

MUS 11E: HISTORY OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC: 1970-PRESENT

Foothill College Course Outline of Record

Heading	Value
Effective Term:	Summer 2025
Units:	4
Hours:	4 lecture, 1 laboratory per week (60 total per quarter)
Degree & Credit Status:	Degree-Applicable Credit Course
Foothill GE:	Area 3: Arts & Humanities
Transferable:	CSU/UC
Grade Type:	Letter Grade Only
Repeatability:	Not Repeatable

Description

The impact of emerging electronic music styles on instrument development, recording technology and popular culture in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Incorporation of electronic music and instruments in new music, television and film soundtracks and live performance, creating a market for the development and sales of portable music synthesizers. Analysis of the impact of emerging musical styles including ambient, techno and trance on the composition of contemporary music and youth culture. Comparison of analog and digital music synthesis techniques in the recording and performance of electronic music. Advances in computer technology in relation to the compositional needs of the emerging electronic musical styles. Students will analyze historically significant electronic works from experimental academic compositions to popular music from the era.

Course Objectives

The student will be able to:

- Describe and discuss the history of electronic music and the impact on popular culture from 1970 to the present.
- Analyze electronic music instruments and synthesis techniques and their effect on musical content, popular culture and aesthetics from 1970 to the present.
- Explore electronic music styles, instruments and synthesis techniques utilized in music production from 1970 to the present.

Course Content

- Electronic musical instruments in the 1970s
 - The first wave of consumer synthesizers as a tool of expression for early electronic composers
 - Analog modular synthesis and human creation of new sounds via wave form modulation
 - Experimental electronic music using early digital synthesis
- Electronic music in the 1970s
 - Top 40 and disco and their influence on pop culture of the Baby Boom generation
 - Early synthesizers and the progressive rock sound
 - Development of fusion, the electronic evolution of American jazz from the early 20th century

- "Switched-On" and "Space" music soundtracks for emerging sci-fi films and TV programs
- Electronic musical instruments in the 1980s
 - Interest in electronic music inspires the creation and development of MIDI and affordable digital synthesis
 - Home computers and recording; electronic music capabilities for all
 - Drum machines, sequencing and the development of a new dance culture
- Electronic music in the 1980s
 - Technopop, rave culture and all night dance parties
 - Hip-hop culture and the Roland 808 drum machine
 - New age and ambient electronic music used for human healing, mood alteration and meditation
- Electronic musical instruments in the 1990s
 - Workstations for easy music creation and rhythmical manipulation essential to emerging dance styles
 - Digital audio recording available for all skill levels
 - Sampling the human manipulation of natural sounds and how it has affected multiple cultural disciplines
- Electronic music in the 1990s
 - Industrial and digital hardcore
 - IDM (intelligent dance music)
 - Grunge, nu-metal and "Invisible Digital" production
- Electronic musical instruments in the 21st century
 - DAWs (Digital Audio Workstations)
 - The return of analog synthesis
 - "Auto-Tune" plug-in and experiencing audio manipulation as a performance art vs editing musical performance
- Electronic music in the 21st century
 - EDM (electronic dance music) and the audience acceptance of electronic music in popular music
 - Dubstep, footwork and micro-genres; new sounds and composing styles in popular music in the 21st century
 - Virtual instruments and enhancement of commercial music for public consumption

Lab Content

Laboratory activities are provided for students to practice and apply their theoretical knowledge regarding music structural characteristics (rhythm, melody, form, instrumentation, and harmony), genre, and style. The lab content includes:

- In-depth, guided listening to representative musical examples.
- Additional opportunities are provided through critical analysis of live concerts, films and documentaries.
- Learning is assessed in module quizzes and essays.

Special Facilities and/or Equipment

- When taught on campus: classroom sound equipment for compact discs, audiotape and records, screen, overhead projector, slide projector, VCR and DVD.
- When taught via Foothill Global Access: on-going access to computer with email software and capabilities; email address; JavaScript enabled internet browsing software.

Method(s) of Evaluation

Methods of Evaluation may include but are not limited to the following:

- Module quizzes on each of the topic areas
- Essays in response to prompts that ask for critical exploration of a topic related to the parts of the course or concert reviews

Final examination or comprehensive project: in-depth analysis of an electronic musician including biography focusing on influences, analysis of music example for structural characteristics, personal impact, interpretation of lyrics, etc.

Method(s) of Instruction

Methods of Instruction may include but are not limited to the following:

Lecture
Discussion
Laboratory

Representative Text(s) and Other Materials

Warner, Dan. Live Wires: A History of Electronic Music. 2019.

Holmes, Thom. Electronic and Experimental Music: Technology, Music, and Culture. 2020.

Types and/or Examples of Required Reading, Writing, and Outside of Class Assignments

- A. Reading assignments: Reading of modules for each of the module topics plus online summary of the assigned reading.
B. Writing assignments: Essays responding to a prompt.

Discipline(s)

Music or Commercial Music