

Name:	Dr. Tom Rojo Poller
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Course title:	Berlin and the Digital Music Era
Track:	B-Track
Language of instruction:	English
Contact hours:	48 (6 per day)
ECTS-Credits:	4

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 24, 2018	What are the intersections between music and technology in our contemporary western culture? What does it mean to be a musician in the digital era? Which specific role does Berlin have in exploring and cultivating the prevailing digitization in music?
Friday, July 27, 2018	How has technology influenced the creation of musical style? What are significant developments in the production of electronic music? Excursion to an electronic music production venue*

Tuesday, July 31, 2018	Which impact does the use of digital computer technology have on the performance and reception of music and in what way has it formed the contemporary cultural phenomenon known as “remix culture”? Excursion to a local electronic music venue*
Friday, August 3, 2018	What are some ways in which technologies employed for the production and dissemination of music are also used for other purposes, such as video games and film, but also non-musical contexts? Excursion to a local start-up company*
Tuesday, August 7, 2018	Fair sharing or illegal piracy? What are the issues inherent to music distribution today?
Friday, August 10, 2018	What is “sound art” and how much of it is technological? Excursion to a sound art venue*
Tuesday, August 14, 2018	How has technology been used to promote an interest in, and to create new ways of encountering classical music? In what ways is the Berlin Philharmonic exploring this new frontier? Excursion to the Berliner Philharmonie*
Friday, August 17, 2018	Course Wrap-Up Student Presentations

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