



MUSI3551 — Fall 2026

Rock and Pop Ensemble

Syllabus

Course Information

Class:

Time: Monday/Wednesday, 9:30–10:45am or 3:30–4:45pm

Dates: August 24th–December 17th, 2027

Place: West Village 277, 275, 163

Instructor Information

Instructor:

Name: Nathaniel Condit-Schultz

Email: natcs@gatech.edu

Office: Couch 209E (in person) or Teams (remote)

Hours: [Book a meeting](#)

Graduate Teaching Assistant:

Name: TBA

Email: TBA

Office: TBA

Hours: tba

Course Description

In this course, students will learn, rehearse, and perform a set of rock/pop music. “Rock/pop” is construed as widely as possible, encompassing all styles of Anglo-American vernacular music from roughly 1950 onwards, as well as derivative genres from overseas. Example genres include blues, folk, rhythm and blues, k-pop, prog-rock, hip-hop, electronic, heavy metal, punk, and reggae. The set list may include cover songs, original songs, or both. We may also work on producing high-quality recordings of original music.

Learning Goals

In preparing for performance(s), students will build their knowledge and skills as professional musicians. Topics we will work on may include:

- Musicianship (e.g., playing in tune, playing in time)
- Ensemble dynamics (e.g., how to play off each other)
- Jamming
- Improvising—both individually and as a group
- Musical dynamics
- The role of all the instruments in a typical rock band, and how to set them up and break them down
- How to make your instrument(s) sound good
- Professional recording practices
- Ensemble arranging
- Composition
- Songwriting

My hope is that each and every student *grows* as a musician each semester. I will work with each student, or band, to identify specific skills that you can focus on developing, and guide you towards projects that will facilitate that development.

Prerequisites

This course is intended for students who are already sufficiently skilled with a relevant musical instrument (or singing) to perform. Thus, this course will **not** include instrumental lessons. However, as a *vernacular music*, rock/pop is not necessarily virtuosic, and players of only moderate ability may still participate, depending on the makeup of the class. No prior experience playing in a group or recording in a studio is strictly required, though it may be a factor influencing my decisions in the “audition” process (below). No prior experience playing rock/pop music is strictly required, though, again, it may influence my decisions in the “audition” process.

The ensemble is primarily geared towards guitarists, bassists, keyboard/piano players, drummers, and singers. However, other instrumentalists are free to audition on their instrument. The ensemble is also (potentially) open to live sound engineers and artists who play other “pop-music technology”: turntables, Ableton Live, etc.

Instruments

All musicians are expected to have their instruments available to play *at home*—the only exceptions are drummers and pianists/keyboardists. For in-person rehearsals/jams, drums, keyboards, and amplification (guitar amps, PA, etc.) will be set up in West Village rehearsal spaces.

- Guitars, bassists should bring their own instrument, cables, and a tuner. You *may* bring your own amp and/or effects pedals.
- Drummers should bring their own cymbals and sticks to rehearsals.
- Keyboardists *may* wish to bring their own keyboard and laptop (with software synths).
- Other instrumentalists (e.g., brass players) need to have their own instruments which they can play at home *and* bring to in-person rehearsals.

Course Structure

This semester, our focus will be divided between two goals: preparing for our performance(s) and producing recordings of original music. In-person class time will be spent on rehearsing, developing specific skills (dynamics, jamming, etc.), composing, and recording.

The class is divided into two sections, one meeting in the morning, one in the afternoon. Each section will be divided into two bands (by me), for a total of four bands. Each band will prepare a set of music to perform and/or record. During class sessions, I will give feedback regarding musicianship, showmanship, and sound

quality, and decide which songs to pursue for performances or recording. I will rotate between “sitting in” with each band as needed.

All students are expected to learn and practice their parts for the songs they are playing *outside* of class. Using class time to listen to and learn repertoire is highly inefficient.

Try-outs

There is limited space in the bands. In the first week of each semester, I will engage with all new recruits in groups and one-on-one with you to determine—as best I can—if your musicianship skills and experience are suitable for the ensemble. To be “suitable” you must

1. have sufficient *basic* instrumental skill, and
2. be a *good fit* with some of the other players in the ensemble.

“Good fit” means that your instrument/skill/taste matches well with a group of other players I can group you with. If I cannot see a way for you to productively participate and grow as a member of the ensemble this semester, I may not let you join. **This is true for new-members and old members**—past members may be excluded from the ensemble if the “fit” is not right *this semester*. For example, if I have too many drummers enrolled, I may be forced to drop one drummer, even though they are definitely “good enough” to play. Remember, if you are rejected, this simply means that I can’t find place for you; **it doesn’t mean that you are “not good enough.”** I’ll encourage you to try and join again next semester!

