

## Spring 2016 MLAS Course Roster

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### **MLAS 6100**

# Listening to Film

## Instructor: Stan Link

**Days and Time: Thursdays from 6:00 to 8:30 pm**

**Dates: January 21<sup>st</sup> to May 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Course Description :** Although we commonly say that we “watch a movie,” this course begins from the premise that hearing is as vital to the experience of cinema as the eye. In fact, sometimes how and what we see is deeply affected or even altered by what we hear such that we might even consider it impossible to separate the two. Film’s presentation of music, sounds, human voices, and even silence may often be heard as elaborating on and emphasizing the image, dialogue, and story. But the soundtrack also has its own work to do in our interpretation of events, and its own ways of doing it. By closely examining and analyzing excerpts from dozens of classic and recent films this class will put all the components of the soundtrack in the foreground of “watching.” Developing a toolbox of concepts and ideas with which to observe the soundtrack’s interactions with the rest of the film, our immediate goal will be to understand how listening reveals and constructs characters, deepens locations, unfolds time, guides the eye, interprets dramatic events, and stimulates emotional responses, etc. Class time will mostly revolve around closely analyzing and interpreting cinematic excerpts in order to “slow down” the experience of film spectatorship and make us consciously aware of how it functions. Ultimately, however, the course also aims at highlighting the ear’s contribution to experiencing our own lives in a world that may often appear to be overwhelmed by images and seeing.

**About this Instructor :** Prof. Stan Link is the Associate Professor of the Composition, Philosophy and Analysis of Music at The Blair School of Music. He teaches undergraduate courses in music theory, composition, and interdisciplinary approaches to music, film, literature

and art. He is an active composer of concert and computer music, with performances throughout the U.S., including two ballets with the Nashville ballet, sound installations in Mexico City, and recent concert premieres in New York. The bulk of his scholarly work is in cinema studies, where he has papers and publications on music in horror films, the thematic leitmotif, cinematic silence, music and children in the horror film, the soundtrack's construction of psychopathology, the musical encoding of vision, and dancing nerds.

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**MLAS 6300**

## Kurdistan and the Middle East

Instructor: Professor Norbert Ross

**Days and Time: Tuesdays from 6:30 to 9:00 pm**

**Dates: January 19<sup>th</sup> to May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Course Description:** Nashville is host to the largest Kurdish population in the United States. Approximately 12,000 Iraqi and Iranian Kurdish people call it their home – being displaced by war and violent conflicts in their homelands. This course provides an understanding of the current socio-political situation in the Middle East and Kurdistan. In order to do so we focus on contemporary Kurdistan, both as it relates to the Kurdish Regional Government, KRG (the semi-independent government of northern Iraq), as well as to Kurdish people outside Iraq, namely Iran, Turkey, Syria as well as in European and US diaspora. Understanding Kurdistan and Kurdish people, their history and contemporary struggles will provide us with insights into the volatility of what we know as the Middle East. Being located at important trade routes as well as being the home of rich oil reserves, the area has seen many restructuring efforts (often by means of war), shaping what we see today. As a consequence, our discussion of the Middle East needs to include international politics especially as they relate to England and the United States.

The course will integrate discussions, approaches and readings from different disciplines such as Political Sciences, History, Sociology, and Anthropology. It is intended for all students interested in the Middle East as well as contemporary international politics. Given the lack of literature on contemporary political developments, our discussions will include news reports from different outlets. A fieldtrip will be organized to the local Kurdish Culture Center in Nashville.

**About this instructor:** Prof. Norbert Ross holds a Ph.D. (1998) and Habilitation (2001) in Anthropology from the University of Freiburg, Germany. He is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Psychology with four books (a fifth is in preparation) and numerous scholarly articles published. Dr. Ross field research and publications address issues ranging from child development and cultural change among Tzotzil Maya of southern Mexico to nationalism and resistance in northern Iraq, and young terrorists among young Kurdish Islamists. Dr. Ross has

worked extensively in Mexico and Mesoamerica, as well as the Middle East (Iran and Iraq). He is currently preparing a NSF grant to conduct research in the KRG (Kurdish Regional Government) of northern Iraq, the focal area of this class.

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**MLAS 6700**

# From Flood to Drought: Facts and Fables of Water in the Twentieth Century (Core Seminar)

## Instructor: Professor Cecelia Tichi

**Days and Time: Buttrick Hall room 112**

**Dates: January 19<sup>th</sup> to May 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Course Description:** Earth has aptly been called the “water planet” and is, like ourselves, 70 percent water, though this vital resource may be said to hide in plain sight. We Americans open the tap without much thought and enjoy recreation in pools, lakes, rivers, creeks, and the coastal seashore. When thirsty, we may easily buy a bottle of water at any convenience store or market. We may think it sobering to know that in ancient times, water was considered to be one of four elements (the other three being earth, air and fire). Today, the reality of climate change and the conflicts that are being dubbed “water wars” here and abroad summon us to an exploration of water in its social, political, religious and artistic dimensions. We are beckoned by the urgency of the much-publicized drought in California and nearby western states, together with the Gulf coast flood of “Katrina” and superstorm “Sandy”—and by the damaging flood that Nashville experienced in May, 2010, when homes excluded from city flood plain maps nonetheless were destroyed (including those of Vanderbilt University employees), while the city’s main convention site, the Opryland Hotel, was flooded and closed for months of extensive repair.

