

# Music History 98T: Analogues of Darkness— The Music of *Film Noir* and Hitchcock Suspense-Thrillers

Classroom: Schoenberg Hall 1402, MW 1:00-2:50 p.m., Winter 2000  
Web site: [ecampus.humnet.ucla.edu/classes/mushst98t-sem1-00w/](http://ecampus.humnet.ucla.edu/classes/mushst98t-sem1-00w/)  
(login with 9-digit UCLA #, password is the last 4 digits of your SS#)  
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Office Hours: MW 12:30-1:00 and 3:00-4:30 p.m. (or by appointment)

## The Films:

- *Film noir* (1941-58) and the Hitchcock suspense-thriller (we will cover 1929-60) concern the pessimistic (“darker”) side of what people might do to try to get ahead.
- They combine elements of psychological/crime and mystery/detective films (1920s-30s) with central characters who generally participate in morally-questionable acts.
- Also common are false or hidden identities, elaborate clues, and (often in *film noir*, but only sometimes in Hitchcock) black and white cinematography, flashbacks, and the *femme fatale*—a seductive, mysterious woman.
- Examples: *The Informer*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *Laura*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, *Chinatown*

## The Music:

- Complicated plotlines and double-crossing characters often make these films difficult to follow. The brooding/cynical music often used is similarly complex.
- However, for the musically attentive, the functioning of leitmotifs (specific recurring melodies, rhythms, etc.) and contrasting musical styles (classical, popular, jazz, etc.) can help to clarify the proceedings. Here, as in all sound film, the music generally functions either as underscoring (“background”) or as source (“on-screen”) music.
- It is possible to understand the effects of film music technique without having to resort to specialized technical language.

## Examples of questions to be asked:

- Why is there so much source music in *The Informer* and none in *The Maltese Falcon*?
- Are the Falcon’s theme and Laura’s theme the only recurring music in these films?
- How is Laura’s theme incorporated both as source music and as underscore?
- How is vertigo (whirling sensations/dizziness) incorporated musically in *Vertigo*’s titles?
- How does the shower scene music in *Psycho* function as more than that?

## The Purpose of the Seminar:

To become a more musically-attentive spectator of films by:

- carefully watching—and listening to!—several films per week
- consulting the video clips/discussion materials on the course web site, reading related materials in the course reader, and discussing these things in class
- writing and presenting (in class) an 8-page term paper on a neo-*noir* or neo-Hitchcock film (1973-98), chosen from the listed films for Weeks 9-10 (see Seminar Outline, below)

## Requirements (see Activities, below, for more details):

- five web-based assignments, to prepare for in-class discussions (Weeks 2-8) 10% total
- two short midterm tests, worth 10% each (Weeks 4 and 8) 20% total
- *constructively* review a first draft of a classmate’s term paper (Week 7-8) 10%
- outline, write, refine, and present your term paper (Weeks 6-10) 60%

## Activities:

- in Weeks 2-8, five web-based assignments—each demonstrating that you understand a particular day's materials—are due by 11 a.m. on those days (10% total)
- during each of Weeks 4 and 8, there is a 40-minute midterm test (10% each)
- beginning of Week 6: submit your term paper outline (topic scheduled in Week 3), 10%
- end of Week 7: submit first draft of term paper for reviews by a classmate and by me
- end of Week 8: reviews of term paper first drafts are submitted to authors and me, 10%
- Weeks 9-10: in-class presentations based on term papers, 20 minutes (including discussion), 15%
- end of Week 10: term papers due, 35%
- Finals Week: no final exam, but term papers will be returned during the scheduled exam period

## Materials:

- Video copies of all films for Weeks 1-8 are available at the Instructional Media Lab (IML) of College Library (Powell 270, 206-1211). IML has two rooms suitable for larger group screenings, and we will book regular times there convenient to your schedules.  
Do NOT watch a film by yourself in IML when a larger screening room is booked.  
Their hours are: MON-THU: 9AM-9PM, FRI: 9AM-5PM, SAT: 12PM-5PM, SUN: 1PM-5PM
- You may also choose to rent (or buy) video copies of the films off-campus. The vast majority of the films will be available at any video store, but a few of the films are presently out-of-print on video and may be hard to find. Some will also be shown on cable/satellite channels during the quarter.
- Buy a course reader at Course Reader Material, 1141 Westwood Blvd, 443-3303.
- The course web site is: [ecampus.humnet.ucla.edu/classes/mushst98t-sem1-00w/](http://ecampus.humnet.ucla.edu/classes/mushst98t-sem1-00w/)  
Login with your nine-digit UCLA ID #. Your password is the last four digits of your Social Security # or (less likely) your 4-digit birthdate: MMDD. Video clips and discussion materials will be made available throughout the course. To gain access, click on the relevant icons after you login.
- Once your term paper topic has been scheduled during Week 3, either purchase a video copy of your film or make sure that a copy is available for your use on campus. I will help you find a copy if you have trouble.

