

Advanced Pro Tools Techniques

Course Syllabus

Course: Advanced Pro Tools Techniques, Credits: 2

Location: Rooms 218, 109, and 110

Time: TBD

Instructor:

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Purpose of this Course

Pro Tools is considered the industry standard for digital audio recording and is used in the vast majority of professional recording studios in the world. For this reason, it is important for an emerging recording engineer to have an in-depth understanding of several digital audio workstations (DAWs), especially Pro Tools. Advanced Pro Tools Techniques is designed to thoroughly explore Digidesign's most current DAW software, Pro Tools 7.4. This course will help students develop musical and artistic concepts they will need as engineers or producers in the recording industry. It can also serve as training on the software itself in preparation for students interested in obtaining Pro Tools certification, available through Digidesign.

Goals and Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Have an in-depth understanding of the operation and applications of Pro Tools (lessons 1-3,9, and 10).
2. Effectively plan and manage recording sessions with a clear focus on how to accomplish a specific aesthetic goal (lessons 4-10).
3. Apply appropriate techniques to achieve a desired sound for a specific instrument as well as for an entire project (lessons 5-10).

Prerequisites

Music Technology III, Audio II

Attendance

Due to the intense nature of this course, prompt and regular attendance is expected. Absence due to illness or emergency will be excused if the instructor is notified in advance. The instructor may request proper documentation, i.e., a note from a doctor, excusing the student from class. It is the student's responsibility to contact

the instructor for missed assignments, etc. Any unexcused absence will result in the loss of half a letter grade of the final grade per absence. Due to room scheduling, two classes may need to be held at a different time than the normal schedule. These classes are still mandatory and students will be notified of the time and place of the rescheduled classes at least 3 weeks in advance.

Lesson Outline

Lesson One (2 weeks) (classes 1 and 2)

- Getting to know Pro Tools
- Creating a Session / File Management

Lesson Two (class 3)

- MIDI and Instrument Tracks
- Sequencing

Lesson Three (2 weeks) (classes 4 and 5)

- Using Pro Tools Devices
- Strip Silence / Beat Detective / Elastic Audio / Elastic Pitch

Lesson Four (2 weeks) (classes 6 and 7)

- Recording a Session

Lesson Five (class 8)

- Mixing strategies
- Planning and Organization / Plug in management
- Working with drums / percussion

Lesson Six (class 9)

- Working with bass instruments

Lesson Seven (class 10)

- Working with piano / strings / guitars

Lesson Eight (class 11)

- Working with Vocals

Lesson Nine (class 12)

- Automation
- Overall mix / blending
- Bouncing Down

Lesson Ten (class 13)

- Mastering

Final Presentations (class 14)

Grading and Assignments

All assignments must be turned in on time. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor before the due date if there is a valid reason for an assignment to be turned in late; in this case the instructor will assign a new due date. Failure to submit assignments on time will result in the lowering of one letter grade for each day past the due date. Any project submitted more than four days late will receive no credit for that assignment.

An exemplary project can be equated with an A grade. Work that clearly meets the standards in the project description will earn an A. To the extent that the work does not meet the standards in the project description, points will be deducted from the relevant categories, resulting in a grade of A- or below.

Quiz (5% of final grade) – A Blackboard quiz will be given at the start of class (week 3). The quiz will consist of 20 multiple-choice questions dealing with tools learned in lesson one.

Sequencing Project (10% of final grade) – Students will submit a Pro Tools project using instrument tracks containing sequenced MIDI data and a software-based synthesizer of their choice.

Rubric - An exemplary project will include at least 2 minutes of music of an original piece or an arrangement of an existing piece. The project will include at least 10 different instrument tracks rewired to Reason or a software-based synthesizer of the student's choice. The sounds used will be completely original and not programmed presets. The piece will show strong evidence of creativity and make use of sounds appropriately and tastefully. The project file will be completely functional with no missing files and the overall production of the piece will be smooth. There will be no balance issues, inappropriate gaps in the music, or unused tracks in the project.

Pro Tools Devices Project (10% of final grade) – Students will submit a Pro Tools session that includes audio tracks that have been repaired or adjusted using Beat Detective, Strip Silence, and Elastic Audio.

