Course Title

Conversations in the Global Music Business:
Cryptocurrency, Big Data and Surviving The Future

Course Number
REMU-UT 9810 D01

Fall 2018

Syllabus last updated on: 15 SEP 2018

Lecturer Contact Information
Mat Dryhurst
md3870@nyu.edu

Course Details
Wednesdays, 7:45pm to 9pm

Location
BLAC 101, NYU Berlin Academic Center

Units earned
2

Course Description
In this class we will be taking a deep look at the impact of emerging technology on the future of music from the unique vantage point of the city of Berlin, which has historically served as “ground zero” for innovative electronic and dance music, and is increasingly becoming a radical technology hub.

Each 75 minute class will begin with a theoretical analysis of the readings and topic in question. The instructor(s) will then discuss core concepts with our guest, and attempt to gather intelligence on any recent and impending future developments in the field. We will end the class with a collective discussion in an attempt to determine the opportunities available for each student to pragmatically pursue their interest in the subject in relation to their individual practice.
This class encourages a DIY (do-it-yourself) approach to the music industry. We will consider bleeding edge conversations on decentralized tech, cryptocurrency, artificial intelligence, and how artistic practices are changing in accordance to the shifting climate online and throughout the touring circuit.

Students will be expected to ask informed questions of guests and to develop their own cogent perspectives throughout the course of the class. The instructor(s) also encourages students to approach him outside of class. The ultimate goal is to empower each student with the information and confidence necessary to navigate the world as it changes.

For the final project, students will begin their business plans and/or conceptualizing their Capstone/Professional Development projects—or, if they are further along, they will continue to develop and implement their plans / projects. Students will receive individualized coaching and mentorship in the effort to develop updated versions of business plans and/or visual decks. This will happen in two ways: students will do so under the guidance and supervision of the principal class instructor as well as a specially curated group of Berlin-based industry professional mentors.

Course Objective

- Introduce students to key concepts and figures in contemporary music and technology and to interrogate the opportunities and challenges inherent to emerging technological and musical developments;
- To help students develop a conversational fluency of the most influential issues facing the contemporary music business in Europe and beyond;
- To improve and enhance students’ ability to think through and articulate ideas about the music business in a historical and contemporary narrative;
- To develop students confidence in discussing technological concepts and relating them to their work;
- To help students continue the development of their professional development projects and/or work-shopping of real-life music ventures by refining or developing or implementing business plans, marketing plans and decks.

Assessment Components

Class Participation – 10%

Everyone is required to participate in class discussion, present arguments and ask questions of the instructor and guests. If there is something you do not understand, or an idea comes to mind, do not hesitate to ask.

Midterm Conversation Exam – 30%

In both Berlin and New York, students will come to the relevant instructor’s office and engage in an informed conversation about three of the topics (randomly chosen) we have discussed so far, and how they relate to your practice. Students will be expected to have thoroughly grasped a topic, and to be able to articulate coherent and original opinions on some of the pressing music business issues of our time. In terms of grading, students will be rewarded for their rigor, intellectual curiosity and ability to contextualize these topics and put them in conversation with each other. A more detailed rubric of how the conversation exam will be
Final Conversation Exam – 40%

Students will set up an appointment with the relevant instructor to discuss about any randomly chosen three of the topics we have discussed all semester, and how they relate to your practice. The grading rubric is identical to the midterm. These 10-minute sessions will take place the week of Dec 10. Students will be invited to sign up for a slot a month in advance.

Required Meetings with Business Mentor – 20%

As part of the class students are required to continue developing, workshopping and/or implementing their projects/ideas toward professional development during senior year. In this class, students will do so under guidance of the instructors as well as professional mentors. As a result, mentorship meetings will be largely student-driven. The instructor and student will collaborate on incorporating some of the new concepts discussed in class to their primary projects if the student would like them to be incorporated as such. Utilizing these new ideas, however, is not required, and students may take advantage of their mentorship sessions to get guidance on their project regardless of its connection to topics covered in class.

You will meet with one of four professional mentors assigned to the class (see bios of mentors below). You will have 3 meetings over the course of the semester with your mentor. These meetings occur outside of the official class time. In these "breakout" sessions with professional mentors, you will work to develop your entrepreneurial projects and business ideas.

The first meeting lasts 90 minutes and takes place in September (date TBD with Lars Zander). You will meet as a group of four or five with a mentor (group assignments will be forthcoming) and you will be expected to present your ideas-in-progress and/or your music and you will receive feedback from the mentor. In the second meeting, (in October, date TBD), you will meet with your mentor one on one for 30 minutes; prior to this meeting, you will be asked to submit materials for the mentor to review. In the third meeting (November), you will meet with one of the mentors again for 30 minutes, and again, you will again present your ideas and music and receive final comments.

Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments.

NYU Berlin Library Catalogue or follow the link on NYU Berlin’s website (Academics/Facilities & Services).

Internet Research Guidelines
to be discussed in class
Session 1 – 05 Sep 2018
Introductions and the question of independence

This class is a lecture and discussion presenting a historical and contemporary overview of the European Indie DIY Label System and the political and cultural factors that help it thrive. How do labels get by, what niches do they occupy and what labels might thrive where others fail? What does it mean to be independent in 2018? Can independence be seen as a protocol by which to do business and create work, and expanded to be encoded into technology itself? How does the notion independence impact your practice as a young artist?

Session 2 – 12 Sep 2018
Music Publishing & Licensing in Europe

Special Guest: James Ginzburg (Multiverse Publishing)
This class provides an overview of contemporary music publishing and licensing, with guest and musician James Ginzburg, who runs his own independent publishing company in Berlin. We will attempt to answer the question: with musicians increasingly looking to commercial industry for licensing opportunities, how does this shift impact the medium as a whole?

Session 3 – 19 Sep 2018
Global Approaches to Marketing and Publicity

Special Guest: Melissa Taylor (Tailored Communication)
This class covers the latest practices and challenges in marketing and publicity with Melissa Taylor, founder of electronic music PR company Tailored Communication. As well as an overview of the practice, we will look at ways in which musicians can pragmatically incorporate promotional strategies into their own work. Prepare questions you might have related to your own practice.

Session 4 – 26 Sep 2018
Promotion Group Discussion

In light of our session with Melissa Taylor, we will use this session to dive deeper into how promotional strategies apply to your work, and discuss ideas as a group for how to more effectively integrate these approaches into your individual projects.

03 Oct – NO CLASS (Tag der Deutschen Einheit)

Session 5 – 05 Oct 2018 (MAKE UP FRIDAY)

The Live Music Industry
Guests: Michail Stangl (Boiler Room)
This discussion with Michail Stangl of Boiler Room, will touch on the live music economy in Berlin, the booking and touring infrastructure and the vital importance of a live show to the contemporary musician. Boiler Room itself hints at a new kind of live music industry, the live streaming industry, that contains within it the potential for new kinds of audience interaction.

Reading

- The Terror of Total Dasein by Hito Steyerl
- Working in the Berlin Techno Scene: Theoretical Sketch of an Electronic Music Scene Economy by Jan-Michael Kuhn
- Excerpt from Lost and Sound: Berlin, Techno and the Easyjetset by Tobias Rapp
- The Online Underground: A New Kind of Punk? by Adam Harper

Session 6 – 10 Oct 2018

Guest: Peter Harris (Founder, resonate.is)
We will begin with a lecture establishing the basics of decentralization, cryptocurrency and the blockchain, and how they may have a significant impact on the future of music distribution and aesthetics.

We will close with a discussion with Peter Harris, who is building an alternative, independent streaming service on the blockchain. He will clarify the transformative possibility of this ascendent technology, and its potential for new kinds of musical ideologies.

Reading

How the Blockchain Can Change the Music Industry by Benji Rogers:
- Part 1
- Part 2
- What is Platform Co-operativism and why is it important? by Nathan Matias
- Cooperating using the Blockchain by Peter Harris
- Using Blockchains for Metadata and Licensing by Peter Harris
- A blockchain for DJ's and Producers by Peter Harris

Session 7 – 17 Oct 2018
Blockchain futures - Tokenisation

Guest: Paul Seidler (Terra0)
After establishing a thorough understanding of the concept of decentralization and emerging Blockchain technology, we will take a deeper dive with Paul Seidler, who co-founded the experimental blockchain project Terra0, to further understand how tokens can be leveraged within an artistic ecosystem.
There will be special attention given for how students may themselves begin experimenting in the space.
For information on Paul Seidels work, visit the website of Terra0.

24 Oct – NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Session 8 – 31 Oct 2018
Blockchain Discussion

After the two week intensive introduction to blockchain technology and its applications to the cultural sector, we will use this class to discuss ideas as a group for how this might impact the student’s individual practices, clear up any confusion about core concepts, and speculate on ideas that have not yet been proposed.