## Some Additional Background:

Most of Alfred Hitchcock's American suspense-thrillers were made in the same period as *film noir* (1941-58), often for the same film studios, and therefore involving many of the same composers—especially the European emigré composers Miklós Rózsa and Dimitri Tiomkin. Hitchcock later worked exclusively with American-born composer Bernard Herrmann (i.e., 1955-65). Indeed, Rózsa, Tiomkin, Herrmann, and several additional American-born composers wrote the music for a very large proportion of *films noir* and Hitchcock films throughout the 1940s and 50s. Some of Bernard Herrmann's final scores (1973-76) were for neo-Hitchcock and horror films directed by Brian De Palma, and I will discuss a few of those film scores in class. Two of you will write your term papers on neo-*noir* film scores by Jerry Goldsmith (1974 and 1997), two on music for recent remakes of earlier films (1998), one on a *film noir* parody (1982), and the rest on music for additional neo-*noir*, retro-*noir*, sci-fi *noir*, neo-Hitchcock, and “new-thriller” films (1981-86 and 1991-99).

# Seminar Schedule: Music History 98T

**Week 1:** The Roots of *Film Noir*: European Films from Silence to Sound, 1929-35  
The hesitant then pervasive incorporation of non-source music in the 1930s

**Day 1** (1/10), an early British mystery-thriller directed by Alfred Hitchcock, 1929;  
German and emigré “dark” psychological and crime films, 1930-31

Introduction, overview of *film noir*, and discussion of musical terms and concepts.

Discussion/Clips:

1. *Blackmail* (1929), d. by Alfred Hitchcock, st. Anny Ondra, John Longden, b. on Charles Bennett’s play, m. by Hubert Bath, Henry Stafford, et al
2. *Der Blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*, 1930), directed by Josef von Sternberg, starring Marlene Dietrich, Emil Jannings, based on Heinrich Mann’s novel *Professor Unrath*, music by Friedrich Holländer
3. *M* (1931), d. by Fritz Lang, st. Peter Lorre, m. from Edvard Grieg’s *Peer Gynt*

**Day 2** (1/12), The American Path to *Film Noir*—the 1930s  
Max Steiner and the desire to have music for just about everything, 1935

Discussion/Clips: *The Informer* (1935, 91’), d. by John Ford, st. Victor McLaglen, b. on Liam O’Flaherty’s novel, m. by Max Steiner

Web assignment trial run (not counted as part of your grade), due at 11 a.m.

Reading: Kalinak, Ch. 5 (on *The Informer*).

**Week 2:** *Film Noir* is Established—1941  
Whether to have source music or not to have source music

Day 1 (1/17, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, holiday: no class), suggested non-*noir* films:  
*The 39 Steps* (1935), *The Lady Vanishes* (1938), *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Casablanca* (1942)

**Day 2** (1/19)

Discussion/Clips: *The Maltese Falcon* (1941, 100’, earlier filmed in 1931 and 1936), d. by John Huston, st. Humphrey Bogart, Mary Astor, b. on Dashiell Hammett’s novel, m. by Adolph Deutsch

**Web assignment #1** (on *The Maltese Falcon*) due at 11 a.m.

Readings: Naremore, pp. 48-63 (on Dashiell Hammett),

Martin Marks’ article excerpts on the music of *The Maltese Falcon*,

Kathryn Kalinak, Chapter 1: “The Language Of Music” (b. on *Vertigo*)

**Week 3:** Hitchcock Suspense-Thrillers and *Film Noir* before/during World War II, 1935-44  
Blurring the line between source music and underscore; electronic effects

**Day 1** (1/24)

Discussion/Clips: *The 39 Steps* (d. A. Hitchcock, 1935), *The Talented Mr. Ripley*

Primary Discussion/Clips: *Shadow Of A Doubt* (1943, 108'), d. by A. Hitchcock,  
st. Joseph Cotten, Teresa Wright, Hume Cronyn, b. on Gordon McDonell's story,  
m. by Dimitri Tiomkin

Discussion of term paper topics and scheduling of presentations.

Discussion of strategies for papers and presentations.

