

HDCC 208C-0101 • Fall 2011

Digital Cultures & Creativity Seminar: Sound Cultures & Practice

Weds 3-5:30pm (abbreviated course outline for web)

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to sound as a creative medium and a historical and cultural phenomenon. We will read about and discuss the historical basis of hearing and listening, histories of audio technologies and electronic musical instruments, and artistic uses of sound in such genres as musique concrète, soundscape composition, DJing and electronic music. Students will gain hands-on experience with digital audio tools by experimenting with free or low-cost software, such as the audio editor Audacity and sound-generating and processing apps available for mobile phones and iPads. Upon completion of the course, students will be conversant in a critical vocabulary for discussing sound, audio technologies, and electronic/experimental music, and able to complete projects that incorporate sound as a primary creative medium.

CORE Requirement

This course fulfills a CORE distributive requirement in the Humanities and Arts, and satisfies the History or Theory of the Arts (HA) requirement. CORE courses are designed to expose students to the ideas and methods of different academic disciplines and fields, and the ways in which they produce and analyze knowledge. Analytic reading and writing and collaborative learning are central to the course. Accordingly, its success and the success of your learning experience in it depend on your informed and thoughtful preparation for class, and your participation in discussion, writing, and group activities. For more information on the CORE Curriculum, see: <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/core/LearningOutcome.htm>

Learning Outcomes

- Students will receive focused exposure to a special topic within the broad purview of digital cultures and creativity.
- They will explore the topic both critically or theoretically and in practical, hands-on ways using digital tools and technologies.
- Students will be able to discuss major issues and debates in the area of the seminar topic, and be conversant with important concepts and terms.
- Students will synthesize insights from one another as well as the instructor and their readings in order to produce a final paper or project that displays real depth of creativity and insight in the area of the seminar topic.

- Students will conclude the seminar with a focused base of knowledge that they can use as a foundation for their program capstone project, as well as working relationships with program faculty and other students with kindred interests.

Semester Schedule and Course Readings

This syllabus is subject to change as we move through the course; students will be notified in advance of any changes to readings, assignments, exams or grading. All readings are to be done before the date under which they are listed. Please bring readings to class (hard copy or electronic format) so that you may reference them during discussion.

Unit I - Hearing & Listening; Introduction to Sound & Recording

WEEK 1

Weds 8/31: Introductions

Heffernan, Virginia. “Beep!” *New York Times*, March 15, 2010.

Discuss Pauline Oliveros’s Deep Listening and Adaptive Use Musical Instruments.

In-class exercise: Oliveros, Pauline. “The Poetics of Environmental Sound,” in *Software for People: Collected Writings 1963-80*. Baltimore: Smith Publications, 1984, 28-35.

Evelyn Glennie’s “Hearing Essay”: http://www.evelyn.co.uk/hearing_essay.aspx

Watch TEDTalk: Evelyn Glennie Shows How to Listen:

http://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn_glennie_shows_how_to_listen.html

Read and consider “Reading, Writing, Citing” and (optionally) “How to Read” PDFs on ELMS

WEEK 2

**** TUES 9/6, NOON - REFLECTION #1 DUE: Poetics of sound**

Weds 9/7: Hearing & Listening

Oliveros, Pauline. “Sonic Images.” In *Software for People*, 52-54.

Ackerman, Diane. “Hearing” (excerpts), in *A Natural History of the Senses* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 175-204.

Schwartz, Hillel. “The Indefensible Ear,” in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, edited by M. Bull and L. Back (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003), 487-501.

Recommended: “How Hearing Works,” *How Stuff Works* website:

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/life/human-biology/hearing.htm>

Recommended: “Slo-Mo Cricket Chirps Reveal Secret Serenades”:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=113435034>

**** IN CLASS: Sound basics**

WEEK 3

Weds 9/14: Introducing Sound Studies

Stadler, Gustavus. "Introduction: Breaking Sound Barriers." *Social Text* 102 (Summer 2010), *The Politics of Recorded Sound* special issue, 1-12.

