

The One Score to Rule Them All: The Music of *The Lord of the Rings*

UF Honors IDH2952 Spring 2026 Syllabus

Class & Contact Information

Class Number: #27250

Meeting Time: Tuesdays, 3:00 PM – 3:50 PM

Meeting Location: [HVR1 114](#)

Professor:

George Adams, PhD

Contact Information:

georgeadams@ufl.edu

352-846-2847

Office Hours:

Fridays, 10:30am–12:30pm, and by appointment

Office:

[YON 408](#)

Peer Instructors:

Chelsea Catabia

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Office Hours:

Available by appointment

For all personal communications, please use canvas inbox.

Course Description

“The One Score to Rule Them All” is an interdisciplinary (Un)Common Arts course dedicated to examining how Howard Shore’s music in Peter Jackson’s film trilogy adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings* (2001–03) functions as an essential component of cinematic storytelling, while reflecting the themes, structures, and cultural foundations of J. R. R. Tolkien’s original literary works (1954–55).

The course explores the role of music in *The Lord of the Rings* by examining how Shore’s score shapes narrative, supports character development, and contributes to the construction of Middle-earth on film through technique, cultural reference, and thematic continuity. Students will engage in active listening, critical viewing, and collaborative discussion to develop a nuanced understanding of how music operates within cinematic and multimedia storytelling. By the end of the course, students will have developed the analytical vocabulary, critical listening skills, and interdisciplinary frameworks necessary to examine how music functions within narrative media, including—but not limited to—*The Lord of the Rings*. Students will be prepared to apply these tools to works of their own choosing, considering how music interacts with visual, literary, and cultural elements in shaping narrative meaning and interpretation.

Course Objectives

1. **Understanding Film Scoring Techniques and History:** This course will examine the musical techniques used to shape narrative and emotional landscape of film, with particular attention to how Shore employs leitmotifs, orchestration, and thematic development to enhance storytelling. In doing so, this course will also explore the historical evolution of film scoring techniques, from its roots in opera and early cinematic practices to its role in contemporary multimedia.
2. **Developing Active Listening Skills:** This course will equip students with the vocabulary, analytical frameworks, and exemplary resources necessary to develop, practice, and apply active listening skills. Students will use these skills to engage in informed, thoughtful discussions of musical media—including film, television, video games, and other narrative forms. Through this process, the course aims to foster a deeper appreciation for the complexity, craftsmanship, and expressive power of musical scores across all genres.
3. **Exploring Cultural and Historical Context:** This course will examine how Shore integrates elements from diverse musical traditions and instruments to reflect the inspirations behind the rich and varied cultures of Middle-earth, emphasizing how these musical choices support contemporary world-building with historical parallels.
4. **Musical Narrative, Character, and Meaning:** This course will discuss how music functions as a narrative force within film by outlining character identity, thematic meaning, and emotional continuity. Focusing on Shore's score for *The Lord of the Rings*, the course will examine how leitmotifs operate as evolving narrative signifiers—how nuances of orchestration, harmony, and thematic structure can reflect character development, moral conflict, fellowship, corruption of power, and mortality. Through active listening and discussion, students will analyze how these recurring musical ideas contribute to long-form storytelling and deepen audience engagement with the narrative.
5. **Interdisciplinary Connections:** Students will investigate how Shore's music interacts with visual storytelling, literary sources, and the broader mythology of *The Lord of the Rings*, emphasizing the role of music as an integral component of interdisciplinary narrative construction in multimedia.

Recommended Materials

Students should acquire access to both the *Complete Recordings* and the *Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* for all three of the *Lord of the Rings* films (free trials and student rates are available through [Spotify](#), [Apple Music](#), [YouTube Music](#), etc...) for convenient listening on their own. Downloadable files of these soundtracks are available on canvas otherwise.

