

Carnegie Mellon University
Music 57XXX - Hacking the Music World
Fall 2015 Syllabus
Instructor: Professor Jesse Stiles (jessestiles@cmu.edu)
TA: TBD
Time: TBD
Location: The Media Lab (HLA10A), Hunt Library - Lowest Level
Class website: <http://jessetil.es/teaching/>
Office hours: TBD

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will perform a series of real-world experiments that examine new models for music creation, promotion, and distribution. We will produce original music videos, explore social media marketing & optimization, examine new platforms for monetization, and officially release digital albums and apps.

The proliferation of digital music distribution has revolutionized how music is experienced in the 21st century. Technologies for music listening, music sharing, and music discovery are in a state of rapid and limitless evolution. There is no longer a single model for a rewarding life in the world of music - we must learn to adapt to the constantly evolving landscape of the 21st century. We must hack the music world!

While examining new approaches to distribution and publication, we will also explore the question of how electronic media is redefining our understanding of music-making itself. Does a new album necessarily need to be a fixed set of sound recordings? What if it was a mobile app that reacts to the listener's environment? What if our new album used mutating algorithms to generate new musical experiences every time the listener hits play?

Throughout the semester we will form teams combining musicians, software programmers, artists, and entrepreneurs. Our teams will work together to produce new music, to design new music distribution methodologies, and to perform social media experiments that enhance the visibility of our work.

Students participating in the course should have proficiency in one or more of the following areas:

- Social Media Optimization
- Music Recording or Video Production
- Leveraging Web Application API's
- Mobile Application Design & Implementation

LEARNING GOALS

- Develop working knowledge of digital music distribution platforms, e.g. BandCamp, SoundCloud, CDBaby
- Acquire working skills in video production, a vital aspect of contemporary music dissemination
- Foster an informed and effective approach towards use of social media tools for music promotion, e.g. Twitter, Facebook, SoundCloud
- Develop working knowledge of online fundraising tools, e.g. Kickstarter, GoFundMe, Indiegogo, Patreon
- Implement effective and expedient tools to design an online presence as a musical artist
- Examine alternative strategies for digital music distribution, e.g. mobile apps, online apps, smart products

COURSE CALENDAR

The course calendar can be viewed online here: [\[Google calendar link\]](#)

ASSIGNMENTS

There will be three short-term assignments and one final project. Due dates for each of the assignments are indicated on the course calendar. All work created in the course will be done in groups, with four students per group. When presenting and documenting your work the role of each group member should be made clear - your evaluation will be based on your *individual* contribution to the group work.

Project 1 - *Your video is dropping.*

Due: Week 4

You've all been provided with an album's worth of "stems" - you will be able to remix, augment, enhance, or degrade these throughout the semester to create a new artistic identity. For our first assignment, your new artist will produce a music video.

Project 2 - *Do believe the hype.*

Due: Week 7

Use social media optimization techniques to promote your new music video. Create tweetbots, hashtags, and enlist "influencers." Go viral! S/he with the most views wins.

Project 3 - *Get money.*

Due: Week 10

Your new artist needs a little cash to release that new album or app. Now that you have a fan base, it's time to monetize. Create and execute a campaign on Kickstarter, Indiegogo, Patreon, or a similar fundraising platform. It will be required that **you actually do what you say you will do** in your campaign -- so don't make any promises you can't keep. And set your fundraising goals at a modest level based on similar campaigns you research online.

Final project - *Your music-thing is dropping.*

Release date: Week 12. Presentation/crit: Finals week.

Your artist's new album/app/music-thing is dropping! Release your new music-thing into the world, promote your music-thing, and reap the rewards. Track your results so we can analyze the effectiveness of our music-hacking techniques. We will examine our success along multiple axes: sales/downloads, social currency, technical innovation, etc.

EVALUATION:

Project 1: 20 points

Project 2: 20 points

Project 3: 20 points

Final Project: 30 points

Class Participation: 10 points

Your grades will be made available to you via Blackboard, within 2 weeks of presenting the work. This will allow you to monitor your grade in realtime - there is no reason for you to be surprised by your grade at the end of the semester as long as you are monitoring your performance via Blackboard.

