

KLETT - Sample Syllabus

Introduction to Sound Studies: Media & Material

This advanced undergraduate and graduate seminar explores the growing interdisciplinary field of Sound Studies. We will survey the work of social scientists, media scholars, and philosophers as they develop theories about the experiences and effects of sound. In addition, we consider examples from across the disciplines, including but not limited to art criticism, ecology, history, and psychology. Though students should expect an even treatment of theoretical, methodological, and empirical details, this class is open to all majors and invites a variety of perspectives. This course is audio-visual friendly, and requires an active engagement with listening and viewing materials. Each session of section I will feature a listening example for discussion; each session of section II features an interactive example; and each session of section III will end with a group brainstorm for possible methods of inquiry. By the end of this course, each student should have a strong sense of works in the field and a toolkit of theories and methods with which to approach the study of sound.

Course Requirements:

- A) Participation: regular attendance and active participation is expected at each class meeting.
- B) Blog posts: students are expected to post a minimum of 3 posts to the class blog, not including comments. Reflection posts are required by 5pm the day before seminar.
- C) Field Study: a 5 page (double-spaced) essay on a sonic phenomenon, due in week 10.
- D) Final Paper: a 15 page (double-spaced) research essay on a selected topic, to be decided with the instructor, due at the end of the semester.

Week 1: Introduction: What is Sound Studies, and why do we need it?

- 1) Discuss syllabus: breakdown by section, key texts and thinkers, and historical development.
- 2) Discuss practical requirements of the course, assignments, and grading.
- 3) In-class listening assignment, Part I: write a critical assessment of the selected example

Section I: Sonic Media & Material

Week 2: What can sound do?

- 1) Sound example: 'the mosquito' frequency; REM, scaled-up: <http://vimeo.com/57685359>
- 2) Discuss Readings
 - Simmel, Georg. 1997 [1903]. "The Metropolis and Mental Life." in *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, edited by D. Frisby and M. Featherstone. London, UK: Sage. Pp. 23–31.
 - Schafer, R Murray. 1994. "The Natural Soundscape" and "The Sound of Life" in *The Soundscape*. Rochester, Vermont, USA: Destiny books.
 - Smith, Susan J. 2000. "Performing the (Sound)world." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18 (5): 615–637.
 - Chapter from Bijsterveld, Karin. 2008. *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture, and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
 - Bull, Michael. 2004. "Automobility and the Power of Sound." *Theory, Culture and Society* 21 (4/5): 243-59.

- Schwartz, Hillel. 2003. "The Indefensible Ear: A History," in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, edited by Michael Bull and Les Back. New York: Berg. Pp. 487-501.
- Sterne, Jonathan. 2012. "The Audio-Visual Litany." In *The Sound Studies Reader*. Routledge. Pg. 9.
- Kelman, Ari Y. 2010. "Rethinking the Soundscape: A Critical Genealogy of a Key Term in Sound Studies." *The Senses and Society* 5 (2): 212–234.

Week 3: What does it mean to think of sound as 'stuff'?

- 1) Sound example: broadband generator
- 2) Discuss Readings
 - Erlmann, Veit. 2004. "Introduction." in *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity*. London, UK: Berg.
 - Adorno, Theodor. 2002. "The Curves of the Needle" and "The Form of the Phonograph Record." in *Essays on Music* by Richard Leppert (Ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 271-282.
 - Barthes, Roland. 1978. "The Grain of the Voice." In *Image-Music-Text*. Hill and Wang.
 - Sterne, Jonathan. 2003. "Machines to Hear for Them." in *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham: Duke University Press. Pp. 37-86.
 - Kittler, Friedrich. 1999. "Gramophone." in *The Sound Studies Reader*, edited by Jonathan Sterne. Routledge. Pp. 234-247.
 - Selections from: Dyson, Frances. 2009. *Sounding New Media: Immersion and embodiment in the arts and culture*. Univ of California Press.