“From Flood the Drought” offers the opportunity to investigate the facts and the fables about water as historians have chronicled them to the present moment, and to understand the central place of water in numerous human endeavors, for the subject of water has preoccupied activists, film makers, song writers, and artists. Our investigation will include weekly readings and prize-winning documentary films, such as *Flow* and *Watermark*. Each member of the seminar will develop a special “water” research project and present it to the group.

Readings will be selected from such sources and titles as the following: Photocopied news articles on water-related issues (to be distributed in class)

1. Steven Solomon, *Water: The Epic Struggle for Wealth, power, and Civilization*
2. John Barry, *Rising Tide* (Simon & Schuster)

3. David Sedlak, *Water 4.0* (Yale Press)
4. Vandana Shiva, *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, and Profit* (South End Press)
5. John Clift and Amanda Cuthbert, *Water: Use Less, Save More* (Chelsea Green)
6. Susan Marks, *Aqua Shock* (Bloomberg)
7. Peter Gleick, *Bottled and Sold: The Story Behind Our Obsession with Bottled Water* (Island Press)
8. Paolo Bacigalupi, *The Water Knife* (Knopf)

**About this instructor:** Cecelia Tichi is the Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of English and Professor of American Studies. Her books include five mystery novels and nonfiction titles that span American popular culture and social history, from television to country music to the gear-and-girder technology that transformed the environment nationwide in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Her newest book—on author Jack London—was published in fall, 2015. She has taught undergraduate courses focused on water and looks forward to presenting this graduate-level course.

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**MLAS 6100**

## Impressionism

### Instructor: Professor Kevin Murphy

**Days and Time: Wednesdays from 6:00 to 8:30 pm.**

**Dates: January 20<sup>th</sup> to May 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Course Description:** Monet, Renoir, Pissarro, Cassatt, Morisot, and the other members of the French Impressionist group pioneered a painting style that emphasized changing atmospheric effects. They focused much of their efforts on capturing the transformation of Paris in the 1860s and '70s under the influence of the Emperor Napoleon III, as well as on the suburbs and rural landscapes. Impressionists stressed the qualities of "modernity"—especially its fleetingness and ephemerality—as defined by poet Charles Baudelaire in the 1860s. This course will examine the work of the French Impressionists from formal, social, political, and intellectual perspectives. In addition, the seminar will consider the international impact of French Impressionism elsewhere in Europe and in North America. Writing assignments will address descriptive, analytic, critical, and historical modes.

**About this instructor:** Kevin D. Murphy is Andrew W. Mellon Chair in the Humanities, and Professor and Chair in the Department of History of Art. He received his Ph.D. from Northwestern University and taught at the University of Virginia and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York prior to coming to Vanderbilt in 2013. Professor Murphy was a Fulbright Fellow in Paris while completing his dissertation on the restoration of medieval

buildings in 19th-century France, and has published on many aspects of French art and architecture, including an essay on Edouard Manet's painting, "The Execution of Maximilian" which appeared in the *Burlington Magazine*.

[Murphy Impressionism Syllabus](#)

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MLAS 7340

## MLAS Capstone

Instructor: Professor Mark Schoenfield

Days and Time: Buttrick Hall room 316

Dates: January 20<sup>th</sup> to May 4<sup>th</sup>

**Course Description:** This course provides students with the opportunity to embark on an independent research projects in which they pursue interests sparked by their course work in MLAS. As the capstone project for the degree, it allows students to apply their creativity and analytic skills to an issue or problem of their choice, which may emerge from prior coursework or represent a departure from that work for which their MLAS training has prepared them. Final projects can take many forms, from research papers to web sites to creative writings or performances. In addition to submitting the final project, there will be an oral defense in which students discuss their work. Because each student will be working on different projects, the course will meet less frequently than usual MLAS courses, and the meetings will concern such topics as research methods and revision techniques. Students will work in small groups, will have opportunities for interviewing experts in their field, and will share their work with one another in a supportive "get-it-done" environment. Students will bring brief descriptions of their current ideas for their project to the first class and should feel free to contact Professor Schoenfield ([mark.schoenfield@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:mark.schoenfield@vanderbilt.edu)) prior to the Spring Semester.

**About this instructor:** Mark Schoenfield specializes in British romantic literature and literature's connections to other social institutions, particularly law. His two books are *The Professional Wordsworth: Law, Economics, and the Poet's Contract* and *British Periodicals and Romantic Identity: The "Literary Lower Empire,"* the 2010 winner of the Colby Prize for outstanding contribution to research in 19<sup>th</sup> century periodicals. He is currently working on a book on Romantic-Era autobiography. As the director of the English Honors program, Mark has guided many classes through independent research and writing, and is excited about getting to work with MLAS students on their capstone projects for the second time, having taught the inaugural Capstone course.

[Schoenfield MLAS Capstone syllabus](#)

