

# **Music and Media Culture**

[syllabus for a MA/PhD seminar in Music]

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

That music today exists outside of media is a romantic delusion. Mass, domestic, and personal media are central to the way we experience music, and sound lies at the core of many multimedia formats. This graduate seminar introduces students to the cultural histories of musical media including the phonograph, the radio, television, MTV, the mp3 format, video games, streaming, and the complex industries that make mediatized music possible. Weekly readings in music and media studies will guide seminar discussion on topics such as circulation, the politics of access and participation, pleasure, labor, trade, and more. Students will undertake a semester-long research project, honing abstract-writing and presentation skills in a conference-style paper, which will inform a final paper or multimedia project.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Students will gain familiarity with recent currents in the study of music and media. In addition, the course will prepare students to produce – and innovate upon – the core media of academic discourse: leading seminar discussion, preparing conference abstracts, presentations, and research papers or multimedia projects. I hope students will produce strong writing that will live on in the shape of conference papers and publications outside of the seminar.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

Abide by the school's Academic Integrity Policy

Deadlines: All assignments are announced well ahead of time; therefore, deadlines are fairly strict. I give extensions in cases of extenuating circumstances (e.g. extended illness, family emergency).

## **GRADING**

**20% Class participation**

**20% Discussion Leadership:** you will be asked to lead the discussion of two articles

**10% Conference Abstract**

**20% Presentation:** 15 minutes + 5 minutes of questions

**30% Final Paper or Multimedia Assignment**

## Weekly Schedule of Topics and Assignments

Discussion of readings marked \* will be led by members of the seminar.

### 1 Introduction to Media Cultures

Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message" (1964)

Raymond Williams, "The Technology and the Society" (1974)

Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding" (1980)

Daniel Fisher, "Radio," in *Keywords in Sound* (2015)

### 2 Listening as Social Practice

\*Goodman, David. "Distracted Listening: On Not Making Sound Choices in the 1930s" (2010)

\*Susan Douglas, "Tuning In To Jazz," in *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (2004)

\*Arild Bergh and Tia DeNora, "From Wind-up to iPod: Techno-cultures of Listening" (2009)

Raymond Krukowski, "Ways of Hearing," *99% Invisible* podcast (2017)

### 3 Format Cultures

Stefan Helmreich, "Transduction," in *Keywords in Sound* (2015)

Alec Wilkinson, "A Voice from the Past," *New Yorker* (2014)

\*Jody Berland, "Radio Space and Industrial Time: The Case of Music Formats" (2008)

\*Jonathan Sterne, "The MP3 as a Cultural Artifact" (2006)

### 4 Format Cultures 2

\*Tong Soon Lee, "Technology and the Production of Islamic Space: The Call to Prayer in Singapore" (2006)

\*Charles Hirschkind, "Cassette Sermons, Aural Modernities and the Islamic Revival in Cairo" (2012)

\*Michael Denning, "Decolonizing the Ear: The Cultural Revolution of Vernacular Phonograph Musics," in *Noise Uprising: The Audiopolitics of a World Musical Revolution* (2015)

### 5 Music and Marketing

\*Elizabeth Wollman, "Men, Music, and Marketing at Q104.3 (WAXQ-FM New York)" (1998)

\*Timothy D. Taylor "World Music in Television Ads" (2000)

\*Jonathan Sterne, "Sounds Like the Mall of America: Programmed Music and the Architectonics of Commercial Space" (1997)

### 6 Music on Screen

***Be ready to share your proposed paper topic***

\*Frances Dyson, "Introduction," in *Sounding New Media* (2009)

\*Simon Frith, "Look! Hear! The Uneasy Relationship of Music and Television" (2002)

\*Kip Pegley, "'Coming to You Wherever You Are': Exploring the Imagined Communities of MuchMusic (Canada) and MTV (United States)" (2004)

## **7 Gendering Media Labor**

### ***Conference abstracts due by 5pm on the day before class***

Bruce Robbins, "Introduction" in *Beneficiary* (2017)

\*Michèle Martin, "The Making of a Perfect Operator," in *"Hello, Central?" Gender, Technology, and Culture in the Formation of Telephone Systems* (1991)

\*Jefferson Cowie, "Introduction" in *Capital Moves* (1999)

\*Anibel Ferus-Comelo, "'Free Birds': The New Precariat in India's Mobile Phone Manufacturing" (2017)

## **8 Video Games**

\*Kiri Miller, "Schizophonic Performance: Guitar Hero, Rock Band, and Virtual Virtuosity" (2009)

\*Roger Moseley, "Playing Games with Music (And Vice Versa)" (2013)

\*William Cheng, "A Tune at the End of the World," in *Sound Play* (2014)

Miellyn Fitzwater Barrows, "8-bit sounds," *Twenty Thousand Hertz* podcast

## **9-10 [Sessions devoted to students' conference-style presentations]**

## **11 Miniaturization**

\*Shuhei Hosokawa, "The Walkman Effect" (1984)

\*Sumanth Gopinath, "Ringtones, or the Auditory Logic of Globalization" (2004)

\*Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Stanyek, "Tuning the Human Race: Athletic Capitalism and the Nike+ Sport Kit" (2013)

## **12 Genres and Media**

\*Ben Williams, "Black Secret Technology: Detroit Techno and the Information Age" (2001)

\*Alex Weheliye, "Desiring Machines in Black Popular Music" (2012)

\*Sarah Thornton, "The Media Development of 'Subcultures': The Sensational Story of Acid House" (2013)

## **13 Networks**

\*K. J. Greene, "Intellectual Property at the Intersection of Race and Gender" (2008)

\*Barry Kernfeld, "Song Sharing" in *Pop Piracy: Disobedient Music Distribution since 1929* (2011)

\*Kyra Gaunt, "YouTube, Twerking & You: Context Collapse and the Handheld Co-Presence of Black Girls and Miley Cyrus" (2015)

"Open letter from artists: we support net neutrality protests and call on Congress to #StopTheFCC," [FightForTheFuture.com](http://FightForTheFuture.com)

## **14 Fidelity**

\*James Lastra, "Fidelity Versus Intelligibility" (2012)

\*Mara Mills, "Hearing Aids and the History of Electronics Miniaturization" (2011)

Miellyn Fitzwater Barrows, "Hearing Loss," *Twenty Thousand Hertz* podcast

***Final papers or multimedia assignments are due a week after the final class.***