Week 4: Radio and Other Media

- 1) Sound example: phonograph and LP
- 2) Discuss Readings
 - Fanon, Franz. 2012 [1965]. "This is the Voice of Algeria." In *The Sound Studies Reader*, edited by Jonathan Sterne. Routledge. Pg. 329-335.
 - Lastra, James. 2000. "Sound Theory" in *Sound Technology and American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 123-153.
 - Selections from Larkin, Brian. 2008. *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
 - Hosokawa, Shuhei. 1984. "The Walkman Effect." *Popular Music* 4: 165-80.
 - Sterne, Jonathan. 2006. "The MP3 as Cultural Artifact." *New Media & Society* (8.5): 825-842.
 - Bull, Michael. 2005. "No Dead Air! The iPod and the Culture of Mobile Listening." *Leisure Studies*, 24: 343-355.
 - Gopinath, Sumanth. 2005. "Ringtones, Or the Auditory Logic of Globalization." *First Monday* 10 (12).

Week 5: How to do Things with Music

- 1) Sound example: various musical examples
- 2) Discuss Readings
 - Attali, Jacques. 1985. "Listening." in *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. University of Minnesota Press. Pp. 1-20.
 - Selections from Bourdieu, Pierre. 1996. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and structure of the literary field*. Stanford University Press.
 - Selections from Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A social critique of the Judgment of taste*. Harvard University Press.

- Selections from Rose, Tricia. 1994. *Black Noise: Rap music and black culture in contemporary America*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.
- Picker, John. 2003. "The Soundproof Study: Victorian Professional Identity and Urban Noise," in *Victorian Soundscapes*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pearlman, Marc. 2004. "Golden Ears and Meter Readers: The Contest for Epistemic Authority in Audiophilia." *Social Studies of Science* 34(5): 783-807.

Section II: Hearing and Listening

Week 6: Phenomenology of Listening

- 1) Movement activity
- 2) Discuss Readings
 - Ihde, Don. 1976. "The Auditory Dimension" and "The Shapes of Sound." in *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound*. Athens: Ohio University Press.
 - Selections from Brendt, Joachim-Ernst. 1988. *The Third Ear: On listening to the world*. UK: Element.
 - Nancy, Jean Luc. 2007. *Listening* [the main text only]. Fordham University Press.
 - Selections from Dolar, Mladen. 2006. *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
 - Connor, Steven. 1997. "The Modern Auditory I." in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, edited by R. Porter. London, UK: Routledge. Pp. 203–23.
 - Ingold, Tim. 2000. "Culture, Perception and Cognition." in *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge. Pp. 157-171.

Week 7: Perception, Audition and Hearing

- 1) Sound example: binaural perception
- 2) Discuss Readings
 - Handel, Stephen. 1995. "Timbre Perception and Auditory Object Identification." in *Hearing*, edited by B. Moore. Waltham, MA: Academic Press. Pp. 425–61.
 - Selections from: Bregman, Albert S. 1990. *Auditory Scene Analysis: The Perceptual Organization of Sound*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT press.
 - Chion, Michel. 1994. "The Three Listening Modes," in *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 24-34.
 - Gaver, William W. 1993a. "How Do We Hear in the World? Explorations in Ecological Acoustics." *Ecological Psychology* 5 (4): 285–313.
 - ———. 1993b. "What in the World Do We Hear?: An Ecological Approach to Auditory Event Perception." *Ecological Psychology* 5 (1): 1–29.

Week 8: Sound in Space

- 1) Reflection activity
- 2) Discuss Readings
 - Schafer, R. Murray. 1994. "Listening" and "The Acoustic Community." *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester: Destiny Books.
 - Blesser, Barry & Salter, Linda R. 2007. "Spatial Innovators and Their Private Agendas." in *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?: Experiencing Aural Architecture*. Cambridge: MIT press.
 - Selections from Labelle, Brandon. 2010. *Acoustic territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*. Continuum International Publishing Group.

- Thompson, Emily. 2002. "The New Acoustics." in *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Week 9: Cultures of Listening

- 1) Listening and sound association activity
- 2) Discuss Readings
 - Howes, David. 2005. "Introduction." in *Empire of the Senses*. London, UK: Berg.
 - Klett, Joseph. *Forthcoming*. "Sound on Sound".
 - Benzecry, Claudio E. 2009. Becoming a Fan: On the seductions of opera. *Qualitative Sociology*, 32(2), 131-151.
 - Chapters 1-3 in Pink, Sarah. 2009. *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. London, UK: Sage.
 - Feld, Steven, and Donald Brenneis. 2004. "Doing Anthropology in Sound." *American Ethnologist* 31 (4): 461-474.
 - Porcello, Thomas. "Afterword." In Greene, Paul D. and Thomas Porcello (Eds.) *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Cultures*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan. Pp. 156-180.

