

Sound In Social Life

CA 222S | MUS 239S | ICS 246S | MW 10.05-11.20am | White Lecture Hall 106

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Office hours | Monday 11.30-1.30

The goal of this interdisciplinary course is to provide a set of tools to help you think critically about the sonic dimensions of social life. Towards this end, you will produce both academic writing and recorded sound. There will be a special focus on the relation between writing and sound production; sound and text; the conceptual, the aural, and the musical. As such, we will draw equally from academic disciplines (such as cultural anthropology, ethnomusicology, sound studies, and social history) and the creative arts (such as audio documentary, sound art installations, sound design [including for film] and experimental forms of music composition such as musique concrète, noise, ambient and electronic music). Part I, The History and Ethnography of Sound, will focus on academic work, while Part II, Art, Knowledge and Composition will focus on overlaps between academic knowledge production and the creative arts.

In learning about how to think and write about sound, we'll ask questions such as: How does sound technology impact practices of listening? In what ways is a sense of place aural? How are social relationships negotiated through sound? How is a particular place or a group of people produced in sound by the global entertainment industry? What are the political implications and aesthetic challenges of recording and processing someone else's sounds? How has streaming and the decline of major record labels affected these questions? What are the political implications of the recent revival of older forms of media such as vinyl and tape?

In learning about how to produce and edit recorded sound (whether documentary, experimental, or other), we'll ask questions such as: How would you represent something like an endangered rainforest, an all-night music performance, or a political protest in sound? For what purposes might you do so? How would you present someone else's voice? Can sound installations be a successful ethnographic medium? What is the difference between ethnographic recording, audio documentary, and a piece of music? What values arise from separating these genres of recording and re-presenting? When is sound considered noise? How are the boundaries between noise and music defined? How are the boundaries between sound and silence defined?

Readings, Viewings, and Recordings

The course material for Part I will be primarily academic articles and chapters from larger manuscripts, while the material for Part II will be primarily recorded sound. All course resources will be available as electronic files on our Sakai site, or in links provided in the syllabus. The syllabus is subject to change throughout the semester. In the event of an assignment change, you will receive an email with links to relevant resources.

Weekly Writing Submissions (20 Points [8 writings, 2.5 points each])

For each weekly course module you will choose one article, chapter or recording, and submit an abstract or listening journal entry. In the first half of the course, assignments will be reading, with supplemental in-class listening. Therefore, **listening journal entries**

will not be accepted until after the midterm. Weekly writings are due – posted on the forums page on Sakai – **by 5pm on the day before your chosen reading or recording is assigned.**

An **abstract** is a *summary* (not a response or reflection!) that appears at the head of articles in some journals, helping busy readers to decide whether to read the article in its entirety. A good abstract usually addresses these questions about the article or chapter:

What is the subject matter?

What are the author's questions about the subject matter?

What methodology does the author use to address these questions?

What theory does the author draw on? (eg. key texts used, main authors cited, or undergirding theoretical approach)

What conclusions does the author draw?

A good **listening journal** entry will either address the technical elements of the assigned recording (e.g. what instruments are being played? how was the recording created? Where was the recording made? For what purpose was the recording made?) or your own subjective response to the recording (e.g. what mood does the recording create for you? What do the sounds on the recording remind you of? Do the sounds bring images to mind? If the sound is accompanied by film or text, do the sound and images/texts/concepts work well together?), or preferably, some combination of the technical and the objective.

Abstract and listening journal submissions should be between 150 and 250 words. These weekly assignments will be graded on a pass/fail basis. An on-time submission is a pass; a late or no submission is a fail. You may miss 3 out of the assigned 11 weekly writings without penalty for any reason, leaving 8 required submissions.

Midterm (25 points)

Your mid term will be a closed book exam drawn from the course materials and discussions. The midterm will be administered in class in **Wednesday March, 8th**.

Sound Piece and Final Research Paper (40 points)

Your final project for this course will be a 5 to 10 minute audio file (or series of files of the same length) and accompanying 12 to 15 page research paper that represents a sonic community of your choosing that is not represented in the syllabus. The research paper and the sound piece must address the same topic. Projects that exhibit a synthesis of analytical (academic) and creative (sound production) work will receive the highest grades. You are highly encouraged to explore the sonic dimensions of a social world that is outside of your typical routine as a Duke student. Communities on campus are accepted, but projects that focus on life outside campus (such as the social, political, musical, or artistic life in a city in the Research Triangle, a smaller town nearby; or any location of your choosing) are highly encouraged.