Very brief mock quiz (not counted as part of your grade)

Suggested: Hitchcock's *Rebecca*, *Suspicion* (1940-41), *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (1999)

**Day 2** (1/26)

Discussion/Clips: *Laura* (1944, 85'), d. by Otto Preminger, st. Dana Andrews,  
Gene Tierney, Clifton Webb, Vincent Price, b. on Vera Caspary's novel,  
m. by David Raksin

**Web assignment #2** (on *Laura*) due at 11 a.m.

Reading: Kalinak, Ch. 7 (on *Laura*).

Suggested: *Murder, My Sweet* (1944)

**Week 4:** *Film Noir* and Hitchcock at the end of World War II, 1944-45  
Big budgets vs. small budgets; Midterm Test #1

**Day 1** (1/31)

Discussion/Clips:

1. *Double Indemnity* (1944, 106'), d. by Billy Wilder, st. Fred MacMurray,  
Barbara Stanwyck, b. on James M. Cain's novel, m. by Miklós Rózsa
2. *Detour* (1945, 69'), d. by Edgar G. Ulmer, st. Tom Neal,  
b. on Martin Goldsmith's novel, m. by Leo Erdody

Readings: Naremore, pp. 81-95 (on *Double Indemnity*)

and Naremore, pp. 143-50 and Caryl Flinn's chapter section (both on *Detour*).

**Day 2** (2/2)

Discussion/Clips: *Spellbound* (1945, 111'), d. by Alfred Hitchcock,  
st. Ingrid Bergman, Gregory Peck, b. on Francis Beeding's novel  
*The House of Dr. Edwardes*, m. by Miklós Rózsa

**Midterm Test #1** (largely video clip-based, worth 10%)

Suggested: Hitchcock's *Notorious* (1946)

**Week 5:** *Film Noir* in the late-1940s — Robert Siodmak  
The place of music in sorting out confusions of identity

**Day 1** (2/7)

Discussion of Midterm Test #1

Screening: *The Dark Mirror* (1946, 85 minutes)

Suggested: *The Big Sleep* (1946), *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946),  
and *Out of the Past* (1947)

**Day 2** (2/9)

Discussion/Clips: *The Dark Mirror* (1946, 85'), d. by Robert Siodmak,  
st. Olivia de Havilland, b. on Vladimir Pozner's story, m. by Dimitri Tiomkin

**Web assignment #3** (on *The Dark Mirror*) due at 6 p.m. the previous evening

Reading: Durrell Bowman's article on *The Dark Mirror* and other films.

Suggested, d. by Robert Siodmak: *The Killers* (1946) and/or *Criss Cross* (1949);  
Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* (1951)

**Week 6:** Hitchcock and Herrmann in the late 1950s—*Vertigo*; Term paper outlines due

**Day 1** (2/14) **Term paper outlines due** (worth 10%)

Discussion and Screening: part one of *Vertigo* (1958, 78 minutes)

**Day 2** (2/16)

Screening: part two of *Vertigo* (1958, 50 minutes)

Discussion/Clips: *Vertigo* (1958, 128'), d. by A. Hitchcock, st. James Stewart,  
Kim Novak, b. on Pierre Boileau and Thomas Narcejac's novel  
*D'entre les morts*, m. by Bernard Herrmann

**Web assignment #4** (b. on part 1 of *Vertigo*), due at midnight the previous evening

Readings: Re-read Kalinak's Chapter 1, Robin Wood's chapter on *Vertigo*,  
Steven C. Smith's chapter excerpt on the music of *Vertigo*, pp. 219-22.

Suggested: Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder* (1954), *Rear Window* (1954),  
*The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956)

**Week 7:** *Film Noir* from the late 1940s to the late 1950s and *Neo-Noir/Neo-Hitchcock*  
The end of the studio composer era; New sounds; Independents in Hollywood

Day 1 (2/21, Presidents' Day, holiday: no class); recommendation: if you have time, see some of the suggested films for Weeks 2-6

**Day 2 (2/23) Term paper first drafts due** (submitted to a classmate and me for review)

Discussion/Clips: *Obsession* (d. by Brian De Palma, 1976, m. by Bernard Herrmann), *Taxi Driver* (d. by Martin Scorsese, 1976, m. by Bernard Herrmann), *The Third Man* (d. by Carol Reed, 1949, zither music by Anton Karas), *Touch of Evil* (d. by Orson Welles, 1958, "Latin rock" music by Henry Mancini)

Reading: Naremore, pp. 76-81 (on *The Third Man*).