Section III: Applications

Week 10: Histories of Sound

- 1) Discuss Readings
 - Selections from: Corbin, Alain. 1998. *Village bells: Sound and meaning in the nineteenth-century French countryside*. New York: Columbia University Press.
 - Bailey, Peter. 1996. "Breaking the Sound Barrier: a historian listens to noise." *Body & Society*, 2(2): 49-66.
 - Cockayne, Emily. 2007. "Noisy." In *Hubbub: Filth, Noise & Stench in England*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Pp. 106-130.
 - Selections from Rath, Richard C. 2003. *How Early America Sounded*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
 - Smith, Mark M. 2002. "Echoes in Print: Method and Causation in Aural History." *Journal of The Historical Society*, 2(3-4), 317-336.
- 2) Brainstorming: heuristics for historical-comparative research

Week 11: Sonic Populations

- 1) Discuss Readings
 - Morris, Edward W. 2007. "Ladies" or "loudies"? Perceptions and experiences of black girls in classrooms. *Youth & Society*, 38(4): 490-515.
 - Schwarz, Ori. 2013. "Dead Honest Judgments: Emotional Expression, Sonic Styles and Evaluating Sounds of Mourning in Late Modernity." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 1 (2): 153-185.
 - Sakakeeny, Matt. 2010. "'Under the Bridge': An Orientation to Soundscapes in New Orleans." *Ethnomusicology* 54 (1): 1-27.
- 2) Brainstorming: heuristics for ethnographic research

Week 12: How does a Sound Student listen to art?

- 1) Discuss Readings
 - Selections from DeNora, Tia. 2000. *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Hennion, Antoine 2008. "Listen!" *Music and Arts in Action* 1(1). Retrieved 2009-03-05, from <http://www.musicandartsinaction.net/index.php/maia/article/view/listen/16>
 - Kahn, Douglas. 2002. "Significant Noises." *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Cambridge: MIT Press. Pp. 20-67.
 - Cascone, Kim. 2000. "The Aesthetics of Failure: 'Post-digital' tendencies in contemporary computer music." *Computer Music Journal* 24(4):12–18.
 - Fales, Cornelia. 2005. "Short-circuiting Perceptual Systems: Timbre in Ambient and Techno Music." In Greene, Paul D. and Thomas Porcello (Eds.) *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Cultures*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan. Pp. 156–180.
 - Selections from: Evens, Aden. 2005. *Sound Ideas: Music, Machines, and Experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
 - Chion, Michel. 2011. "Dissolution of the Notion of Timbre." *Differences* 22 (2-3): 235–239.
- 2) Brainstorming: heuristics for musical analysis

Week 13: Science and Technology Studies of Sound

- 1) Discuss Readings
 - Bruyninckx, Joeri. "Sound Sterile: Making Scientific Field Recordings in Ornithology." In Pinch, Trevor, and Karin Bijsterveld, Eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*. New York, NY: OUP USA, 2012. 127–150.
 - Mody, Cyrus C. M. 2005. "The Sounds of Science: Listening to Laboratory Practice." *Science, Technology & Human Values* 30 (2): 175–198.
 - Mills, Mara. 2010. "Deaf Jam From Inscription to Reproduction to Information." *Social Text* 28 (1 102): 35-58.
 - Roosth, Sophia. 2009. Screaming Yeast: Sonocytology, Cytoplasmic Milieus, and Cellular Subjectivities. *Critical Inquiry*, 35 (2), 332-350.
 - Helmreich, Stefan. 2007. "An Anthropologist Underwater: Immersive soundscapes, submarine cyborgs, and transductive ethnography." *American Ethnologist* 34(4). 621-641.
- 2) Brainstorming: technologies of/for listening/sounding

Week 14: Share and reflect: So what is Sound Studies?

- 1) Share and discuss final paper topics
- 2) In-class viewing assignment, Part II: write a second critique of the selected example. Share.