

Listening to Sound Art

Department of Music (but open to non-Music students)

This graduate course explores feedback between sound broadly conceived and sound art as a creative practice spanning installation, performance, composition, and guided listening. Students will study scholarly and creative approaches to sound as physical, as embodied, as sexual, as policed, as disorienting, as mediated, as a platform of identity construction, and as a vehicle of public activism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Readings in feminist theory, critical theory, art history, musicology, and media studies will guide in-class discussion. The seminar will survey address the following questions: What is sound art? How do we listen to sound art? How do scholars from different disciplines address sound in public and private? How does contemporary sound art reflect issues that arise in these domains? Workload: six short online postings, one-time leadership of seminar discussion, midterm presentation, 15-page final paper and informal presentation thereof.

1. Introduction to the Course

2. Elements of Sound

Jonathan Sterne, "Hearing," *Keywords in Sound* (2014).

Pauline Oliveros, "Some Sound Observations," *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* (2004).

Marion Guck, "A Woman's (Theoretical) Work," (1994).

Regine Basha, "Sound and inter-subjective space," *Sexing Sound* conference video (2014).

3. Sound, Intimacy, Affect, Touch

Suzanne Cusick, "On A Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not To Think Straight" (1994).

Jacqueline Kiyomi Gordon, *It Only Happens All the Time* (2014). Video.

4. Having a Voice

Katharine Norman, "Speak/Listen: Invisible voices in radio, radio art, and works for sound alone," *Sounding Art: Eight Literary Excursions through Electronic Music* (2004).

Nina Eidsheim, "Race and Aesthetics of Vocal Timbre," *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, eds. Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe, Jeffrey Kallberg (2015), excerpt.

Alondra Nelson, "Spin the Painting: An Interview with Nadine Robinson," in *Sound Unbound: Sampling Digital Music and Culture*, ed. Miller (2008).

Nadine Robinson, *Tower Hollers* (2001).

5. Cyborg Sounds

Judy Wajcman, "Combining Feminist and Technology Studies," *TechnoFeminism* (2004).

Annie Goh, "Sonic Cyberfeminism and its Discontents," *Discontinuities* publication to accompany CMT Festival for Adventurous Music and Art (2014), a brief introduction to cyberfeminism in sound.

Todd Selby x Christine Sun Kim, *Christine Sun Kim* (2011). Short film.

6. Afrofuturism

Octavia E. Butler, "The Monophobic Response," *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction From the African Diaspora*.

Beth Coleman, "Race as Technology," *Camera Obscura* 24 (2009).

Michelle-Lee White et al. "Afrotech and Outer Spaces," *Art Journal* (2001).
 Vik Franke, *Boom Box Bikers, Queens, New York* (2009), video.

7. Sound and Big Data

N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, (1999), excerpt.
 Patricia T. Clough et al., "The Datalogical Turn," in *Nonrepresentational Methodologies: Re-envisioning Research*, ed. Phillip Vannini (2014), excerpt.

8. Student Presentations

A formal conference-style presentation of about 15 minutes (depending on enrollment) followed by a peer-lead Q/A.

9. Ecology and Soundcape

Emily Thompson, "Sound, Modernity, and History," [2002] in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. Jonathan Sterne (2012), 117-129.
 Andra McCartney, "Soundscape Works, Listening, and the Touch of Sound," in *Aural Cultures* (2004), 179-85.

10. Soundwalk

A selection of collective soundwalking exercises by Pauline Oliveros, Andra McCartney, Hildegard Westerkamp, and others.

11. Queering Sound

David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (1997), 15-20.
 Drew Daniel, "All Sound is Queer," *The WIRE* (2011).
 Bob Ostertag, "Sooner or Later" and "All the Rage," in *Creative Life: Music, Politics, People, and Machines* (2009).

12. Sound, Protest, War

Jonathan Sterne, "Quebec's #Casseroles: on participation, percussion and protest," (2012).
 Nasser Hussain, "The Sound of Terror: Phenomenology of a Drone Strike" (2013).
 Choe Sang-Hun, "To Jar North, South Korea Used a Pop Music Barrage," *New York Times* (2015).

13. Disciplining the Listening Body

Jonathan Sterne, "Urban Media and the Politics of Sound Space," (2011).
 Suzanne G. Cusick, conversation with Aaron Friedman (president of Make Music New York) on the use of music as torture in CIA black-sites (2015), podcast.

14. Silence

Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Sheena Malhotra, "Still the Silence: Feminist Reflections at the Edges of Sound," in *Silence, Feminism, Power: Reflections at the Edges of Sound*, ed. Sheena Malhotra (2013).
 Salome Voegelin, "When there is nothing to hear you start hearing things," from her book *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (2010), 82-88.
 Adrienne Rich, "Cartographies of Silence" poem (1978).

15. Final paper presentations

Informal presentation of individual research papers; final discussion.