Session 9 – 7 Nov 2018
Data + Metrics in the New Music Industry

Guests: Cory Levinson (Ex-Soundcloud)
Guest Cory Levinson was a data analyst for Soundcloud and will share insights into how data is shaping the new music industry. We will seek to interrogate what data music platforms seek to collect from artists and users, and why, and also look at the ways in which students might utilize big data to augment and inform their practice.

Reading
- How Netflix Uses Analytics by Kissmetrics
- Big data and creativity: What we can learn from ‘House of Cards’ by Shane Atchison and Jason Burby
- Data-Driven Artists And Their Critics by Rob Myers
- Spotify clears up it’s controversial privacy policy by Brian Barrett
- Spotify Wants Your Data. Could That Be A Good Thing? by Jessica Goldstein

Session 10 – 14 Nov 2018
Surviving the (immediate) future - Group Discussion

By now we have been together in Berlin for a number of months, tasted life in a European cultural centre, explored alternative avenues for a new music industry, and interrogated the viability and intentions of the current one. So where does this leave you? In this class, we will discuss the practicalities of starting a career in this new musical landscape; as a recording artist, does it make sense to take a salary job in the industry, or maintain your autonomy as a creative force? Does it make sense to pay high rents in a cultural centre like New York, or move to somewhere where you can focus more comfortably on your craft? This is an opportunity to bring the conversation down to earth, before we lift off again for the rest of the semester.
Session 11 – 21 Nov 2018
Platforming

Guest: Daniella Seitz (Founder, Creamcake)
This discussion with Daniella Seitz will cover how and why it is essential to build new platforms to support emerging artists in the current music climate. Through Creamcake, Daniella and her collaborators have built an essential platform to help young musicians transition from the internet to the live environment.

Session 12 – 28 Nov 2018
The Academy

Guest: Many Ameri (RBMA Founder)

Independent music academies, pioneered by Red Bull, have emerged as an unprecedented player in the musical landscape. What role do these academies play, what new opportunities do they present, and what challenges have they faced as a new model within an established industry?

- Red Bull Music Academy, a caffeine boost for the music industry? by Joe Muggs

Session 13 – 5 Dec 2018
AI and Music Discussion

AI/Machine learning is already having an impact on how we consume music; how much influence will it have on the creation of music itself? We are beginning to see tools emerge to assist musicians in their creative practice, and machines that do away with humans and utilize neural networks to create their own, increasingly convincing, compositions. What questions do these new developments raise about the traditional role of musicians. How and why are we needed? We will look over many examples at the bleeding edge of music creation through Machine Learning and discuss.

- AI, Apple and Google by Benedict Evans
- What the AI behind AlphaGo can teach us about Being Human by Cade Metz
- Google’s computers are creating songs, Making music may never be the same, by Matt McFarland

Final Conversation Exam – 17 Dec 2018

Classroom Etiquette
Ask questions. My main expectation in terms of etiquette is that you are engaged and alert, and let me know if something isn’t making sense to you as early as possible :) Everyone is encouraged to challenge opinions and ideas with skill and enthusiasm.
Suggested Co-Curricular Activities
Feel free to write your instructors and ask for personalised recommendations.

Your Mentors
Anne Haffmans (anne@dominorecordco.com) is the head of Domino Recording Company in Germany, and the former label manager of Mute. Prior to her current position, she was a freelance label manager working for EMI, Mute, Virgin and Domino. She studied English Literature, Political Science and Communication at Universität Augsburg, and received her M.A. from the Universität Augsburg. She taught a summer course at UCLA, has served as a tutor at the Popakademie in Mannheim and remains a jury member for the grant and stipend scheme of the Music Board Berlin.

Sandra Passaro (sandra@stars-and-heroes.com)
As the founder and owner of promotions company Stars and Heroes, Int. and Hyper Culture Music Projects, Sandra helps support, consult and promote international artists, labels and performances worldwide. She is the project manager at Norient and certified instructor (CC) for audiovisual media businesses. She is on the board of the International Association for the studies of Popular Music/ German speaking branch (IASPM D-A-CH), and is a university lecturer and researcher in pop music and media. She has been a guest lecturer at the Humboldt University Berlin, the University for Dance and Music Cologne, the Freie Universität Berlin (Department for Communication Studies), the University of Applied Popular Music Mannheim, and the University of Paderborn (Department for Music/Popular Music and Media). She is a member of the Berlin Music Commission (BMC), the German Association for the Study of Popular Music (ASPM), and the Group Popular Culture and Media within the German Association for Media Studies (GfM).

