

MUS 101: Topics in Computer Music - History of Electronic Music and Sonic Arts

M.A. Program in Digital Musics, Dartmouth College
Winter 2013 - Dr. Tara Rodgers

Course Description

This course surveys conceptual, technical, and aesthetic developments over the past century in electronic, electroacoustic, computer music and sonic arts. Our tasks are to consider how past work in these fields informs creative possibilities in the present, and to gain new understandings of our own research/creative practices in historical context. We will examine work by artists who have crossed traditional boundaries of music, science, fine arts, performance, and philosophy. The selection of course texts emphasizes interviews and writings from artists and inventors themselves—so that we may glean details of their creative process and also learn from their methods of describing and documenting that process. Additional readings are drawn from the fields of sound studies, music history, and musicology. Themes and topics to be explored include: the invention of new musical instruments; indeterminacy and improvisation; acoustic ecology and soundscape composition; sound and music technologies in relation to voice, language, and the body; sound, space, and architecture; microsound, drone, and electronic dance music; format theory and data sonification. Preparation outside of class time will entail keeping up with a steady stream of readings; class sessions will typically center on listening and discussing musical works, using the readings as context; assignments will cultivate skills in descriptive writing and music/sound art composition.

Semester Schedule and Course Outline

Week 1 - Jan 8-10

1) Tues - Introductions

2) Thurs - Introductions (cont'd)

Share and discuss work samples

Recommended:

Oliveros, Pauline. *Deep Listening: A Composer's Practice* (New York: iUniverse, 2005), xxi-xxv.

— — —. "Some Sound Observations," "The Poetics of Environmental Sound," and "Sonic Images," in *Software for People: Collected Writings, 1963-80* (Baltimore: Smith Publications, 1984), 17-27, 28-35, 52-54.

Sterne, Jonathan. "Sonic Imaginations," introduction to *The Sound Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1-17.

Week 2 - Jan 15-17

1) Tues - Provocations

Russolo, Luigi. "The Art of Noises (extracts) 1913," in *Futurist Manifestos*, edited with an introduction by Umbro Appolonio (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973), 74-75, 84-87.

Varèse, Edgard. "The Liberation of Sound," in *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music* (expanded edition), edited by Elliot Schwartz and Barney Childs (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 195-208.

Ussachevsky, Vladimir. "Afterword: Random Thoughts on Creative Collaboration With Machines," in *Electronic Tape Music: The First Compositions*, Ussachevsky and Otto Leuning (New York: Highgate Press, 1977 [1952]), 41.

Shimizu, Jio. "Concerning the Relationships Between Space, Objects, and the Production of Sound" (excerpt), in *Site of Sound: of Architecture and the Ear*, edited by Brandon Labelle and Steve Roden (Los Angeles: Errant Bodies Press, 1999), 150-51.

Braxton, Anthony. "An Interview with Graham Lock, 1988," in *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, 462-68.

2) Thurs - Historiography

Cage, John. "The Future of Music: Credo," "Experimental Music," "Experimental Music: Doctrine," and "History of Experimental Music in the United States," in *Silence: 50th Anniversary Edition* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 3-17, 67-75.

Lewis, George E. "Improvised Music After 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives," *Black Music Research* 16:1 (1996): 91-122.

Luening, Otto. "An Unfinished History of Electronic Music," *Music Educators Journal* 55:3 (1968): 42-49+135-42+145.

Rodgers, Tara. "Introduction" (excerpt), *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 6-16.

Dunn, David. "A History of Electronic Music Pioneers" (1992).
<http://www.daviddunn.com/~david/writings/pioneers.pdf>

Week 3 - Jan 22-24

1) Tues - Musique concrète, San Francisco Tape Music Center & more...

Holmes, Thomas B. "Enter Electronic Music" (excerpt), in *Electronic and Experimental Music* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), 117-35.

Minard, Robin. "Musique Concrète and Its Importance to the Visual Arts," in *Resonances: Aspects of Sound Art*, edited by Bernd Schulz (Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2002), 44-48.

Oliveros, Pauline. "Memoir of a Community Enterprise," in *The San Francisco Tape Music Center: 1960s Counterculture and the Avant-Garde* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 80-94.

Recommended:

Bernstein, David W. (ed.) "The San Francisco Tape Music Center: Emerging Art Forms and the American Counterculture, 1961-1966," in *The SFTMC*, 5-41.

Hodgkinson, Tim. "An Interview with Pierre Schaeffer," in *The Book of Music and Nature: An Anthology of Sounds, Words, Thoughts*, edited by David Rothenberg and Marta Ulvaeus (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 34-44.

Schaeffer, Pierre. "Acousmatics," in *Audio Cultures: Readings on Modern Music*, edited by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Continuum, 2004), 76-81.

Eliane Radigue interview in *Pink Noises*, 54-60.

2) Thurs - Acoustic ecology; soundscape composition

Schafer, R. Murray. "The Music of the Environment," in *Audio Culture*, 29-39.

Westerkamp, Hildegard. "Speaking from Inside the Soundscape," in *The Book of Music and Nature*, 143-52.

Lopez, Francisco. "Blind Listening," in *The Book of Music and Nature*, 163-68.

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

Annea Lockwood interview in *Pink Noises*, 114-27.

Kitundu's "Elemental Turntables":

<http://www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark/profile.jsp?essid=8440>

Polli, Andrea. "Atmospherics/Weather Works: A Spatialized Data Sonification Project," *Leonardo* 38:1 (2005): 31-36.

