

# Georgia Institute of Technology

## MUSI 3551 — Fall 2018

### Rock and Pop Ensemble

## Syllabus

### Course Information

*Class:*

**Time:** Tuesday & Thursdays 9:30am–10:45am  
**Dates:** August 20th–December 13th, 2018  
**Place:** Couch 115 & Couch B04 (basement studio)

*Instructor:*

**Name:** Dr. Nathaniel Condit-Schultz  
**Email:** [natcs@gatech.edu](mailto:natcs@gatech.edu)  
**Office:** Couch 205A (or Couch B04)  
**Office hours:** Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:30am–1:00pm (or by appointment)

### Course Description

In this course, students will learn, rehearse, and perform a set of rock/pop music. “Rock/pop” is construed widely as possible, encompassing all styles of American vernacular music from roughly 1950 onwards, and derivative genres from overseas—particularly from the U.K.! 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.

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).
- Showmanship.
- Ensemble dynamics (e.g., how to play well together).
- Musical dynamics.
- Ensemble arranging (e.g., how to play complex studio arrangements as a trio).
- 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 sound good in a live performance setting.
- How to behave professionally on stage—in particular, how to treat equipment.
- How live sound reinforcement technology works, and how to interact with “the sound guy.”
- Songwriting.

This course will *not* include instrumental lessons.

### 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,

much rock/pop music is not virtuosic, so players of only moderate ability may still participate, depending on the makeup of the class. No prior experience playing in a group 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.

## Auditions

There will be no formal auditions. Rather, the first class session (and possibly the second) will be spent jamming and playing together so that I may form an impression of each student’s abilities. My goal as the instructor of this course is to form coherent groups of musicians who can immediately begin to perform together and *grow together* as musicians over the course of the semester. Thus, students will only be excluded from the class if either:

1. Their basic instrumental skill is insufficient;
2. Their experience and/or skill level does not fit in with the rest of the class.

**Instruments:** This class is primarily intended for (electric) guitarists, (electric) bassists, trap-kit drummers, keyboardists/pianists, and singers. Brass instruments and percussion players are also unequivocally welcome. Other instrumentalists are welcome as well—including non-Western instruments—, though you may not be able to participate if we can’t find a way to effectively incorporate your instrument into the ensemble.

## Course Structure

The primary focus of this course is preparing for our performances. As such, class time will be spent almost entirely on learning and rehearsing songs.

The class will be divided into two (or more) bands. During each class session two bands at a time will rehearse, one in Couch 115, the other in Couch B04. I will alternate time between each rehearsal space, giving feedback regarding musicianship, showmanship, sound quality, etc.

Students are expected to help set up and break down *all* equipment before and after each class.

## Performances

The class will perform at least twice over the course of the semester. Dates are to be arranged. The venue will (hopefully) be the [Under the Couch](#) performance space in the [Georgia Tech Student Center](#).

**Set List:** I will make final decisions regarding the choice of set list. However, students’ suggestions and opinions will be the primary factor in my selection. Other factors I will consider in creating the final set list include:

- Picking songs that will push students out of their comfort zone, either regarding musical difficulty or playing styles/genres they are less familiar with.
- Picking songs that will build a particular ensemble skill: for instance, working on group dynamics.
- Picking songs that form a coherent set list, possibly focusing on a particular genre, era, or theme.

## Homework

The only required, assigned homework for this class is time you spend learning and practicing songs outside of the ensemble rehearsing time. Obvious failures to practice outside of class at all will affect your grade. However, this is a one-credit course, so this out-of-class practice is not expected to be extensive.

## Other Assignments

I may from time to time suggest other assignments for students to work on outside of class. These will not be required, nor graded, but will be intended to be fun and/or build your musical skill. Examples include: transcribe your favorite guitar solo or drum fill, or map out the arrangement of your favorite song.

## Attendance, Participation

You are expected to attend and actively participate in all class sessions. Absence or extreme tardiness (>5–10 minutes) from any class will result in points deducted from your participation grade.

## Grading

The bulk of the class grade is awarded simply for attending and participating in rehearsals. However, “participation” includes not only showing up and playing your instrument. You are also expected to actively communicate (positively) with your band, offering (and accepting) *constructive* feedback and suggestions.

Rehearsal time should not be wasted “shooting the shit” and noodling on your instruments. Students are expected to be efficient in their use of rehearsal time, and to encourage each other to be so as well.

Showing up and playing	40
Ensemble feedback/support	30
Not wasting time	10
Setting up/break down	10
Out-of-class preparation	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.

### Equipment Treatment & Safety

In this course, students will make extensive use of audio equipment which is the property of the Georgia Institute of Technology, including the School’s facilities themselves. This equipment is valuable, fragile, and potentially dangerous. Students are expected to handle all equipment with appropriate respect and caution.

In this course, you will learn how to handle and use equipment in a manner which is safe for everyone and which won’t damage the equipment. 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 equipment from the 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](#).