SOUND STUDIES
MCC-GE 2310.001

This course examines central themes in the emerging field of “Sound Studies”. We explore a range of histories, archeologies and ethnographies of sound and listening, as it intersects with topics in media studies, science and technology studies, political economy and musicology. How has our experience of sound changed as we move from the piano to the personal computer, from the phonoautograph to the mp3? How have political, commercial, and cultural forces shaped what we are able to listen to, and how we listen to it? Finally, how have performers, physiologists, acousticians, engineers and philosophers worked to understand this radical transformation of the senses?

Students should be able to describe and analyze technologies of sound production and reproduction over the last two centuries. They should also be able to describe, contrast and analyze (1) disciplinary, (2) metaphysical, (3) ideological, and (4) musical approaches to sound and listening over the last two centuries. Finally, students should be able to critically assess the way various communicative media have shaped how sound is made, used and heard in our times.

Readings
There are some books that are essential to this course. While it is not mandatory to purchase them, you may want them for your library. All are in print and available through major booksellers.


All the assigned book excerpts and articles listed on the course schedule will be made available through the New York University Blackboard system.

I will also try to upload as many audio examples as possible. These will also be found on the Blackboard site under “Course Documents” (in the folder named “Audio Examples”). Any CDs or videos that are placed on reserve will be in the Avery Fisher Center for Music and Media (on the second floor of the Bobst Library).

There will be no laptop usage in class:
http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValu e_0=EJ893903&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ893903

Assignments

Weekly Assignments
For most weeks you will be asked to post a short response paper or a fragment of your research to the “Forums” Section of NYU Classes.
Sound/Video/Web Examples
You will frequently be expected to upload a sound, video or web example that illustrates some of the major themes covered in the reading for that particular week. There will be folders for this purpose on the website. Also, insofar as it's possible, you should bring these examples with you to class.

Research Paper
In addition to the in-class assignments, a final research paper on an original topic that highlights aspects of modern aural culture is required for this course. We will discuss options for this paper throughout the semester (e.g., an analysis of the advertising campaign for Apple’s iPod, an ethnography of the sonic environment of New York’s public spaces, a concert report on a musical event or concert, an account of the aesthetics of sound for the 2010 election campaigns, a diagnosis of recent music/sound/recording software and its cultural impact, a history of a musical genre, etc.) This paper should be in the range of ten to fifteen pages. Further information on this assignment will be given in class. The paper will be due by the last day of class.

Evaluation Standards and Policies

A=Excellent. Outstanding work in all respects. Demonstrates comprehensive and solid understanding of course material, and presents thoughtful interpretations, well focussed and original insights, and well reasoned commentary and analysis. Includes skilful use of source materials, illuminating examples and illustrations, fluent expression, and contains no grammatical or typographical errors.

B=Good. This work demonstrates a complete and accurate understanding of course material, presents a reasonable degree of insight and broad levels of analysis. Work reflects competence, but stays at a general or predictable level of understanding. Source materials and examples are used appropriately and articulation/writing is clear. Paper has been carefully proofread.

C=Adequate/fair. This work demonstrates understanding that hits in the ballpark but which remains superficial, incomplete, or expresses some significant errors or weaknesses. Source materials may be used inadequately or inappropriately, and arguments lack concrete, specific examples and illustrations. Writing or articulation may appear vague, hard to follow, or loaded with typos and other technical errors.

D=Unsatisfactory. This work demonstrates a serious lack or error in understanding, and fails to express the most rudimentary aspects of the course. Sources may be used entirely inappropriately or not at all, and writing is deficient.

F=Failed. Work not submitted or attempted.

Grading Rubric

five written assignments (10 % each)
one oral presentation (10 %)
final research paper (20%)
class participation (20%)
COURSE SCHEDULE

Current Themes in Historical Perspective

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Mass-Mediated Sound: Radio, Television, and Music Industries after World War II


Additional Reading:
On Blockbusters: HYPERLINK http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2013/10/the-case-for-blockbusters?utm_source=SilverPopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=10.08.daily%2520%2581%29


On Song Factory 2012: HYPERLINK http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/03/26/120326fa_fact_seabrook
On Sameness in songs over the last half century: HYPERLINK http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/2012/jul/27/pop-music-sounds-same-survey-reveals