Recommended:

McCartney, Andra. "Soundscape Works, Listening, and the Touch of Sound," in *Aural Cultures*, edited by Jim Drobnick (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2004), 179-85.

Dunn, David. "Nature, Sound Art, and the Sacred," in *The Book of Music and Nature*, 95-107.

Week 4 - Jan 29-31

1) Tues - Voice, language, bodies, technologies

Z, Pamela. "A Tool Is a Tool," in *Women, Art & Technology*, edited by Judy Malloy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 348-61.

Laetitia Sonami interview in *Pink Noises*, 226-34.

Duckworth, William. Interview with Meredith Monk, ch. 12 in *Talking Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1999), 345-67.

Fullman, Ellen. "The Long String Instrument," *Musicworks* 85 (Spring 2003): 21-28.

2) Thurs - ** First draft of artist/personal statement due (due date of revision TBA)

Week 5 - Feb 5-7

1) Tues - Sound, space, and architecture

Licht, Alan. "Sound Art: Origins, Development and Ambiguities," *Organised Sound* 14 (2009): 3-10.

Lucier, Alvin. "I Am Sitting in a Room" (1969)," in *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, 455-61.

Amacher, Maryanne. "Synaptic Island: A Psybertonal Topology," in *Architecture as a Translation of Music*, edited by Elizabeth Martin (New York: Princeton Architectural Press [Pamphlet Architecture 16], 1994), 32-35.

Maryanne Amacher in Conversation with Frank Oteri, *NewMusicBox*, April 16, 2004:
http://www.newmusicbox.org/assets/61/interview_amacher.pdf

Recommended:

Selections from *Chambers: Scores by Alvin Lucier; Interviews with the composer by Douglas Simon* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1980).

Lucier, Alvin. "The Tools of My Trade," in *Contiguous Lines: Issues and Ideas in the Music of the '60s and '70s* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 143-60.

2) Thurs - Sound, space, and architecture (cont'd)

Maggi Payne interview in *Pink Noises*, 63-72.

Gercke, Hans. "The Garden of Dreams: About the Work of Christina Kubisch," and Christina Kubisch, interview with Christoph Metzger, in *Klangraumlichtzeit* (Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2000), 42-49, 80-93.

Fontana, Bill. "The Relocation of Ambient Sound: Urban Sound Sculpture," ca. 1985:
<http://www.resoundings.org/Pages/Urban%20Sound%20Sculpture.html>

Recommended:

Fontana, Bill. "The Environment as a Musical Resource," ca. 1990: <http://resoundings.org/Pages/musical%20resource.html>

Week 6 - Feb 12-14

1) Tues - Synthesizers & computer music

Chadabe, Joel. "The Early Instruments," "Computer Music," and "Synthesizers," chs. 1, 5-6 in *Electric Sound: The Past and Promise of Electronic Music* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 1-20, 108-84.

Hutton, Jo. "Daphne Oram: Innovator, Writer and Composer," *Organised Sound* 8(1): 49-56.

Recommended:

Roads, Curtis, and Max Mathews. "Interview with Max Mathews," *Computer Music Journal* 4:4 (Winter, 1980): 15-22.

2) Thurs - Synthesizers & computer music (cont'd)

Gagne, Cole. Interview with Laurie Spiegel in *Soundpieces 2: Interviews with American Composers* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1993), 297-332.

Jessica Rylan interview in *Pink Noises*, 139-55.

Recommended:

Reynolds, Simon. "Laurie Spiegel's Machine Music," *Pitchfork*, December 6, 2012: <http://pitchfork.com/features/articles/9002-laurie-spiegel/>

Scaletti, Carla. "Computer Music Languages, Kyma, and the Future," *Computer Music Journal* 26:4 (Winter 2002): 69-82.

Week 7 - Feb 19-21

1) Tues - Microsound and drone music

Demers, Joanna. "Minimal Objects in Microsound" and "Maximal Objects in Drone Music, Dub Techno, and Noise," chs. 3-4 in *Listening Through the Noise: The Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 69-109.

Recommended:

Roads, Curtis. "The History of Microsound from Antiquity to the Analog Era," ch. 2 in *Microsound* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 43-84.

2) Thurs - Owen Chapman visit - <http://coms.concordia.ca/faculty/chapman.html>

<http://www.oboro.net/en/activity/audio-mobile-field-recording-sound-mapping-and-audio-creation-mobile-phones>

Week 8 - Feb 26-28

1) Tues - Electronic dance music; Detroit techno

Williams, Ben. "Black Secret Technology: Detroit Techno and the Information Age," ch. 9 in *Technicolor: Race, Technology, and Everyday Life*, edited by Alondra Nelson and Thuy Linh N. Tu with Alicia Headlam Hines (New York: NYU Press, 2001), 154-76.

Lipsitz, George. "Techno: The Hidden History of Automation," ch. 10 in *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 238-62.

Stubbs, David. "'Different Atmospheres, New Locations': Jeff Mills Interviewed," *The Quietus*, August 13, 2012: <http://thequietus.com/articles/09661-jeff-mills-interview-axis>

Recommended:

Burns, Todd L. "Jeff Mills: Purpose Maker [interview]," *Resident Advisor*, December 5, 2012: <http://www.residentadvisor.net/feature.aspx?1668>

2) Thurs - Format theory

Sterne, Jonathan. *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012),
selected chapters TBA.

Week 9/10 - Mar 5-7+

Final Project Presentations