

Fall 2023

STS-325 (005): ST: Songwriting: Writing and Producing Music

Laura Montanari

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Montanari, Laura, "STS-325 (005): ST: Songwriting: Writing and Producing Music" (2023). *Humanities Syllabi*. 704.

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NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE INFORMATION

STS 325 - ST: Songwriting: Writing & Producing Music - Fall 2023

- Professor: Laura Montanari
- Class Days/Time MR 4 - 5.20
- Location: CULM 311
- Credits: 3 credits
- Email Address: laura.montanari@njit.edu
- Office Hours: after class or by appointment on Zoom

COMMUNICATION

Typically I respond within 24 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. If you do not hear back within 24 hours, resend your email. Your wellbeing and success in the course are central. If you are experiencing any challenges completing course requirements, please reach out early and often—I am here to help!

COURSE DELIVERY

This course is a participatory class with collaborations and hands-on activities. **NO LAPTOPS, iPADS, OR CELL PHONES** during class times unless needed for the activities or exercises assigned. If you need to take a call or text you can step outside of the classroom.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to beginning music theory in the form of harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic tools to be employed in the creation of original songs. By the end of this course students will be able to write original melodies and lyrics all

the while making informed choices in regards to harmony, rhythm, and instrumentation. DAW's will be used to apply concepts learned in class and to record and produce final song renditions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Use lyrical strategies in order to create original lyrics
- Use melodic strategies in order to create original melodies
- Use common chord progressions & non-diatonic chords in order to create original songs
- Apply prosody to arranging and production of original songs
- Collaborate with fellow students in the creation of an original EP or performance
- Use a preferred DAW and utilize basic recording and audio editing techniques

COURSE MATERIALS

First and foremost I highly encourage you to get a special songwriting journal/notebook!

These books are **NOT** mandatory and are all available at the library. We will rely on them quite often during the course.

- Keys, S. (2018). The craft of songwriting: Music, meaning, & emotion. Berklee Press.
- Pattison, P. (2009). Writing better lyrics. The essential guide to powerful songwriting. Berklee Press.
- Rooksby, R. (2011). The songwriting sourcebook. How to turn chords into great songs. Backbeat Books.
- Charnas, D. (2022). Dilla time: The life and afterlife of J Dilla, the Hip-Hop producer who reinvented rhythm. MCD.

RECOMMENDED FREE SOFTWARE:

- [Pro Tools First](#)
- [Garage Band](#)
- [Audacity](#)
- [Studio One Free](#)
- [Podium Free](#)
- [OhmStudio](#)

- [Ardour](#)
- [Soundtrap](#)
- [Logic Pro](#)
- You can get [Ableton Live Intro](#) for \$79 [on sale for \$39 right now... best price ever!].
- The [full version](#) at the educational discount is \$349 [on sale for \$179 right now].
- This version of [Live Lite](#) is actually **free**, see if you can get it to work.

Here is a [summary of the differences](#).

COURSE POLICIES

- **Participation:** This is an activity-based course and your participation is very important both in discussions and in hands-on projects.
- **Attendance:** Punctuality is a top priority. Four late arrivals will count as 1 absence. Please let me know if your absence is of a serious nature such as an illness, death in family, or other similar circumstances. Attendance grades are calculated on a 100-pt. scale: 0-1 absences are 100 points; 2 absences are 90 points; 3 absences are 80 points, 4 absences are 70. **More than 4 absences may result in failure for the entire course.**
- **Emergency class cancellation plan:** If a class needs to be canceled (which will probably never happen), I will send an announcement via canvas email.
- **Classroom expectations for behavior/etiquette:** No Laptops, iPads, or cell phones unless needed for activities. No food or drinks in the classroom.
- **Plagiarism/AI:** We are all witnessing and observing what AI can do for us (great advancements in medicine, for example!). This is an elective creative class which is inviting you to create something unique that represents you and that makes you feel good in the process. Your humanity and creativity are what matter at the end of the day. If plagiarism is defined as:
 - Using or attempting to use written, oral, or graphic work which was authored or prepared by another and submitting it as one's own without appropriate citation or credit.
 - Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise.
 - Copying from a source without quotations or appropriate documentation.
 - Copying from any source and altering a word or phrase to avoid exact quotation.
 - Cloning someone else's ideas without attribution.

- o Having someone else write a paper for you.
- o Utilizing an image for a paper or project without attribution.

Then, what does it mean for us in the creative process and creative arts? We'll discuss it in class.

COURSE TOPICS AND SCHEDULE

Week	Theory	Melody	Rhythm	Harmony	Lyrics	Technology
1	Parts of a song Diatonic chords in major	Minor Pentatonic	Names	Primary chords Blues	AAB Point of view	Find your DAW
2	Chord tones	Major scale Arpeggios Passing tones	Backbeat	Pedal Point Secondary chords	Poem Haiku	MIDI drums
3	Major keys	Shape of melody: 4 types of melodies	Tempi	Diatonic Substitutions	Title Words we hear W's & How?	MIDI synths

4	Minor scale Diatonic chords in minor	Minor scale	Rhythms we hear	Minor Keys	Rhyme schemes	Quantize & Editing
5	Stable & unstable tones Flat degree chords	Melodic contour	Other meters	Non-diatonic (min → maj) (min → maj)	Rhyme Types	TBA
6	Review of scales	Melodic-Rhythmic relationship	Contrasting sections	7th chords (Major & Dominant) Suspended chords Add chords Power chords	Lyrics settings	
7	MIDTERM SONGS WORKSHOP	MIDTERM SONGS WORKSHOP	MIDTERM SONGS WORKSHOP	MIDTERM SONGS WORKSHOP	MIDTERM SONGS WORKSHOP	MIDTERM SONGS WORKSHOP
8	Non-chord tones	Melodic motion against bass lines	Genres	Ascending & Descending bass lines	Invitations	
9	Modes: The Blues Myxolydian	Developing melodies	Genres	Modes	Invitations	ADSR
10	Cadences	Melodic hooks	Genres	Harmonic rhythm ii V I	Invitations	Mixing

11	Modes	Melodic schemes	Genres	Cadences Neapolitan Picardy 3rd	Invitations	TBD
12	Direct modulation & Pivot chords	Melody across chord changes	Genres	Modulation	Invitations	TBD
13	FINALIZE PROJECT	FINALIZE PROJECT	FINALIZE PROJECT	FINALIZE PROJECT	FINALIZE PROJECT	FINALIZE PROJECT
14	PERFORMANCE	PERFORMANCE	PERFORMANCE	PERFORMANCE	PERFORMANCE	PERFORMANCE

ASSIGNMENTS

Rubrics for each assignment will be posted in Canvas.

- Attendance, punctuality, & participation: 10%
- Class playlist contribution: 10%
- Weekly song shares (recorded and/or performed, #3 total): 10%
- Mid-term song performance (recorded and/or performed): 20%
- Final personal portfolio: 30%
- Final group performance (recorded and/or performed): 20%

Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: [NJIT Academic Integrity Code](#).

Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu

Letter Grades

Add the grading system followed for your course below. Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows. A 100-point system is used. At the end of the semester, the numerical grades earned for each written assignment will be averaged and translated into letter grades using the following formula.

Letter Grade	Percent Grade
A	94-100%
A-	90-93%
B+	87-89%
B	84-86%
B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%
C	74-76%
C-	70-73%
D+	67-69%
D	64-66%
D-	60-63%