

## Example Syllabus: Master's Level Course on Audiovisual Composition

This production-centred module focuses on audiovisual composition. It covers several theoretical and practical approaches as well as video production software and techniques. Students will learn about the history of visual music and other cultural and historical contexts for audiovisual composition. They will analyse and discuss pieces of historical significance along with modern examples. Finally, they will produce audiovisual work using the theory and examples discussed in class to inform their compositional strategies. Production techniques taught in the course will centre on video editing and processing but will include other aspects of production such as filming and compression for various distribution formats.

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### Assignment Overview

#### Assignment 1 – Technique Study 1

Produce a 1-2 min audiovisual piece that carefully considers the relationship between the sound and image within the piece's composition.

Accompany your work with a short (less than 1 page) discussion on the audiovisual relationship within your work and how it is used within the work's composition.

Artistic Success	30%
Technical Understanding	20%
Audiovisual Relationship	30%
Documentation	20%

#### Assignment 2 – Technique Study 2

Produce two short 1-2 min audiovisual studies from the same bank of manipulated sound and video material, each exploring different compositional relationships between the sound and image. The material in both pieces should be similar but the audiovisual relationships should not be.

Accompany your work with diagrams that explain and contrast the compositional development and structure of both pieces. Include a short discussion explaining their differences and compositional affect. You may notate your diagrams and use them to help with your arguments.

Artistic Success	30%
Audiovisual Relationships (Contrasting)	40%
Documentation	30%

#### Final Production Assignment : Audiovisual Composition

Produce a 3-5 min audiovisual work that carefully considers the relationship between the sound and image within the composition.

Accompany your work with a short (1 - 2 page) discussion on the audiovisual relationship within your work and how it is used within the work's composition. Accompany your work with a notated diagram that explain the piece's compositional development. Use examples and theory as discussed in class or from relevant outside sources.

Artistic Success	30%
Technical Understanding	20%
Audiovisual Relationship	30%
Documentation	20%

### Analysis Paper

Analyze an audiovisual composition (5 – 15 min). This category may include music videos, audiovisual performances, or experimental short films set to music, if they demonstrate significant variation in composition. You may consider the cultural context in which the work was produced but must discuss aspects of the audiovisual relationship (associative, semantic, and perceptual) as manifested within the piece as well as the work's structural form. Your paper should include both visual and bibliographic references and be no more than 3000 words (2000-3000 is acceptable). A list of potential pieces for analysis will be circulated closer to the assignment deadline.

Background and Context	20%
Structural Analysis and Description	30%
Analysis of Audiovisual Relationship	30%
Legibility / Writing	20%

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## Week 1: Introduction to Audiovisual Composition

### Introduction to the class

- What is audiovisual composition?
- Overview of the Syllabus
- From visual music to live AV performance: What do they have in common?
- Comparison of three short audiovisual compositions.

## Week 2: Early Visual Music and Experimental Animation part 1

### Early Visual Music part 1

- Cinema and Animation history

- Film music before the talkies
- Early Visual Music: Oscar Fischinger
- Early Visual Music: Mary Ellen Bute
- Other pioneers

### Week 3: Early Visual Music and Experimental Animation part 2

#### Early Visual Music and experimental animation

- Animation and Technology
- Sound Animation: Norman McLaren

### Week 4: Early Visual Music and Experimental Animation part 3

#### Early Visual Music and experimental animation part 3

- Early Computer Graphics: John and James Whitney
- Mechanical computer experiments

#### Associative relationships between sound and image

- Common associations
- Temporal relationships
- Can properties between media be paired?

### Week 5: Montage and Editing

#### Film Theory 1: Motion and Affect created through editing

- The Kuznetsov Effect
- Eisenstein and his theory of montage
- Walter Murch on editing and 'the cut'.
- Audiovisual Composition in Film
- Narrative Audiovisual Composition (continued in Week 9)

### Week 6: The Audiovisual Contract and Relational Movement

#### Sound and Image

- How the film soundtrack works
- Aural Perception / Visual Perception
- Analysis: Synchresis
- Theory: Gestalt Perception

## Week 7: Lyrical Film

The film avant-garde

Experimental Techniques

- Lyrical time
- The cut-up

Experimental Film-makers

- Maya Deren
- Stan Brakhage
- Phill Niblock

## Week 8: Narrative, Audiovisual Composition and the Construction of Meaning

Semantic Meanings in Audiovisual Composition

- Revisiting sound in film
- How do sound and image inform each other?
- Sound and Image Metaphors (Nicholas Cook)
- The similarity and difference test

## Week 9: Sonification and Visualization

What is Sonification? Visualization?

Image from Sound

- Lumia
- Abstract Expressionism

Sound from Image

- Visual Scores
- Image reading machines

Unified Sound and Image (Conformance)

## Week 10: Live AV Performance

In Performance

- Real-time video
- 'Liveness'
- Live AV Performance
- Combined Sound and Image Software

Ryoichi Kurokawa - Read (2004) 41'00

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**Additional Reading:**

Please note: I have included the reading list for this module with this handout, however, the numerical id of the weeks differ as they correspond to the terms of my current institution.