Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Studio 2: Anatomy of Sound



Image Credit: Michiel Turner and Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra (2023). *Fair Land*

Please note that this specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the academic year.

Course Code	HECOS Code	Academic Session
		2027-28

Course Title	Studio 2: Anatomy of Sound
Course Contact	Dr. Jessica Argo

Credits	40
SCQF Level	8
When Taught	Semester One (Week 1-8)

Associated Programmes	BDes Sound
Lead School	School of Innovation and Technology
Other Schools	N/A
Date of Approval	Programme Approval October 2026

Course Introduction

In this course, students explore the Anatomy of Sound to convey meaning in visual content. This includes recording Foley for sound effects, capturing voice, collecting ambient sound and assembling music. Students will create a soundtrack for visual material, referring to theory on sound and its impact on an audience.

The anatomy of a soundtrack can be broken down into the effects on the body, such as '**musical** rhythms' raising the audience's heartbeat, or 'stormy weather **ambience'** breathing life into a space on screen, enveloping the audience's skin. Students will learn that these functions of sound can also be creatively blurred or swapped – for example, musical textures can be used to depict the ambient sounds of a space in the film.

This course will help students to conceptualise how sound elicits emotion, and how sound makes visuals (film or still images) feel materialised, or brought to life - to support the audience's imagination. We will delve into the larger experiences of perceiving sound through the body.

Course Aims

This course aims to equip students with the ability to:

1. Develop and apply creative approaches to sound design, including ideation, conceptualising and evaluating ideas in response to project briefs.
2. Familiarise themselves with industry standard practical workflows for sound and audio-visual works, from capture/generation to final output – and to follow ethical approaches and professional guidelines.
3. Develop knowledge of key concepts around the function of sound for moving image and its impact on the audience and society.
4. Communicate creative practice to a range of audiences, using appropriate digital tools and presentation methods.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an awareness of how sound contributes and conveys meaning to visual material, using theory on Sound and its impact on the audience.
2. Select, apply and evaluate appropriate methods for audio recording, production and post-production in the creation of sound for visual material.
3. Apply professional and ethical approaches while developing audio-visual production for an audience.
4. Communicate project processes and outcomes clearly and effectively using appropriate formats for diverse audiences.

Indicative Content

Students will be guided on best practices for capturing sound to tell the story of their visual material. Students will be encouraged through an iterative process of recording, tracklaying, editing, effects, equalisation, reverberation in appropriate Digital Audio Workstations to create these sounds, integrating them into the visual material.

To inform their practice, students will be introduced to theories around the body, the senses, affect and emotion, in sonic and cinematic creative practices. Students will discover how sound can fulfil key genre expectations held by audiences. Students will also reflect on theory about the historical origins and contemporary issues in moving image as a representation. Students will learn adaptive techniques for sonic storytelling in diverse contexts and analyse the impact of when film conventions are stretched to their limits, as creators can surprise audiences by pushing beyond what we expect to see or hear in a film.

Students will make sounds that are not just heard, but are designed to activate the audience's emotions and sensations, enacting the relational idea in Affect Theory of film as a "body" that acts on the audience's body. Theorists use these analogies to understand the way that audiences feel sensations when watching cinema, like the character on screen is feeling. Watching and listening to film is an embodied experience, rather than only following the words of a story.

Description of Learning and Teaching Methods

This course is primarily studio-based, supported by lectures, tutorials and practical lab/workshop sessions.

Students will be required to engage with a range of key texts and papers to provide a deeper contextual and theoretical underpinning for the practical techniques and methods developed in studio practice and through practical tutorials, workshops and fieldwork.

Lectures and seminars are used to disseminate theoretical, contextual and historical knowledge and address specific issues underpinning practical work. Lectures also have the broad aim of generating further debate in seminars, tutorials or further enquiry in self-directed learning or research.

Labs, Tutorials, Workshops, and Practical sessions provide students with hands-on experience - working with a range of audio-visual equipment, software and workflows. These sessions usually follow or relate to lectures and take place in computer laboratories as practical classes. Tutorials vary between individual student-tutor tutorials, group tutorials and workshops. These provide

opportunities for scaffolded problem solving and discussion, and for broader discussion of the programme themes and topics. Interactive sessions to enhance presentation skills are part of these workshops. Students will be encouraged to communicate their processes and outcomes, as presentation skills are taught in addition to the studio techniques and creative ideation.

This course is supported by a virtual learning environment tool (Canvas) for the dissemination, discussion and access to relevant course information, and signpost to other relevant teaching and learning platforms used by GSA.

Indicative Contact Hours	Notional Learning Hours
40	400

Description of Formative Assessment and Feedback Methods

Students are supported in their learning through a range of formative assessment activities as they progress through the course. These include:

- Engagement in scheduled peer review sessions where students can present work in progress for feedback from peers and tutors
- Regular feedback from tutors through in-class discussion and verbal feedback from tutors on work in progress

Description of Summative Assessment arrangements

Students submit three deliverables, individually:

1. ***Soundtrack for visual material,*** creation of sound design for existing, selected visual material to convey meaningful narrative and emotional elements within their moving image sequence. Students will deliver a rendered video file with embedded stereo audio mix.

2. ***Written Statement*** (500 words)*,* audience-focused text explaining and justifying the choice of methods and creative decisions for the *Soundtrack for visual material.* The statement should reflect on how the soundtrack aligns with the genre expectations of the visual material, referencing key influential theory and practitioners.

3. ***Concept and Process Evaluation Video*** (3-5 minutes), reflective video presentation documenting the project development process and outcomes, including decisions made, influences, challenges, and successes. Submission formats may include voice over videos, narrated slides, or other appropriate presentation styles.

Submissions will be assessed and moderated in line with the Code of Assessment. Reassessment opportunities where a student has not passed the course are outlined in the Code of Assessment.

Description of Summative Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week
Reflective Audio-Visual Outcome Portfolio including: - **Soundtrack for visual material** (Practical Audio-Visual Outcome) (approx. 3-5 min.) - **Written Statement** (500 words)	60%	11

Concept and Process Evaluation Video submission (3-6 min.)	40%	12

Exchange/Study Abroad	
Can this course be taken by Exchange/Study Abroad students?	No
Are all the students on the course taught wholly by distance learning?	No
Does this course represent a work placement or a year of study abroad?	No
Is this course collaborative with any other institutions?	No
If yes, then please provide the names of the other teaching institutions	

Reading and On-line Resources
The course indicative Reading and online Resource List is accessible via Resource Lists (see sections “Studio 2: Anatomy of Soundtrack”). This List will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect course content and subject developments.