MUSIC 3736B: VOCAL PRE-PRODUCTION, TRACKING, AND EDITING
Dr R. Toft, TC-114, ext. 85104
Tuesday, 1:30-3:30, TC-200 // Thursday, 2:30-3:30, TC-200

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Practical application of basic principles essential for producers and singers to record vocals.
Topics: Pre-production – singing (phrasing, accent, emphasis, messa di voce, legato, staccato, portamento, appoggiatura, tempo rubato, register, tonal contrast)
Production – microphones, principles of operation and use
Post-production – editing (EQ, compression, de-essing, reverberation, etc.)
The course consists of a mix of lectures and workshops.

CONTENT AND TEACHING PHILOSOPHY
The central focus of virtually all pop/rock records is the vocal track. This course teaches the practical skills necessary for singers to deliver texts convincingly and for producers to help vocalists reach their full potential. Producers regularly coach singers in the pre-production phase of a project, and this role requires them to assess performances and address problems before tracking begins. Singers, for their part in the process, need a set of performing skills – everything from sibilance and plosive control to various aspects of phrasing and dynamics – that will minimize the amount of work engineers must do to enhance the track after it has been recorded. Audio engineers track vocalists through microphones capable of rendering voices in a flattering manner and edit the performances to optimize them for a variety of playback systems.

From at least the sixteenth century, musicians have realized that knowledge precedes practice, and because performers find it difficult to execute their craft well if they do not have a firm grasp of the concepts involved, this course combines academic comprehension with practical application. Students will be expected to read about vocal procedures, microphones (dynamic, condenser, ribbon), and digital editing tools. This information will guide our practice, and at the end of the course, participants will be expected to understand the material well and to skillfully apply the concepts studied. The goal of the lectures and workshops is to show both singers and producers how to employ principles quickly and effectively in a studio environment. As the term progresses, participants will be expected to take an increasingly active role in workshops.

During the course, singing will take place over pre-recorded backing tracks.

COURSE MATERIALS
Required Text:

ASSESSMENT
50% Recorded vocal track (a fully edited vocal over a pre-recorded backing track) – due 3 April by 3:00 pm (place the assignment in my mailbox in the main office)
50% Two mid-term tests, one on principles of singing and the other on principles of microphones, mic placement, and digital editing (each test is worth 25% of the final grade)

Note: In order to receive a passing grade in this course, students must attend 80% of the classes
COURSE OUTLINE

Part 1 Delivering words
lectures and workshops
mid-term test on terminology, principles, and concepts (covers part 1)

Part 2 Microphones and their use, tracking
lectures and workshops

Part 3 Digital editing and work on final project
lectures and workshops
mid-term test on terminology, principles, and concepts (covers parts 2 and 3)

PREREQUISITE
Music 2736A/B
Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you will be removed from the course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

PROTOCOL
Cell phones, computers of any kind (including laptops), tablets, and personal listening devices (iPod, etc.) are not permitted in class – notes are to be taken by hand. I have found that the use of laptops/tablets is almost universally abused and regret the fact that I cannot accommodate those who find laptop computers and tablets helpful for taking notes. Although these devices are convenient, they are not necessary for the work we do in class. Note: students with a documented need for the use of a laptop or tablet will be exempt from this restriction (documentation from Western’s Student Accessibility Services must be provided).

Any student using a prohibited device or engaging in disruptive behaviour (including excessive whispering/talking) will be asked to leave the class.

ATTENDANCE
Students will acquire most of the framework necessary for vocal pre-production, tracking, and editing through lecture material presented in class, as well as in workshops. Attendance is imperative, and to receive a passing grade in this course, students must attend 80% of the classes (that is, 29 out of the 36 class hours; please note that the two-hour time slot counts as two class hours). Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class.

This policy will be applied with no exceptions, unless a note from a medical practitioner is provided (further information on medical and non-medical absence is provided at the end of this document). Auditions, family holidays, computer malfunctions, tiredness, transportation problems, part-time jobs, etc. are not legitimate reasons for missing class.
CONSULTATION
I am available for consultation outside class by appointment. Please see me either before or after class to arrange a time. I prefer to conduct business ‘in person’ rather than by email, and I do not answer questions about course content by email. On the rare occasion that a student misses a lecture for legitimate and medically documented reasons, I will provide assistance with course material, but please be advised that I do not give private summaries of lectures. Students should rely on their peers to gather, and understand, material from classes they miss. See me only to clarify what you and your peers cannot grasp independently.

NON-MEDICAL AND MEDICAL ABSENCES / MENTAL HEALTH
Students are responsible for making up any missed classes or assignments as soon as possible. In order to ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing more than 30% of the student’s overall grade in the course shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation in the form of a completed and appropriately signed Student Medical Certificate (SMC) indicating that the student was seriously affected by illness and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities, or the equivalent documentation for non-medical or compassionate grounds.

Students seeking academic consideration must communicate with their instructors no later than 24 hours after the end of the period covered by either the self-reported absence or SMC, or immediately upon their return following a documented absence, to clarify how they will be expected to fulfil the academic expectations they may have missed during the absence. Documentation, if required, shall be submitted to the Office of the Associate Dean, Undergraduate (TC210).

Note that the new Self-Reporting Absence Portal may not be used for requesting academic relief for work worth more than 30%, or for Final Exams scheduled during the official examination period.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @ Western https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES
Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoffence.pdf.

PLAGIARISM
Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing, such as, footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see the Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).