Rubric - An exemplary project will include all of the source material provided for the project. The audio will have been manipulated using the Pro Tools devices as explained in the lesson. The manipulated audio will be consistent and have no flaws. Upon listening to the project, the instructor will not be able to hear any processing done by Pro Tools. The project will be neat and organized. Everything will be easy to find and audio using different devices will all be on their own tracks. An exemplary project will also include manipulated audio files created by the student in addition to the source files provided by the instructor.

Mixing in Pro Tools Projects (30% of final grade) – Students will submit an assignment every week for each of the six mixing lessons. The projects will be

submitted in the form of a session folder including a session file and all used audio files. Each weekly assignment will show the instructor that progress has been made towards the student's in-class final project.

Rubric – An exemplary project will include a neat and organized session folder containing all of the audio files used that specific week as well as previous weeks in the lesson. The session will be mixed using tools learned in class and will also show improvements to parts of the mix worked on in previous weeks. Advancements towards a complete and coherent project must be apparent in each week's assignment.

In-class Final Project (10% of final grade) – Students are required to submit a final project of the in-class session that is started in lesson 4 (week 6). All students will be working with the same audio files that are recorded as a class and will have shown weekly progress with the session throughout the mixing lessons. A final presentation of the project will occur during the last scheduled class time. During this presentation, students will discuss aesthetic effect and how it was achieved in their project.

Rubric - An exemplary project will include a neat and organized session file and folder. The project will have no missing audio files and will function without incident. Only the audio files recorded in class during lesson 4 will be used in an exemplary project. The project will show an exceptional amount of creativity that makes it stand out from the rest of the class. It will make use of techniques learned throughout the semester especially Pro Tools specific utilities discussed in lesson 3.

Individual Final Project (30% of final grade) – Students are required to submit an individual final project made up of completely original audio recordings and ideas. The project will be submitted as a session file and folder and will be presented along with the in-class final project on the day of the final scheduled class time. Individual final projects will also be accompanied by a short description of about 500 words explaining the techniques and artistic features used in the project as well as the reasons the student chose to incorporate each idea.

Rubric – An exemplary project will include a neat and organized session file. The project will have no missing audio files and will function without incident. The project will show the student's ability to create a functioning session and maneuver around the software (lesson 1). It will include at least 2 sequenced tracks using any software synthesizers available in the computer lab (lesson 2). Projects will employ the use of at least one device available within Pro Tools (lesson 3) as well as mixing strategies learned in class (lessons 5 through 10). An exemplary project will be an original piece composed by the student (although an original arrangement of another's work is acceptable) and will include at least 12 total tracks; 7 of which must be audio tracks. The project will also make use of at least 4 aux tracks as well as track and plug in automation.

Attendance and Participation (5% of final grade) – Students are required to attend all scheduled classes as well as out-of-class recording sessions. Participation is also required throughout the semester in the form of in-class discussions as well as discussion board posts on Blackboard. Students are required to bring their firewire storage devices to every class.

Honor Policy

Plagiarism will result in a minimum penalty of a failing grade for the assignment and a maximum penalty of failing the course.

Students with Disabilities

Students who feel they may have a disability that requires special accommodation should contact the instructor privately by the second week of class. If the disability is not yet officially documented they need to contact the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services, 309 Student Union, 412-396-6658.

Class Conduct

Cell phones, and other personal communication devices as well as any other devices that could disrupt class must be switched off during class. Use of these devices as well as inappropriate use of lab computers during class, i.e., instant messenger and web surfing, will result in a lowered participation grade.

Required Texts and Materials

-“Pro Tools 7 Power! 2E: The Comprehensive Guide (Book & CD)” by Colin MacQueen and Steve Albanese. Thompson Course Technology, 2007.
ISBN-10: 1598634739



- Pro Tools 7.4 compatible Firewire External Hard Drive (formatted for mac).
 - Compatible Firewire 400 Drives (from Digidesign’s website): The Avid MediaDrive rS80, DigiDrive FireWire 80, and third-party 7200 RPM FireWire 400 drives with the Oxford 911 chipset interface.

Students are required to back up all of their work. Any lost work will be solely the student’s responsibility.