BOOKS

Going Viral, Karine Nahon. ISBN-10: 0745671292

Memes in Digital Culture, Limor Shifman. ISBN-10: 0262525437
Contagious: Why Things Catch On, Jonah Berger. ISBN-10: 1451686579

Growth Hacker Marketing: A Primer on the Future of PR, Marketing, and Advertising, Ryan Holiday. ISBN-10: 1591847389

EQUIPMENT

There is a wide variety of sound, video, and photo equipment available to you from the IDEATe storage room. The Media Lab is also packed to the gills with powerful audio/video equipment. Your participation in the course makes all of this equipment available to you throughout the semester (and in the future, if you pay a minimal "Membership Fee.")

We are able to afford these many fine instruments because we are a large community, working together. To be a part of this community you must respect communally used

equipment, and take excellent care of it. If you damage equipment due to careless behavior the cost of repairs will be charged to your student account.

For your computer work you have three options:

You may work on the Mac Pro that is permanently installed in the Media Lab. Select the "Media Lab User" user account. When you are using this account create a folder with your Andrew ID and store all your files in this folder. It is very important that you back up your work every time you work on the computer. It is entirely possible that files on a communally used machine can be unexpectedly moved, erased, or modified. Get an external hard drive or USB thumb drive and back up your work constantly.

You may also work on any of the 40 MacBook Pro laptops that are available to you in the IDeATe storage room. Similarly, you must be diligent in backing up your work when using these machines. The laptops and the Mac Pro all have Max 7, Logic Pro, Audacity, Arduino, Final Cut, Photoshop, Illustrator, and many other useful pieces of software.

Thirdly, you may work on your own computer. If you work on your own computer you will be responsible for acquiring and maintaining any of the software you choose to use. Your instructor and TA cannot provide technical support on your computer for you.

USING THE MEDIA LAB

You will have access to the Media Lab outside of class hours - it is an excellent environment for you to work on your projects. To use the Media Lab outside of class time you must make a reservation using the online reservation system. When using the Media Lab outside of class you must comply with the policies indicated on the class website.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

When we are designing new software it is perfectly acceptable to use sections of code from examples found on the web, in help files, in tutorials, etc. Indeed, this is not only acceptable but is totally necessary if one wants to work efficiently.

Furthermore, when we are creating new works of electronic art is perfectly acceptable to make use of found materials (video files, sound files, images, etc.) to use as raw material in creating new works of art/music/design.

When using found code/images/sounds in your own work there are two requirements:

Attribution. You must clearly identify where the code/images/sound came from.

Transformation. You must significantly transform the materials you are using. You should extend the material, modify it into something new, offer new insight into the concepts underlying the material, etc. Work that uses borrowed code or other materials without significantly transforming those materials will result in a low grade.

More information on CMU's Academic Integrity policy can be found at:

<http://www.cmu.edu/academic-integrity>

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance: Unexcused absences are disruptive and disrespectful - especially when we are working on group projects. How is your group supposed to advance the work without you? If you are unable to attend class for any reason you must email me, and the other members of your group, in advance. Failure to contact myself and your group members before the start of class will result in an unexcused absence. Three or more unexcused absences will result in the drop of one letter grade per absence. This means that if you have three unexcused absences and would otherwise receive an A in the class, you will receive a B. If you have four unexcused absences and would otherwise receive an A, you will receive a C, etc.

Absences: You are responsible for what happens in class whether you're here or not. Organize with your classmates to get class information and material that you have missed. We cannot repeat course material in class just for you.

Participation: You are invited, encouraged, and expected to engage actively in discussion, reflection and activities. Our class time is precious and limited. Please refrain from texting, facebooking, tweeting, etc., during class time - this behaviour during class is distracting, disruptive, and disrespectful. Failure to follow this request will negatively affect your grade for class participation. Your contributions towards the class website will also count towards your class participation.