Pinch, Trevor, and Karin Bijsterveld. "Sound Studies: New Technologies and Music," *Social Studies of Science* 34, no. 5 (2004): 635-48.

Greene, Paul D. "Introduction: Wired Sound and Sonic Cultures," ch. 1 in *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Cultures*, edited by P. D. Greene and T. Porcello (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), 1-22.

**** IN CLASS: Audacity tutorial**

WEEK 4

**** SUN 9/18, 11:59PM - REFLECTION #2 DUE - Sound, space and architecture**

Weds 9/21: Sound, Space, and Atmosphere

Csepregi, Gabor. "On Sound Atmospheres," in *Aural Cultures*, edited by J. Drobnick (YYZ Books, 2004), 169-77.

Blessner, Barry, and Linda-Ruth Salter. "Auditory Spatial Awareness," ch. 2 in *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 11-66.

Than, Kher. "Ancient Maya Temples Were Giant Loudspeakers?" *National Geographic*, December 16, 2010. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2010/12/101216-maya-acoustics-speakers-audio-sound-archaeology-science/>

**** IN CLASS: Microphone & recording techniques; discuss Midterm assignment**

WEEK 5

**** SUN 9/25, 11:59 PM - REFLECTION #3 DUE - Playlist and mobile listening**

Weds 9/28: Mobile Listening

Thibaud, Jean-Paul. "The Sonic Composition of the City," in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, 329-41.

Bull, Michael. "No Dead Air! The iPod and the Culture of Mobile Listening," *Leisure Studies* 24, no. 4 (October 2005): 343-55.

**** IN CLASS: Mobile listening exercise (bring iPads, phones, headphones if you can)**

Unit II - History of Audio Technologies; Sound Art & Electroacoustic Music

WEEK 6

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: Tues 10/4: Electronic music composer Morton Subotnick visits the Music department. Free and public talks from approx. 12:30pm-6, details TBA -

<http://www.claricesmithcenter.umd.edu/2010/c/performances/calendar?month=10&year=2011> (see 3 listings on 10/4)

Weds 10/5: Synthesizers

Pinch, Trevor, and Frank Trocco. Selected chapters from *Analog Days: The Invention and Impact of the Moog Synthesizer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

Watch excerpts of *Moog* (2005) documentary

**** PRESENTATION DUE IN CLASS: demos of iPad and mobile phone synthesizer apps**

WEEK 7

Weds 10/12: Sound Art

Licht, Alan. "Sound Art: Origins, Development and Ambiguities," *Organised Sound* 14, no. 1 (2009): 3-10.

Gercke, Hans. "About the Work of Christina Kubisch," and Christina Kubisch, Interview with Christoph Metzger, in *Klangraumlichtzeit* (Heidelberg: Kerher Verlag, 2000).

"The Whole Corporeality of Hearing: An Interview with Bernhard Leitner." In *Resonances: Aspects of Sound Art*, edited by Bernd Schulz (Heidelberg: Keher Verlag, 2002), 81-88.

**** IN CLASS: Check in on midterms; group iPad performance / installation**

WEEK 8

Weds 10/19: Electroacoustic Music

**** MIDTERM DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS - SONIC PORTRAIT**

Rodgers, Tara. Interviews with Maggi Payne and Annea Lockwood, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

Selections from Cox, Christoph, and Daniel Warner, *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*. (New York: Continuum, 2004).