In order to facilitate the technical skills needed for the sound piece, Part II of the course will begin with a workshop on audio recording and editing. You will receive your own Zoom field recorder and we will explore the basics of microphone placement, audio editing (such as clipping, cutting, pasting, fading), audio effects (such as reverb, EQ, compression, distortion), and audio synthesis.

For the research paper, draw on the ideas and materials of the semester as they relate to your chosen topic. Supplementing with sources outside the syllabus as they relate to your chosen topic is encouraged. Please cite sources using the format on the syllabus (Chicago). I am happy to meet with you during office hours or another time to discuss any questions you may have about the writing process. Additionally, the [Writing Studio](#) is an excellent resource. Consult their experts regarding questions you might have about the writing aspect of your assignments.

All final research topics must be approved by me before the midterm. Please be in touch before then.

An outline of your paper and demo of your audio is due March 27th.

Attendance and Participation (15 points)

“Participation” in class requires that you engage the course material, and is demonstrated by asking questions, listening attentively, and responding to the ideas of your peers. This requires that you complete assigned readings before class, bring your readings to class, submit assignments on time, demonstrate original work, and treat your colleagues with respect. Please **unplug** during class. In other words, turn off your cellphones, laptops and tablets. Laptops may only be used in class during the audio editing workshop week or during other specified times.

Two absences without a *dean’s excuse* (not at STINF) for extenuating circumstances (such as extended illness or athletic schedules) drops your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade.

Grading by the Numbers:

Weekly Writing Submissions	20 points
Midterm	25 points
Sound piece and Final Paper	40 points
Attendance and Participation	15 points
Total	100 points

Deadlines and Important Dates

- Weekly** | Writing Submissions
- March 1st** | Final Project Approval Deadline
- March 8th** | Midterm (proctored in class)
- March 27th** | Outline and Demo of Final Project Due
- April 24th & 26th** | Final Project Presentations
- May 1** | Final Projects Due

PART I | The History and Ethnography of Sound

Wednesday, January 11 | Introduction

Monday, January 16 | MLK Day, No Class

1. The Ethnography of Sound, Then

Wednesday, January 18

Turnbull, Colin M. Chapter Selections from *The Forest People*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1961.

//In Class Listening

Turnbull, Colin, and Francis S. Chapman. 1992[1957]. Selections from *Mbuti pygmies of the Ituri rainforest*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Folkways CD 40401.

2. The Ethnography of Sound, Now

Monday, January 23

Novak, David. *Japanoise: Music at the Edge of Circulation*. Duke University Press Books, 2013.

//In Class Listening

[Japanoise Ch. 1 Videos](#)

Wednesday, January 25

Meintjes, Louise. ***Cut 1 and Cut 3, "Liveness" from Sound of Africa!: Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio*. Duke University Press, 2003.

//In Class Listening

Sound of Africa Cut 3 clips

3. Noise and Appropriation in World Music

Monday, January 30

Feld, Steven. "Pygmy POP. A Genealogy of Schizophonic Mimesis." *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 1996, 1–35.

Wednesday, February 1

Novak, David. "The Sublime Frequencies of New Old Media." *Public Culture* 23, no. 3 65 (September 21, 2011): 603–34.

//In Class Listening

Konono no. 1. *Congotronics*. Crammed Discs, 2016.

4. The Social History of Listening

Monday, February 6

Sterne, J. 2003. "Medicine's Acoustic Culture: Mediate Auscultation, the Stethoscope, and the 'Autopsy of the Living'." *The Auditory Culture Reader*. M. Bull and L. Back. Oxford, Berg Publishers: 191-217.

Supplemental:

Mills, Mara. 2015. "Deafness." In *Keywords in Sound*, edited by David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny, 45-54. Durham: Duke University Press.

Wednesday February 8

Thompson, Emily Ann. "The Origins of Modern Acoustics" *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933*. Mit Press, 2004.

5. The Ethics and Practice of Listening

Monday, February 13

Rice, Tom. "Sounding Bodies: Medical Studies and the Acquisition of Stethoscopic Perspectives." In *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*, 2011, 298-319

Supplemental:

Rice, Tom. "Listening" in Novak, David, and Matt Sakakeeny. *Keywords in Sound*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

// In Class Viewing
[Pauline Oliveros Ted Talk](#)

Wednesday, February 15

Hirschkind, Charles. "The Ethics of Listening" Chapter 3 of *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*. Columbia University Press, 2006.

Supplemental:

Hirschkind, Charles. 2012. "Cassette sermons, aural modernities and the Islamic revival in Cairo." In *The sound studies reader*, edited by Jonathan Sterne. New York: Routledge.

