



Syllabus

Course Title: From Māori to Middle Earth: Film Music Appreciation

Program and Date: New Zealand Winter – December 27, 2026 – January 9, 2027

Instructor Name: Dr. Christopher Sharpe

Instructor Home Institution: Murray State University

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Academic Department: Music

Get to Know Your Professor

My name is Dr. Christopher Sharpe, and I am Assistant Professor of Trombone at Murray State University. In addition to my responsibilities teaching trombone and Aural Skills at Murray State, I also teach Film Music Appreciation. I have held a love of film music ever since seeing Star Wars as a young kid, and I incessantly listened to the soundtracks from the Star Wars prequels and The Lord of the Rings growing up. These scores inspired me to become a professional trombonist and composer, and John Williams and Howard Shore are two of my biggest influences. I am extremely excited about getting to see some of the elements from the Lord of the Rings franchise in person and learn more about films in New Zealand!

Course Description

Explore the evolution of music in film through the lens of New Zealand's film industry, known as the "Hollywood of the Pacific." You will learn to distinguish the major eras of film history and the composers and musical styles that defined their sound, like Howard Shore's scores for the Lord of the Rings films, film music from Māori musician Dalvanius Prime, and many more. Experience elements of these films in person at the Hobbiton film set in Matamata and the Wētā Workshop in Wellington, visit museums in Auckland and Wellington featuring Māori culture, and learn more about New Zealand's film industry, the composers who have brought New Zealand's films to life, and how the various cultural elements in New Zealand interact and influence each other.

Course Level and Credit Hours

Undergraduate (lower-division) and Honors – 3 credit hours

Prerequisite(s)

This course does not have any prerequisites. It is one of several Music courses students have the option of taking in our required University Studies component of degrees at Murray State.



Syllabus

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of all coursework with a passing grade and full participation in course activities, students shall be able to:

- Describe the major eras of film history and associated composers and musical styles through the lens of New Zealand's film industry.
- Describe the roles of various jobs throughout the film production process as seen at the film sets at Hobbiton and Wētā Workshop.
- Apply critical listening, critical viewing, and analytical skills to the function of music in films from New Zealand across multiple genres.
- Honors section: Students in the honors level will be expected to dive further into analysis regarding the difference in British Commonwealth influence on New Zealand filmmaking and its subject matter versus the themes explored in films made by New Zealanders with Māori ancestry, as well as the broader historical context of the British colonization of New Zealand.

Required Readings and Materials

All readings will be sourced from the public domain and provided by the professor on Google Classroom for students to read and interact with before traveling to New Zealand. Students will be required to watch some films before traveling to New Zealand, many of which will only be available for rent on online platforms – please plan accordingly.

Assignments and Grades

The final grade will be assessed as follows:

- Pre-departure writing assignment = 10%
- Journal entries every day or two based on instructor's prompts = 25%
- Short presentation of assigned topic at site in New Zealand = 20%
- Participation = 10%
- Short essays, analyses, and reviews of site visits due one month after return = 10%
- Final essay due one month after return from New Zealand = 25%

For the final researched essay, students in the standard section will be asked to write about the history of New Zealand's film industry and what they learned from the program. Students in the honors section will have an additional prompt asking them to apply their understanding of the cultural dynamics at play in New Zealand's film industry by writing about the history of film music made by Native Americans and how that music differs from the music written in a more traditionally Western European orchestral style that has been commonly used by American filmmakers.



Syllabus

Grading Scale

The following scale will be used to compute your grade.

90 - 100% = A
80 - 89% = B
70 - 79% = C
60 - 69% = D
Below 60% = F

Onsite Learning Experiences and Activities

Onsite learning experiences in this class will likely include the following site visits. This is a tentative list which will be replaced with a detailed daily itinerary of class meetings and field trips prior to the departure date.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Hobbiton film set in Matamata● Wētā Workshops in Wellington and Auckland● Wellington Town Hall (where parts of The Lord of the Rings soundtrack were recorded)● Te Papa Tongarewa Museum in Wellington● Auckland War Memorial Museum● Bay of Plenty/Rotorua |
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Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory at all scheduled activities and class meetings as well as field trip excursions. This includes any virtual meetings before and after the onsite experience. Repeated absences, including for ill health, will require documentation to be excused.

Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty (see your campus student handbook for definitions) will not be tolerated and will result in failing assignment grades or even a course grade of F. Violations of academic honesty will be reported back to student's home campus. The use of generative AI is strictly forbidden in this class.
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Physical Expectations

Program requires walking 3-5 miles per day on uneven pavement in all kinds of weather and long periods of standing. Students must be able to carry their own bags and belongings.



Syllabus

Disability Accommodation

CCSA is committed to providing access to education abroad to the extent possible in a study abroad setting. The earlier CCSA and the faculty know the needs, the more likely we can accommodate them. At a minimum, students seeking accommodations are to contact both the CCSA office and the faculty one month in advance of the program's beginning. Students seeking such accommodation must provide CCSA with a copy of the letter on file with their own Office of Disability Services outlining what services they receive on their home campus.

Title IX Policy

Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sexual discrimination violate CCSA policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain support from the Onsite Program Director or the CCSA Executive Director. To report sexual misconduct or sex discrimination, contact either of these two officers. Disclosure to faculty instructors or CCSA officers of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on the program or involving a visitor, student or employee is not confidential under Title IX. Faculty and other CCSA employees are required to forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the CCSA Executive Director.

Statement about Final Syllabus

Please note that all CCSA syllabi are subject to change, but every effort will be made to ensure participants receive notice of such changes in a timely manner.