**Week 8:** Later Hitchcock/Herrmann—*Psycho*  
Term paper first draft reviews due; Midterm Test #2

**Day 1 (2/28)**

**Term paper first draft reviews due** (to authors and me, worth 10%)

Screening: *Psycho* (1960, 109 minutes)

**Day 2 (3/1)**

Discussion/Clips: *Psycho* (1960, 109'), d. by A. Hitchcock, st. Anthony Perkins, Janet Leigh, b. on Robert Bloch's novel, m. by Bernard Herrmann

**Midterm Test #2** (largely video clip-based, worth 10%)

**Web assignment #5** (on *Psycho*) due at midnight the previous evening

Reading: Steven C. Smith's chapter excerpt on the music of *Psycho*.

Suggested: Hitchcock's *North By Northwest* (1959), *The Birds* (1963), and *Marnie* (1964)

**Week 9: Term Paper Presentations** (worth 15%) begin, 20 minutes each (including time for discussion). From this point on, watch as many as possible of the films you haven't seen before. You are required to watch the one film about which you reviewed a paper draft and to participate in the discussion following that presentation.

**Day 1 (3/6):** Retro-*Noir*, Parodies, and New Directions in “Dark” Thrillers, 1974-96

Results of Midterm Test #2

Presentations on:

1. *Chinatown* (1974), d. by Roman Polanski, st. Jack Nicholson, Faye Dunaway, m. by Jerry Goldsmith
2. *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (1982, parody-homage of 1940s' *film noir*), d. by Carl Reiner, st. Steve Martin, Rachel Ward, m. by Miklós Rózsa
3. *Blue Velvet* (1986), d. by David Lynch, st. Kyle MacLachlan, Laura Dern, Dennis Hopper, Isabella Rossellini, m. by Angelo Badalamenti
4. *Fargo* (1996), d. by Joel Coen, st. Frances McDormand, William H. Macy, Steve Buscemi, m. by Carter Burwell

**Day 2 (3/8):** Sci-Fi *Noir* and Neo-Hitchcock, 1982-98

Presentations on:

1. *Blade Runner* (1982, compare original release with director's cut), d. by Ridley Scott, st. Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, b. on Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, m. by Vangelis
2. *Final Analysis* (1991), d. by Phil Joanou, st. Richard Gere, Kim Basinger, Uma Thurman, m. by George Fenton
3. *Rear Window* (1998, also discuss 1954 version), d. by Jeff Bleckner, st. Christopher Reeve, Daryl Hannah, b. on Cornell Woolrich's story, m. by David Shire
4. *A Perfect Murder* (1998, also discuss *Dial M For Murder*, 1954), d. by Andrew Davis, st. Michael Douglas, Gwyneth Paltrow, Viggo Mortensen, b. on Frederick Knott's play *Dial M For Murder*, m. by James Newton Howard

**Week 10: Term Paper Presentations** (worth 15%) continue.

**Day 1 (3/13):** Retro-*Noir* and Sci-Fi *Noir*, 1995-99

Presentations on:

1. *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1995), d. by Carl Franklin, st. Denzel Washington, b. on Walter Mosley's novel, m. by Elmer Bernstein
2. *L.A. Confidential* (1997), d. by Curtis Hanson, st. Kevin Spacey, Russell Crowe, Guy Pierce, James Cromwell, Kim Basinger, Danny DeVito, b. on James Ellroy's novel, m. by Jerry Goldsmith
3. *Dark City* (1998), d. by Alex Proyas, st. Rufus Sewell, Kiefer Sutherland, Jennifer Connelly, Ian Richardson, William Hurt, m. by Trevor Jones
4. *The Thirteenth Floor* (1999), d. by Josef Rusnak, st. Craig Bierko, Gretchen Mol, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Vincent D'Onofrio, b. on Daniel F. Galouye's novel *Simulacron-3*, m. by Harald Kloser

**Day 2 (3/15):** New Directions in Neo-*Noir* and Suspense-Thrillers, 1981-98

**Term Papers Due** (worth 35%).

Presentations on:

1. *Body Heat* (1981), d. by Lawrence Kasdan, st. William Hurt, Kathleen Turner, m. by John Barry
2. *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), d. by Jonathan Demme, st. Jodie Foster, Anthony Hopkins, b. on Thomas Harris's novel, m. by Howard Shore (plus use of J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations*)
3. *The Usual Suspects* (1995), d. by Bryan Singer, st. Gabriel Byrne, Stephen Baldwin, Kevin Spacey, Chazz Palminteri, m. by John Ottman
4. *A Simple Plan* (1998), d. by Sam Raimi, st. Bill Paxton, Billy Bob Thornton, Bridget Fonda, b. on Scott B. Smith's novel, m. by Danny Elfman