Listening:
Creed, Nickelback, Three Doors Down
Lady Gaga (various)
A current piece of popular (a.k.a.) successful recent radio (Billboard Top 40) music of your own choice

Viewing:
“Intel Inside Analysis,” by Phil Tagg (cf. tagg.org) HYPERLINK http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5ZsmHHmDGA
See also HYPERLINK: pumpaudio.com and
“Adorno on Popular Music” on youtube.com See also, alteredzones spoof: HYPERLINK http://alteredzones.com/posts/1171/oesb-pays-creedance-creed/

Week 3: Censored Sound: Case Study – September 11, 2001 and Consequences


Additional Reading:

**Viewing/Listening:**
Dixie Chicks, *Shut Up and Sing!*
Madonna, “American Life” (on *American Life*)
John Adams, *Death of Klinghoffer*


**Week 4: Sound Unbound: Music Industry in the Age of Digital Networks**


**Additional Reading:**


See Scooter Braun, and other “talent scouts”

On memes, Limor Shifman, “An Anatomy of a youtube Meme”: [http://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu:2940/content/14/2/187.full.pdf+html](http://ezproxy.library.nyu.edu:2940/content/14/2/187.full.pdf+html)


On “Harlem Shake” (Feb 2013, Baauer) (cf. also Lana del Rey; “Gangam Style”, Aug 2012):


See also HYPERLINK
[http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/index.htm](http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/index.htm)
See also HYPERLINK
See also HYPERLINK
http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703727804576017592259031536.html?mod=googlenews_wsj
See also HYPERLINK
http://futureofmusic.org/blog/2009/10/14/29-streams
See also HYPERLINK
http://vimeo.com/14912890
See also HYPERLINK
See also HYPERLINK
On outsourcing labor
http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2013/01/16/169528579/outsourced-employee-sends-own-job-to-
china-surfs-web?utm_source=npr&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=20130116
Johannes Kreidler, Fremdarbeit:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L72d_0zIT0c
On Crowdfunding:
http://wi.mobilities.ca/crowdfunding-culture/

Week 5: Piracy, Copyright, and Paradoxes of Technical Reproducibility

Johns, Adrian. Piracy: The Intellectual Copyright Laws from Gutenberg to Gates. Chicago University
Press, 2009 (Chapter 1 and 13)

York (Preface and Introduction)

Dissent. January 25. HYPERLINK
http://dissentmagazine.orgออนไลne.php?id=435

Hyde, Lewis. Common as Air. Chapters 1 and 2. 2010

Review 1331


Sinnreich, Aram. “Mash it Up!” unpublished article (summary of Mashed Up!, 2010)

Primo and Libby Lloyd), 2011, 99-147

Larkin, Brian, “Pirate Infrastructures,” Structures of Participation in Digital Culture (ed. J Karaganis),
SSRC, 2007, 75-84 HYPERLINK
http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new_publication_3/%7B6a130b0a-234a-de11-afae-
001cc477ec70%7D.pdf


Chicago.
**Additional Reading:**

On strategic use of piracy for commercial reasons: HYPERLINK http://www.citeworld.com/consumerization/22803/iron-maiden-musicmetric


Comic Rebuttal on SOPA (Rob Reid): HYPERLINK http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZadCj8O1-0&feature=youtu.be


On remix as cultural dominant: HYPERLINK http://dismagazine.com/blog/37255/the-word-remix-is-corny/


Hilderbrand, Lucas. *Inherent Vice*: Bootleg Histories of Videotape and Copyright, 2011


**Viewing**

*RIP! A Remix Manifesto* (dir. Brett Gaylor)

*Good Copy, Bad Copy* (dir. Andreas Johnsen, et al)

HYPERLINK http://www.everythingsareremix.info/watch-the-series/
Metaphysics of Listening

Week 6: Reason and Resonance: Figures of Musical Sound in 19th-Century Philosophy


Hegel. G.W.F. “Sense Certainty,” *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Miller


**Additional Reading:**


Erlmann, Veit. *Reason and Resonance*


Listening:
Selected examples from Beethoven, Schubert, Liszt, Chopin, Mahler, and others

Week 7: Negative Dialectics, Productive Rhizome, Third Ears, Deconstruction, and Communism: Figures of Musical Sound in 20th- and 21st-Century Philosophy