Course Schedule

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS	ASSIGNMENT(S) DUE
1	Jan 13, 2026	Introductions & Course Overview	–
2	Jan 20, 2026	Intro to Music & Active Listening	Introduction Survey

3	Jan 27, 2026	Leitmotifs, Mechanics and History	Week 3 Pre-class Assignment
4	Feb 3, 2026	Leitmotifs in LOTR	Week 4 Pre-class Assignment
WEEK	DATE	TOPICS	ASSIGNMENT(S) DUE
5	Feb 10, 2026	Exploring Howard Shore	Week 5 Pre-class Assignment
6	Feb 17, 2026	Instrumentation in LOTR	Week 6 Pre-class Assignment
7	Feb 24, 2026	Music and Narrative - Characters	Week 7 Pre-class Assignment Mid-semester Survey
8	March 3, 2026	Music and Narrative - Settings	Week 8 Pre-class Assignment
9	March 10, 2026	Music and Narrative - Creatures	Week 9 Pre-class Assignment
10	March 17, 2026	NO SCHOOL – SPRING BREAK	
11	March 24, 2026	Vocal Performances in LOTR	Week 11 Pre-class Assignment
12	March 31, 2026	Live Concert Tours	Week 12 Pre-class Assignment
13	April 7, 2026	IP and Multimedia	–
14	April 14, 2026	Final Presentations	Final Presentations Due
15	April 21, 2026	Final Presentations	–

Pre-class assignments will be assigned on Thursday evenings and are due at the start of the next class meeting.

Throughout the semester, topics are subject to change based on class interest (as gauged by the mid-semester survey), progress, and instructor discretion.

Grading Policy

55% – Attendance and Participation: Attendance is mandatory—please email in advance if you will be missing class. See [UF Academic Regulations and Policies](#) for more information regarding excused absences. Participation will be assessed based on students' engagement with weekly in-class discussions and their ability to engage respectfully with other students (i.e. listening while others are speaking, not using cellphones in class, etc.).

30% – Final Presentation: Students will complete a project (optional format) on a score from a film, TV show, or videogame of their choosing. The project must be submitted prior to presenting. Students will be assessed on their ability to interpret the score and integrate topics they learned during the semester, as well as their ability to present effectively. More information can be found on Canvas.

15% – Pre-Class Assignments: Prior to each class, supplemental material on the topic of the week will be posted on Canvas. Students are expected to watch all videos or listen to all recordings and complete a discussion post. The prompts for the post will vary. These should not take long and they are

only there to act as a guide for the in-class discussion, so they will be graded on completion (note that the instructors WILL read the content).

Honors: A minimum grade of B is required to earn Academic points towards Honors Completion Requirements. Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Requirements module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

University grading policy for assigning grade points can be found [here](#).

University of Florida Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code.” On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The [Honor Code](#) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#) by visiting their website. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs as early as possible in the semester.

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online through GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available [here](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or [here](#). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students [here](#).

In-Class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

- **U Matter, We Care:** If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit U Matter, We Care website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- **Counseling and Wellness Center:** Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- **Student Health Care Center:** Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the Student Health Care Center website.
- **University Police Department:** Visit UF Police Department website or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- **UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:** For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.
- **GatorWell Health Promotion Services:** For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the GatorWell website or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

- **E-learning technical support:** Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- **Career Connections Center:** Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392- 1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- **Library Support:** Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. Call 866-281-6309 or email ask@ufl.libanswers.com for more information.

- **Teaching Center:** 1317 Turlington Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- **Writing Studio:** Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
 - Daytime (9:30am-3:30pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138
 - Evening (5:00pm-7:00pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339).
- **Academic Complaints:** Office of the Ombuds; Visit the Complaint Portal webpage for more information.
- **Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions):** View the Student Complaint Procedure webpage for more information.

Honors Program:

- Honors Program, Honors Village Complex #4, (352) 392-1519
- Quick questions for an Honors advisor? Email advisor@honors.ufl.edu
- Need an Honors advising appointment? Schedule via Microsoft Bookings: <https://bit.ly/UFHonorsAdvising>
- Honors Program Event Calendar: <https://www.honors.ufl.edu/news--events/calendar-of-events/>

All University of Florida policies are available to read here: <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>