Repertoire

Bands will pick their own repertoire, subject to my approval, to work on. I will ultimately select which songs are performed at our show, or recorded. I strongly prefer original songs over covers, and will encourage/allow as many original songs as possible. My approval of songs will be determined by:

1. how it fits with the overall set;
2. how good a performance I you can pull off;
3. how much it will help the band and its members *grow* as musicians.

I will work to make sure each student has a voice in choosing the music they play; However, the practical reality is that not everybody will be equally happy with our set lists. *You are expected to play and participate just as enthusiastically whether you like the music or not.*

Rehearsal Space/Time

The Rock/Pop ensemble will have West Village 275 and 163 as our rehearsal spaces this semester. A PA, drum set, keyboard, and bass/guitar amps will be set up all semester. The following guidelines will be strictly enforced:

- **Do not remove equipment from the room.**
- **Do not move equipment within the room.**

Everybody should make every effort to keep the rehearsal spaces neatly set up and ready to go at all times.

Bands will rehearse either every Monday and Wednesday, either from 9:30–10:45am or 3:30pm–4:45pm. Members of the ensemble may also, potentially, access our rehearsal spaces at other times during the week. However, we you cannot “drop in” whenever we want; Rather, we must set up specific time blocks each week for using the room(s).

Attendance

Attendance in this course is graded. Show up on time, or your grade will be affected.

If you are feeling sick, please do not come to rehearsals, performances, or in-person office hours. I will do everything I can to help you catch up on anything you miss due to illness. For occasional mild illnesses, you do not need to officially document your illness or receive a doctor's note—it is best to simply stay home and inform me of your absence via email *before rehearsal starts*. However, if you miss more than two consecutive rehearsals, or more than five in total, we must meet (remotely) to discuss how your absences will affect your band—in these cases, I *may* need to ask for formal documentation (e.g., a doctor's note) to justify significant accommodations.

Absences for other valid (documented) professional purposes (e.g., interviews) are also acceptable. If you miss sessions for any *other* reason, or if you fail to inform me why you were absent *before rehearsal*, I don't mind personally, but you will not receive credit for attendance.

Performances

Each semester, we we will perform twice in the West Village. This year, the shows are scheduled:

- TBA

On these days, *everyone* who doesn't have (official) course conflicts will need to help with setting our stage and sound system in the morning (9am–Noon). Sound checks for each band will be scheduled between 1pm–5pm, so bands will also need to make time (one hour each) in that time window.

Grading

Participation/Engagement 40

Punctuality/Attendance/Not wasting time 20

Out-of-class preparation 20

Peer feedback/support 10

Maintaining Equipment/Set up 10

Policy Statements

Reasonable Accommodation

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with bona fide disabilities will be afforded reasonable accommodation. The [Office of Disability Services](#) will certify a disability and advise faculty members of reasonable accommodations.

Learning Environment

As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. If you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me, the [Office of Disability Services](#), or the School of Music administration.

Changes to Course

Since all classes do not progress at the same rate, it may be necessary to modify the requirements laid out in this syllabus, or their timing, as circumstances dictate. Adequate notification will be given in writing and be discussed in class.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The School of Music community of faculty, staff, and students aspires to create and nurture an environment that is supportive of all backgrounds where different views and ideas are respected and encouraged. In all our pursuits, we commit to justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion with regard to race, national origin, language, age, sexual orientation, gender, religion, and ability. Moreover, we will encourage intellectual inquiry and respectful exchange that cements our dedication to these principles.

Equipment Treatment & Safety

In this course, students will make use of audio equipment which is the property of the Georgia Institute of Technology, including the facilities themselves. This equipment is valuable, fragile, and potentially dangerous. Students are expected to handle all equipment with appropriate respect and caution. Students are also expected to monitor the behavior of their classmates to assure that they too handle equipment appropriately.

Of course, all equipment is expected to receive *some* minor damage and wear during use, and occasional accidents may even result in severe damage to equipment. Still, students are expected to treat Georgia Tech property respectfully, as they would their own property, and make every effort to minimize damage the equipment.

Students may not remove any audio equipment from West Village or Couch Building without permission from the School of Music. Students caught stealing (or “borrowing”) equipment will receive a grade of zero in *the course*, and be reported to the [Office of Student Integrity](#).

Hearing Health

Rock/pop music is by its nature, extremely loud. All students are expected to wear protective ear plugs during rehearsals, auditions, and performances. I recommend professional musician’s ear plugs like [these](#). I will also provide cheaper foam ear plugs during rehearsals, but musician’s ear plugs are definitely worth the money!