

MUS 9543b: Listening to Popular Music: Record Production pt. 1 — Tracking & Signal Processing  
Winter 2016/ Dr. J Hodgson ([jhodgs5@uwo.ca](mailto:jhodgs5@uwo.ca))/ WED 7-10pm @ IMC lab

Popular music is primarily made and heard by making and listening to records now. Yet researchers who study popular music have very little to say about how records are made, nor do they typically consider even the most basic audible artefacts of the record production process. In fact, it sometimes seems that the primary object of study in the field of popular music studies — namely, recorded musical communications — doesn't matter much to researchers. However, most analysts simply cannot hear what they are missing.

This course is designed to rectify this scholarly oversight, and mostly through tactile and experiential engagements with popular music recording practices. Indeed, to understand how records are made — to actually hear recorded popular music — students must learn to produce recordings of popular music themselves. By making popular music, we hear it more accurately. Thus, in learning to produce recordings of popular music, students who take this course will acquire a crucial new way of listening to popular music.

Given the vastness of this musical area, we can only consider the first half of the production process in an introductory semester: tracking and signal processing. Moreover, we focus specifically on how these processes present in the modern digital-audio (“project”) paradigm. Those who would like to consider the “finalizing” stage of record production, namely, mixing and mastering, should enrol in a more advanced course I offer bi-annually called “Record Production pt. 2 — Mixing and Mastering,” or perhaps see me to enrol in the PMC creative project option, which this course is designed to partially support.

Students of all disciplinary backgrounds are welcome in this class. Formal musical training, and experience in record making, is neither assumed nor required. Finally, I do not grade creative content in this course. I am interested only to see that students can recognize, and reproduce, common-practice “project” paradigm production techniques by semester's end.

#### Required Materials.

Both course texts are available at the University book store in the University Campus Centre building. Students should also acquire two 8-16 GB jump drives for archiving and submitting course work.

- 2 Jump Drives @ 8-16 GB for submitting course work.
- Jay Hodgson, *Understanding Records: A Field Guide to Recording Practice*. Continuum, 2010.
- Russ Hepworth-Sawyer & Mark Cousins, *Logic Pro 9: Audio and Music Production*. Focal, 2010.

#### Evaluation.

Final grades are comprised of a participation grade (70%), which encompasses weekly assignments, and a final project (30%) due on the last day of class.

#### Statement on Academic Offences.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic offence, as found at: [http:// www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

#### Statement on Health and Wellness.

As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help students achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing a graduate degree. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone in whom they feel comfortable confiding, such as a faculty supervisor, a program advisor, or the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies). Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html)

## Schedule.

Readings are due on the dates listed below. Video playlists are accessible via the course website, accessed by following the appropriate links @ <http://www.audiogeek.info>

### UNIT ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT PARADIGM OF RECORD PRODUCTION

January 5 — Intro to the course & course concept

January 12 — User Interfaces as Drivers of Creativity: The Arrange Window in Logic (H-S&C: Chapters 2&4)

January 19 — Musical Instrument Digital Interface: Modern Sequencing (H-S&C: Chapter 6)

January 26 — Representing Sound: Digital-Audio (H-S&C: Chapter 5; UR: Chapter 1)

### UNIT TWO: SIGNAL PROCESSING (TRACKING & MIXING MODALITIES)

2 February — Automating Listening: Dynamics Processing (UR: Chapter 2, subsection: “Dynamics Processing”)

9 February — Automating Filtering: EQ (UR: Chapter 2, subsection: “EQ”)

### ————— READING WEEK —————

23 February — Representing Acoustics: Reverb (UR: Chapter 2, subsection: “Reverb”)

1 March — Psychoacoustic Art: Delay (UR: Chapter 2, subsection: “Delay” & “Modulation Processing”)

8 March — Change Over Time: Modulation & LFOS (HS&C: Chapter 7; UR Chapter 2, subsection “Modulation”)

### UNIT THREE: MIXING & MASTERING

15-22 March — Mixing (HS&C: Chapters 8 & 9; UR Chapter 3)

29 March — Mastering (UR: Chapter 4)

### FINAL PROJECT SUBMISSION (APRIL 5)

5 April — Final Projects Due at the beginning of class.

## Recording Resources for the BA in Popular Music Studies and MA in Popular Music & Culture programs

Some courses in Western University’s BA in Popular Music Studies and MA in Popular Music & Culture programs make use of two different recording environments on campus: (i) the music pod in the IMC lab; and (ii) the popular music recording environment in TC 345a. These spaces have been retrofitted for recording, outfitted with technology, and are maintained by Dr. J. Hodgson. Bookings are done by doodle polls, which I post monthly to the course website ([www.audiogeek.info](http://www.audiogeek.info)).