6. Space, Place and Mobility

Monday, February 20

Sakakeeny, Matt. "'Under the Bridge': An Orientation to Soundscapes in New Orleans." *Ethnomusicology* 54, no. 1 (2010): 1-27.

Wednesday, February 22

Jaji, Tsitsi. *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan-African Solidarity*. Oxford University Press, 2014. Selections TBD.

7. Trance, Ritual and the Body

Monday February 27

Tucker, Sherrie. *Dance Floor Democracy: The Social Geography of Memory at the Hollywood Canteen*. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2014. Selections TBD.

Supplemental:

Seremetakis, C. Nadia. Chapter 4, "The Screaming" from *The Last Word: Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani*. University of Chicago Press, 1991

Hammond, Jay and Wissa Karim. "An Interview with Sherrie Tucker." *Full Stop Magazine*. 2013.

Wednesday, March 1

Jackson Jr, John L. "Ethnophysicality, or an Ethnography of Some Body." *Soul: Black Power, Politics, and Pleasure*, 1998, 172–90

Monday, March 6

Becker, Judith O. *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion and Trancing*. Bloomington, Indiana Univ. Press, 2004. Selections TBD.

Wednesday, March 8

Midterm

Field Recorders Handed Out

PART II | Art, Knowledge and Composition

8. Audio Production Workshop

Monday March 20 & Wednesday March 22

Download the open source audio-editor, [Audacity](#) and the open source audio re-router [soundflower](#) for sampling online audio material.

If you already use a different DAW or sequencer such as Garageband, Ableton Live, Pro Tools, Logic or would like to purchase one, you are welcome to.

Bring Laptops and Headphones to Class.

Supplemental:

Rodgers, Tara. 2015 "Synthesis" from *Keywords in Sound*. edited by David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny. Durham: Duke University

9. Sounded Anthropology

Monday March 27

Garton, Brad. [My Book of Dreams](#).

Feld, Steve, and Donald Brenneis. "Doing Anthropology in Sound." *American Ethnologist* 31, no. 4 (November 1, 2004): 461–74.

Supplemental:

Samuels, David W., Louise Meintjes, Ana Maria Ochoa, and Thomas Porcello. "Soundscapes: Toward a Sounded Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2010): 329–45.

Wednesday March 29

//listening

Karel, Ernst. *Swiss Mountain Transport Systems*. Gruenrekorder. Greun 091. 2011. Audio CD.

10. Radio and Audio Documentary

Monday April 3rd

//listening

Orson Wells. 1938. *The War of the Worlds* Radio Play, Mercury Theatre, October 30.

Lucille Fletcher. 1943. *Sorry, Wrong Number* Radio Play, Suspense. May 25.

The Conet Project. 1997. *Recordings of Shortwave Numbers Stations*. Irdial-Discs.

Parapsychic Acoustic Research. 1999. *The Ghost Orchid: Introduction to EVP*.

Wednesday, April 5th

Fisher, Daniel. "Mediating Kinship: Country, Family and Radio in Northern Australia." *Cultural Anthropology*, Volume 4. Issue 2, pp. 280-312. American Anthropological Association 2012.

Supplemental:

Vaillant, Derek W. "Sounds of Whiteness: Local Radio, Racial Formation, and Public Culture in Chicago, 1921-1935." *American Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (2002): 25-66.

Kunreuther, Laura. 2006. Technologies of the Voice: FM Radio, Telephone, and the Nepali Diaspora in Kathmandu. *Cultural Anthropology* 21(3): 323-353.

11. Musique Concrète

Monday, April 10th

//listening

["Now Is" Podcast with Olivia Block](#)

Wednesday, April 12th

Kane, Brian. *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice*. Reprint edition. Oxford University Press, 2016.

Supplemental:

Schaeffer, Pierre. "Acousmatics." *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, 2004, 76-81.

12. Composition, Nature, Silence

Monday, April 17th

//listenings

Messiaen, Olivier. *Réveil Des Oiseaux Trois Petites Liturgies de La Présence Divine*. [Sound Recording]; Paris: Erato, 1996.

Wednesday, April 19th

Ochoa, Ana Maria. 2015. "Silence." In *Keywords in Sound*, edited by David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny, 183-192. Durham: Duke University

Visit to Anacheoic Chamber

Supplemental:

Holdsworth Dan. 2007. "No Echo" in *Autumn Leaves*, edited by August Carlyle. Double Entendre Press. Paris.

Monday April 24th & Wednesday April 26th - Student Presentations

Monday May 1st - Final Projects Due