Derrida, Jacques. “Différance,” Margins of Philosophy


Barthes, Roland. “Listening” Responsibility of Forms


Additional Reading:
Neuroscience and listening:

Freud, Sigmund, “Recommendations to Physicians Practicing Psycho-Analysis”


Nancy, Jean Luc. Listening

Listening:
Selected examples from Anton Webern, Arnold Schoenberg, Pierre Boulez, Luciano Berio, John Cage, Helmut Lachenmann, Mozart, and Beethoven

Sensory Turn: Immediacy, Presence

Week 8: Performance, Sensation, Liveness


**Additional Reading**


**Week 9: Voice, More or Less**


Dolar, Mladen. “Metaphysics of Voice,” *A Voice and Nothing More*


**Additional Readings**

Cavarero, Adriana. *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (excerpt)


Diyn, Frances. 2009. *Sounding new media: immersion and embodiment in the arts and culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Ch. 1)


Nichols, Bill. “The Voice of Documentary”


Stanyek, Jason and Pieikut, Benjamin. “Deadness,” forthcoming


See also: HYPERLINK [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgbS-vy9_Sk&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgbS-vy9_Sk&feature=related)

See also, HYPERLINK [http://bigthink.com/ideas/26517](http://bigthink.com/ideas/26517)

See also, HYPERLINK http://brandstory.typepad.com/writer/2007/01/thinking_about_.html
See also, HYPERLINK http://www.braintracksaudio.com
See also, HYPERLINK http://nuweb9.neu.edu/goode/.
See also, HYPERLINK http://news.yahoo.com/video/politics-15749652/president-obama-sings-soul-in-harlem-27938648.html

Ideologies of Listening

Week 10: Iconographies of Race and Place: Case Study – Africa


Additional Reading:

Technologies of Listening

Week 11: Sound and Signal: A Short History of Sound Reproduction


**Additional Readings:**


See website: “Earliest Sound Reconsidered” NPR – All things considered, 2009

See website: HYPERLINK http://videointerchange.com/audio_history.htm


“Secret Language of Elephants” HYPERLINK http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/01/01/60minutes/main6045121.shtml

**Week 12 a.: Audible Futures: From High Fidelity to Hyper Fidelity**


**Additional Readings:**

On Synthetic Stars: HYPERLINK http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-205_162-57547707/hatsune-miku-the-worlds-fakest-
Week 12 b.: Mobile Sound, Cybersound, and Customization


Reynolds, Simon. “We are all David Toop Now” or “(Tales from Topographic Oceans),” in The Wire # 338, April 2012, and “Xenomania” HYPERLINK http://www.mitwiggy.com/articles/xenomania-nothing-is-foreign-in-an-internet-age/

Additional Reading:

Grimshaw, Mark, “Acoustic Ecology of the First Person Shooter,” PhD, University of Waikato, 2006


Collins, Karen. From Pac-Man to Pop Music: Interactive Audio in Games and New Media. Ashgate
**Week 13: Sonic Interpellation, Emplacement, Acoustemology, and Soundscapes**


LaBelle, Brandon. *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life.* Continuum, 2010 (excerpts)


**Additional Reading**

Larkin, Brian. *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*


Wurtzler, “Sound Design: Everywhere!” unpublished

**Viewing:**

*Moolaaade,* dir. Ousmane Sembene (Senegal, 2004, 120 min.)

Steven Feld on Cosmological Sounds HYPERLINK http://unseen.scripts.mit.edu/blog/?cat=4


See also, soundscapes for tourism, HYPERLINK http://www.mps.gov/moru/naturescience/soundscape.htm

**Week 14: Sonic Warfare**


Cusick, Suzanne. 2008. “You are in a place that is out of the world . . . ”: Music in the Detention Camps of

Jon Pieslak, Sound Targets


Additional Reading
See the trial of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (May 7, 2012): refusal, silence, hiss, censor, hearing, etc. http://www.npr.org/2012/05/07/152171198/sept-11-defendants-make-refusal-focus-of-hearing

Listening:
Selected examples from Metallica, ACDC, Bruce Springsteen, Olivier Messiaen, Pierre Boulez, and others

On Listening In
As Art: Daniel Wilson, 9Y40:
http://www.9y40.com/?page_id=27

As Surveillance: The Lives of Others (Florian Henckel von Donnersmark).

On Politics of Code