Recommended: Selections from Chadabe, Joel. *Electric Sound: The Past and Promise of Electronic Music*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997

Watch excerpts of documentary *Ohm: The Early Gurus of Electronic Music* (2006)

**** IN CLASS: Introductions to Ableton Live, Traktor, ProTools (?)**

WEEK 9

EVENT OUTSIDE OF CLASS (your attendance is expected in the morning and/or afternoon, unless you have another class or job that conflicts): Mon 10/24: Betsey Biggs (<http://www.betseybiggs.org/>) visits DCC, leads an exploratory sound activity with students, ~10am-12 & 2-4pm, details TBA

Weds 10/26: Music, Sound, Environment; Soundscape Composition

Schafer, R. Murray. "The Music of the Environment," in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, edited by C. Cox and D. Warner (2004), 29-39.

Westerkamp, Hildegard. "Linking Soundscape Composition and Acoustic Ecology," *Organised Sound* 7, no. 1 (2002): 51-56.

McCartney, Andra. "Soundscape Works, Listening, and the Touch of Sound," in *Aural Cultures*, ...

Dunn, David, with Rene van Peer. "Music, Language and Environment," *Leonardo Music Journal* 9 (1999): 63-67.

Recommended: Read about/listen to "singing" sand dunes:

<http://www.nymoon.com/pubs/desert/singingsand/>

**** IN CLASS: Midterm critiques & discussions**

Unit III - Sound Systems; DJing & Electronic Music; Digital Audio

WEEK 10

**** SUN 10/30, 11:59PM: REFLECTION #4 due - Sound and embodied experience**

Weds 11/2: Sound and the Body; Music and Pleasure

Henriques, Julian. "Sonic Dominance and the Reggae Sound System," in *The Auditory Cultures Reader*, 451-80.

Gilbert, Jeremy, and Ewan Pearson. "Music, Meaning and Pleasure: From Plato to Disco," ch. 2 in *Discographies: Dance Music, Culture and the Politics of Sound* (London: Routledge, 1999), 38-53.

Articles on Maryanne Amacher TBA

**** IN CLASS: Multichannel speaker arrangements**

WEEK 11

**** SUN 11/6, 11:59PM - SHORT PAPER/FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE**

Weds 11/9: Sampling & DJ Cultures

Beth Coleman interview in *Pink Noises*.

Excerpts from Miller, Paul D. (aka DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid). *Rhythm Science*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

Watch excerpts of *Scratch* (2002) documentary on hip hop and turntablism and *Modulations* (1998) documentary on electronic dance music

**** IN CLASS: Discuss final project proposals**

WEEK 12

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: Tues 11/15: Guest lecture by Beth Coleman, MITH Digital Dialogue, ~12:30pm, 0135 Taliaferro, details TBA - <http://cms.mit.edu/people/bcoleman/>

Weds 11/16: Digital Audio

Jordan, Ken. "Freeze Frame: Audio, Aesthetics, Sampling, and Contemporary Multimedia," and "Stop. Hey. What's That Sound?" chs. 9 and 24 in *Sound Unbound: Sampling Digital Music and Culture*, edited by P. D. Miller aka DJ Spooky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 97-108, 245-64.

Sterne, Jonathan. "The MP3 as Cultural Artifact," *New Media & Society* 8 (2006): 825-42.

Bodle, Carrie. "Sonification" reading TBA

Recommended: SuperCollider album with each track just 140 characters of code:

<http://supercollider.sourceforge.net/sc140/>

**** IN CLASS: Data sonification techniques in SuperCollider - <http://www.audiosynth.com/>**

WEEK 13

**** SUN 11/20, 11:59 PM - REFLECTION #5 DUE: Sonic thresholds and limits**

Weds 11/23: Sound, Power, and Pain

Cusick, Suzanne G. "'You are in a place that is out of the world...': Music in the Detention Camps of the 'Global War on Terror,'" *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2, no. 1 (Feb 2008): 1-26.

Goodman, Steve. Excerpts from *Sonic Warfare*.

Paglen, Trevor. "Recording Carceral Landscapes," *Leonardo Music Journal* 16 (2006).

WEEK 14

Weds 11/30: Final Project Work Time

WEEK 15

Weds 12/7: ****FINAL PROJECTS DUE IN CLASS**