Colin Self (colin.self@nyu.edu) composes and choreographs music, performance, and environments for expanding consciousness, troubling binaries and boundaries of perception and communication. He works with communities across disciplines and practices, using voices, bodies, and computers as tools to interface with biological and technological software.

Aaron Gonscher (agonsher@gmail.com) is a graduate of the Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music and has lived full-time in Berlin since 2013. During this time, he has worked as the label manager of the Berlin-based Leisure System and Knives labels and as a full-time booking agent at LittleBig Booking Agency, in addition to serving as an independent PR consultant for record labels and individual artists. In 2014, he collaborated with producer Jace Clayton and arts collective Slavs & Tatars on a sound installation included in the 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art. He currently works for the Red Bull Music Academy.

Your Lecturer
Mat Dryhurst is an artist and musician who has experience of almost every corner of the independent music industry. He runs a project studio in Berlin in collaboration with his partner Holly Herndon, where they release and tour popular albums and artworks experimenting on the frontier of technology and contemporary politics. He developed the open source publishing platform Saga, and serves as advisor to numerous Blockchain music initiatives.
Academic Policies

Assessment Expectations

Grade A: The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well-structured arguments in their work. The student writes comprehensive essays / answers to exam questions and their work shows strong evidence of critical thought and extensive reading.

Grade B: The candidate shows a good understanding of the problem and has demonstrated the ability to formulate and execute a coherent research strategy.

Grade C: The work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the research problem. However, the work fails to organize findings coherently and is in need of improvement.

Grade D: The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be a problem of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, poor research.

Grade F: The work shows that the research problem is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the research is clearly negligible.

Grade Conversion
Your lecturer may use one of the following scales of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

A = 94-100 or 4.0
A- = 90-93 or 3.7
B+ = 87-89 or 3.3
B = 84-86 or 3.0
B- = 80-83 or 2.7
C+ = 77-79 or 2.3
C = 74-76 or 2.0
C- = 70-73 or 1.7
D+ = 67-69 or 1.3
D = 65-66 or 1.0
F = below 65 or 0

Attendance Policy
Participation in all classes is essential for your academic success, especially in courses that meet only once per week. Your attendance in both content and language courses is required and will be checked at each class meeting. As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor by e-mail immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, religious observance or emergencies. Your professor or NYU Berlin's administration may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from NYU Berlin's Director or Wellness Counselor as proof. Emergencies or other exceptional circumstances must be presented to the Director. Doctor's notes need to be submitted to the Academics Office, who will inform your professors. Doctor's notes need to be from a local doctor and carry a signature and a stamp. If you want the reasons for your absence to be treated confidentially, please approach NYU Berlin's Director or Wellness Counselor.
Unexcused absences affect students’ grades: In content courses each unexcused absence (equaling one week's worth of classes) leads to a deduction of 2% of the overall grade and may negatively affect your class participation grade. In German Language classes two or three (consecutive or non-consecutive) unexcused absences (equaling one week's worth of classes) lead to a 2% deduction of the overall grade. Three unexcused absences in one content course and five unexcused absences in your German language course may lead to a Fail in that course. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points for frequent late arrival or late arrival back from in-class breaks. Please note that for classes involving a field trip, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student’s responsibility to arrive in time at the announced meeting point.

Exams, tests and quizzes, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation. It is the student's responsibility to produce this doctor's note and submit it to the Academics Office; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F and no make-up assessment is scheduled. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class.

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to catch up with the work that was missed.

Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays
Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their lecturer AND NYU Berlin's Academics Office in writing via e-mail one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

Late Submission of Work
(1) Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the professor.

(2) Late work should be submitted in person to the lecturer or to the Academics Office, who will write on the essay or other work the date and time of submission, in the presence of the student. Another member of the administrative staff may also personally accept the work and will write the date and time of submission on the work, as above.

(3) Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late (excluding weekends and public or religious holidays), unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor's note or by approval of NYU Berlin's administration), in which case the 2 points per day deductions start counting from the day the extended deadline has passed.

(4) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 days (excluding weekends and public or religious holidays) following the submission date receives an F.

(5) End of semester essays must be submitted on time.
(6) Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.

(7) Please remember that university computers do not keep your essays - you must save them elsewhere. Having lost parts of your essay on the university computer is no excuse for a late submission.

Provisions for Students with Disabilities
Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see their website for further information.

Plagiarism Policy
The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. Proper referencing of your sources avoids plagiarism (see as one possible help the NYU library guide to referencing styles.

NYU Berlin takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form.

It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.

For a summary please follow the link to NYU Global's academic policies.