cinema and broadcasting from the "silent" era onwards as well as introducing key works within the film music canon. Students will critically evaluate the use of music for picture in terms of its cultural, psychological and emotional resonances and genre, as well as demonstrate an informed overview of the creative processes underpinning the composition of music for picture. The course also aims to introduce students to film music within international contexts e.g. Bollywood, Soviet Cinema, Chinese Cinema. Students will compose and produce original music for picture via practical projects and critically evaluate their own work in the context of professional exemplars

11. Intended Learning Outcomes of Course:

On successful completion of the course students will be able to:

- Evaluate the history of film music;
- Critically analyse music used in a moving image context in terms of emotional impact, audience expectations and cultural signifiers;
- Identify and assess examples of music composition techniques in the context of the moving image;
- Describe the creative process of music composition for picture in terms of intent of concept, interpretation of image, genre, narrative and characterisation;
- Use current software tools to compose and produce music for the moving image.

12. Indicative Content:

This online course is for students who have a well-developed interest in music for film, games, television and other visual media. Some knowledge of basic music theory and instrumentation is desirable but not essential as tuition will be provided in the use of accessible software tools for music composition. The course provides a critical overview of the uses of diegetic and non-diegetic music for the moving image – cinema, television, theatre, games. This critical overview is contextualised via a thorough examination of the history of film music and also via analysis of existing professional exemplars of music for the moving image, past and present. Students also have the opportunity to engage with music composition and production methodologies within a practical sound for picture framework using professional software tools and techniques

The indicative content of this course will include:

- Music in the silent film era
- Classical period film music
- Music in '60s and '70s film
- Television music and signature tunes
- Popular music and cinema
- Music in world cinema
- Experimental film music
- Psychological implications of film music
- Professional composition techniques and approaches
- Professional software tools (Logic Studio, Sibelius)
- Practice-based work

13. Description of Summative Assessment Methods:

Assessment Method	Description of Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week (assignments)
Portfolio of work with Essay	Portfolio of work with Essay	80%	Week 11, Stage 2
Practical project with supporting statement	Thirty second theme piece of music with 500 word supporting statement	20%	Week 11, Stage 2

13.1 Please describe the Summative Assessment arrangements:

The summative assessment consists of the following two compulsory components:

1. A portfolio (music show-reel) of between eight and twelve minutes accompanied by a 1500 word essay describing the development and production of the show-reel. The essay will also discuss one or more of the theoretical concepts explored within the class in the context of the students composition process.
2. The composition of a 30 second TV signature tune in response to a set brief with a 500 word supporting statement.

14. Description of Formative Assessment Methods:

Engagement with formative assessment is a mandatory requirement.
Formative feedback will be provided regularly during tutorials.

14.1 Please describe the Formative Assessment arrangements:

All students will have at least one formative assessment peer review in week 6 of the course.
Students will also have the opportunity to discuss their work with tutors on a more informal basis during studio sessions.

15. Learning and Teaching Methods:

Formal Contact Hours

20

Notional Learning Hours

200

15.1 Description of Teaching and Learning Methods:

Course is offered over 10 weeks, 2 hours a week. Delivered on Wednesdays or Fridays.

16. Pre-requisites:

Successful completion of PGT Stage 1.

17. Can this course be taken by Exchange/Study Abroad students?	Yes
18. Are all the students on the course taught wholly by distance learning?	No
19. Does this course represent a work placement or a year of study abroad?	No
20. Is this course collaborative with any other institutions?	No
20.1 If yes, then please enter the names of the other teaching institutions:	
N/A	

21. Additional Relevant Information:

N/A

22. Indicative Bibliography:

Cooke, M. 2008. *A History of Film Music*. Cambridge University Press.

Cooke, M & Ford, F. (Eds) 2016. *The Cambridge Companion to Film Music*. Cambridge University Press.

Schiffrin, L. 2011. *Music Composition for Film & Television*. Omnibus Press.

Kalinak, K. 1992. *Settling the Score*. University of Wisconsin Press.

Karlin, F. 2004. *On the Track: A Guide to Contemporary Film Scoring*. Routledge.

Gorbman, C. 1988. *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music*. BFI Publishing.

Slobin, M. (Ed.) 2008. *Global Soundtracks: Worlds of Film Music*. Wesleyan University Press.

Neumayer, D. (Ed.) 2015. *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies*. Oxford University Press.

Dvorin, D. 2015. *Logic Pro X Advanced Music Production: Composing & Producing Professional Audio*. Peachpit Press.