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<b>Course title:</b>	Berlin and the Digital Music Era
<b>Track:</b>	B-Track
<b>Language of instruction:</b>	English
<b>Contact hours:</b>	48 (6 per day)
<b>ECTS-Credits:</b>	4

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### Course description

Over the past twenty years, Berlin has become a thriving crossroads at the intersection of music and technology. Attracting artists, creatives, and musicians from all over the world, it serves as a hub especially of techno and electronic music, as well as the home of leading music software developers such as Ableton or Native Instruments.

This course will examine significant developments in the production, performance, dissemination, and reception of music, which have been significantly affected by the pervasive digitalization of recent decades. Thereby, we will in particular focus on the specific role Berlin has in this process.

Our first goal will be to understand how technology influences the production and performance of new music. Through specific case studies, we will tackle questions such as: How have digital technologies enabled unprecedented modes of making, using and perceiving music? In what ways has digital mediatization shaped our experiences with musical content and style? In particular, we will discuss developments in the production and reception of electronic dance music as well as explore Berlin's role in the contemporary music and audio technology industry.

Our second goal will be to explore how technology facilitates new modes of experiencing and acquiring music. For this portion of the course, we will discuss how technology is being used trying to reinvigorate an interest in classical music, by institutions such as the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. We will also look at the issue of digital music distribution, and how Berlin-based companies such as SoundCloud are trying to find new ways of digitally distributing music.

Finally, our third goal will be to explore how developments in music technology interact with other artistic media, by examining the relation between technology and music in film, video games as well as in contemporary sound art.

### Student profile

This course is open to all students. No previous experience studying music or technology is necessary. Please note that while the topics of technology and music are integral to the course, we will examine it through the lens of media theory and cultural history, rather than learning how to engineer music technology or actually create music.

**Prerequisites**

There are no prerequisites for this course.

**Course requirements**

1. Active Participation  
Participation in class discussion and group work is a vital component of this course. Every session will feature collaborative exercises to foster active engagement with the materials.
2. Class Meetings and Excursions  
This course meets on Tuesdays and Fridays, and will include local excursions off campus.
3. Written Responses  
In response to our discussions, excursions, and readings, students will craft short written answers to specific questions. These responses will be our way to thoughtfully reflect on the course materials.
4. In-Class Presentation  
During the last week of the course, students will collaborate in pairs and present on a topic of their own choice related to the topic of the course. In addition to an in-class presentation, students will submit a written summary and response to this project.

**Grading**

Participation Assignments:	30%
Written Assignments:	40%
Final Presentation and Written Summary/Response:	30%

**Reading**

Readings will be drawn from scholarly and journalistic sources. A reader containing these excerpts will be provided at orientation.

**Course schedule**

Date	Program*
Tuesday, July 16, 2019	<p>An introduction into the main topic and the first discussion of fundamental aspects, which will be addressed in detail throughout the course:</p> <p>Term 'digital age'. – Distinction between analog/digital. – An inquiry into the debate over 'post-digital' trends</p> <p>Berlin as the center of electronic music and as a magnet for tourists and artists from all over the globe. – Significance of the recent past of Berlin since the fall of</p>

	the Wall.
Friday, July 19, 2019	<p>Is there a 'sound of Berlin'? What are urban conditions for musical creativity and technical development? What role do processes of gentrification play in Berlin? – An inquiry into the past and present of techno, (experimental) electronica and electronic dance music in Berlin.</p> <p>– <i>An excursion to a small dynamic company (on the edge of a gentrified neighborhood of Berlin) developing special hardware for the production of electronic music*</i></p>
Tuesday, July 23, 2019	<p>An inquiry into the variety of discourses about 'analog' and 'digital'. – Is there a 'digital beauty'? – Is there 'analog' aesthetics? – An inquiry into the correlation of ideas about 'analog' and 'digital' phenomena. – The technical distinction between 'analog' and 'digital' signal paths.</p> <p>The history of 'analog' and 'digital' music devices and sound-recording media. – Significance for the music culture.</p> <p>On the relationship between technical developments and new musical trends: From sampling, remixing and mashup through to interactive music in video games?</p>
Friday, July 26, 2019	<p>Laptop music and the 'return' of hardware interface. On the importance of manual intervention in computer-based musical processes.</p> <p>— <i>An excursion to a global manufacturer of software and dedicated hardware for the production of electronic music in Berlin *</i></p>
Tuesday, July 30, 2019	<p>Developments in the distribution and consumption of music: legal/illegal file sharing, streaming services, blogs and self-promotion. Music listening between cellphone headphones and club sound systems. On the meaning of mastering.</p> <p>— <i>An Excursion to a place of distribution and consumption of electronic music *</i></p>
Friday, August 2, 2019	<p>What is sound art? How blurred are the boundaries of media art? On the past and current trends in Berlin.</p> <p>— <i>An excursion to a sound art gallery *</i></p>

Tuesday, August 6, 2019	Final papers of the participants: Presentation and discussion
Friday, August 9, 2019	Final papers of the participants: Presentation and discussion

\*Excursions may be subject to change depending on the availability of appointments and speakers. On excursion days, adaption of class times is possible.