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:
**Week 2 - Jan 15-17**

1) **Tues - Provocations**


2) **Thurs - Historiography**


**Week 3 - Jan 22-24**

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


Recommended:


Eliane Radigue interview in Pink Noises, 54-60.

2) Thurs - Acoustic ecology; soundscape composition


Annea Lockwood interview in Pink Noises, 114-27.

Kitundu’s “Elemental Turntables”:

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


Recommended:


Week 4 - Jan 29-31

1) Tues - Voice, language, bodies, technologies


Laetitia Sonami interview in Pink Noises, 226-34.


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


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).


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

Maggi Payne interview in Pink Noises, 63-72.


Recommended:


Week 6 - Feb 12-14

1) Tues - Synthesizers & computer music


Recommended:

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


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

**Recommended:**


**Week 7 - Feb 19-21**

1) Tues - Microsound and drone music


**Recommended:**


**Week 8 - Feb 26-28**

1) Tues - Electronic dance music; Detroit techno


**Recommended:**

2) Thurs - Format theory


**Week 9/10 - Mar 5-7+**

Final Project Presentations