### THE MUSIC POD (IMC Lab, North Campus Building)

#### Recording Complement —

- iMac
- Steinberg UR28M 2x2 interface
- M-AUDIO EX66 monitors
- Logic 9
- Celemony Melodyne
- Kaotica “Eyeball” Microphone Isolator
- SM57
- SM58
- 1 Large Diaphragm Condenser Mic
- 2 XLR cables
- 1 “patch” cable
- 2 microphone stands

#### Recommended Use —

- quiet single or dual channel (XLR/DI) tracking
- pitch correction & other editing using Melodyne

#### Booking Restrictions —

- Students who have taken four weeks of MUS 2736 or MUS 9543b, and who are currently enrolled in a “recording module” course, can book time in the music pod in the IMC lab. The music pod is booked on an hourly basis. At the beginning of every week, a doodle poll is created with available times, which can be booked by students on a first-come-first-serve basis. Each student may book two separate hours per week in the pod. Students are expected to set-up, track, and tear down within that time frame. Failure to properly tear down will result in a 4 week ban from the environment. Since access to the IMC lab expires when courses end, students who use the pod can be given the door code directly, and may coordinate their own use. The door code will be changed at the end of every semester.

#### TC345a (Talbot College, 3rd floor): EDITING STATION

#### Recording Complement —

- iMac
- AVID mbox 2
- Logic 9
- Celemony Melodyne
- Headphones

#### Recommended Use —

- pitch correction & other editing using Melodyne
- mixing; mastering; other forms of post-production

#### Booking Times —

- Students who have completed MUS 2736 or MUS 9543b, and who are currently enrolled in a “recording module” course, can book time at the Editing Station in TC345a. It is reserved for quiet work, however. Efforts are made to ensure that students do not book this time concurrent with loud tracking sessions. At the beginning of every week, a doodle poll is created with available times, which can be booked by students on a first-come-first-serve basis. Each student may book only one hour per week at this station. It is maintained primarily as a secondary station for times when the IMC pod is overbooked, and is only offered during certain hours of the week. Students who have been put on a week by Dr. Hodgson can grab the key from Julia Lazaretto at the Dean’s office. It must be returned within the allotted time frame (ie., if you book 7-10am, it must be returned by 10am).

#### TC345a (Talbot College, 3rd floor): TRACKING ENVIRONMENT

#### Recording Complement —

- iMac
- Digidesign 002
- Kaotica “Eyeball” Microphone Isolator
- hemi-anechoic chamber
- LogicPro9
- 2 “patch” cables
- 4 XLR cables
- various stomp boxes
- 12 acoustic panels
- 4 microphone stands

#### Recommended Use —

- audio-engineering functions such as tracking drums, guitar, vocals, etc.

#### Booking Times —

- Students who have completed MUS 2736, and who are currently enrolled in a “recording module” course, can book time for tracking in TC345a. Tracking slots are booked in 180 minute cells, and students are expected to set-up, track, and tear down within that time frame. Failure to properly tear down will result in a 4 week ban from the environment. During particular weeks in MUS 3738b, Digital Engineering, the tracking environment will be “booked out” for a week to facilitate particular recording functions: ie., recording drums; recording electric bass; recording electric guitars; etc. At the beginning of every week, a doodle poll is created with available times, which can be booked by students on a first-come-first-serve basis. Each student may book one available 90 minute session in TC345a per week. Students who have been put on a week by Dr. Hodgson can grab the key from Julia Lazaretto at the Dean’s office. It must be returned within the allotted time frame (ie., if you book 7-10am, it must be returned by 10am).

TC345a (Talbot College, 3rd floor): ADVISING STATION

#### Recording Complement —

- SSL 24 channel I/O
- API Lunchbox 6b
- 2 x API 550b EQ
- 2 x Shadow Hills Mono-Gama Pre
- elyssia xPressor “dual-mono” compressor
- Lexicon reverb unit with LARC
- 2 x db25 “d-sub” cabling
- ADAM A7 monitors
- monitor stands

#### Recommended Use —

- used by Dr. J. Hodgson for teaching in TC 345a, to advise creative project students, and to advise students enrolled in recording module courses on advanced creative projects

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