

ENC 1145, SECTION 3309: WRITING ABOUT MODERN SOUND

Instructor: Michael Joshua Rowin

Class Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11:45am-12:35pm [Period 5]

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Office Hours: Monday 12:50pm-2:45pm [Periods 6-7] and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Students in Writing About Modern Sound will become familiar with aesthetic, philosophical, ideological, and visceral issues relevant to live and recorded sound art, in media ranging from music to theater to cinema to literature to performance art and beyond. We will address the ways in which technological reproduction transforms live sound into inscribed and mediated information; extreme forms of music—silence and noise—that produce physical yet reflexive confrontations with the materiality of sound, and that foreground environments, technologies, and human relationships governing their production; and the interaction between hearing and other sensorial experiences – especially seeing – as embodied in synaesthetic media.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course is divided into three sections:

- Section One covers technology's ability to alter human speech, music, and perception itself. Students will become familiar with theories of technological reproduction and mediation, as well as practices in sound art that investigate technologies usually taken for granted, as ideologically "invisible."
- Section Two covers silence and noise as employed in experimental and even popular sound art contexts to engender a concentration on environmental, technological, and physical sonic phenomena typically ignored or marginalized. The writings, compositions, and performances of John Cage will be especially emphasized in this section of the course.
- Section Three covers sound's relationship to arts in which the sonic dimension is not considered primary or essential. For example, students will encounter films such as those of Jean-Luc Godard, David Lynch, and the Soviet montage filmmakers that stress incongruous and unconventional sound-image relationships; prose fiction like that of William S. Burroughs that refers to and incorporates language as a material, aural and auditory act; and experimental theater, dance and performance art that employ sound as a confrontational element unsubordinated to the visual.

ASSIGNMENTS

In total three essays will be assigned, one at the end of each section, in order to gauge students' analytical skills and understanding of basic sound concepts:

- For the Section One assignment, students will choose a work of music or sound art and analyze the manner in which its sonic qualities and textures are manipulated and transformed by the recording process. Students will be expected to not only write about their personal encounter with their chosen work, but to also perform the appropriate research to describe, explain, and analyze the ideological implications of that work's technological reproduction. (2000 words)
- For the Section Two assignment, students will analyze an experimental music piece not encountered in class that either tends toward extreme silence or extreme noise. Students will apply to their analysis of these works class readings concerning phenomenological and philosophical issues related to such music as well as similar scholarly material obtained through independent research. (2000 words)
- For the Section Three assignment, students will choose a work of art from beyond the realm of music and sound art and analyze its use of the sonic dimension in accordance with the terms, concepts, and possibilities encountered in class readings, screenings, etc. The resulting essay must describe, explain, and analyze how sound works in relation to images, print, theatricality, dance, and performance. Students may choose the work to be analyzed from among film, literature, theater, and performance art, but only with my permission. (2000 words)

GRADING

Class attendance, quizzes, and participation: 25%

Papers: 75% (25% each)

Weekly quizzes will be given to gauge students on readings.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Cage, John. *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. Wesleyan: Wesleyan University Press, 1961. Print.

Voegelin, Salomé. *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010. Print.

Weiss, Allen S., ed. *Experimental Sound and Radio*. Boston: MIT Press, 1996. Print.

Additional readings will be provided via uploaded pdf and Word files in the “Resources” section of the course Sakai website. These readings are marked in your syllabus as “handouts.”

ATTENDANCE

Writing About Modern Sound is a participation-oriented course, which means that you will build your skills and knowledge in each class throughout the semester.

Attendance is required. If you miss more than **six** periods during the semester, you will **fail** the entire course. **Only** those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, or religious holidays are exempt from this policy. Absences for illness or family emergencies will count toward your **three** allowed absences. **Each absence beyond six will lower your overall grade by 50 points.**

If you are absent, it is still your responsibility to make yourself aware of all due dates. You are still responsible for turning assignments in on time. Please do not come late to class; arriving late disrupts the entire class. If you are more than 5 minutes late, you will be marked absent. Being tardy two times will equal one absence.

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PREPARATION

You are expected to be prepared for every class, including completing all reading and writing assignments on time. Papers and drafts are due at the beginning of class. **Late papers will not be accepted.** Failure of technology is not an excuse.

MODE OF SUBMISSION

All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font and double-spaced with standard margins. Be sure to staple papers before submitting hard copies. Your final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

- Plagiarism: A student shall not represent as the student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to):
 - a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.
 - b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student. (University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 15

Aug. 2007 <<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php>>)

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code. Important Tip: You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without providing the exact location from which it came.

All acts of plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment and may result in failure of the entire course. Plagiarism can occur even without any intention to deceive if the student fails to know and employ proper documentation techniques.

Unless otherwise indicated by the instructor for class group work, all work must be your own. Nothing written for another course will be accepted.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All students are required to abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php

GRADED MATERIALS

Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a re-submission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material.

CONFERENCES AND OTHER ACCESS

Take advantage of office hours. These hours are for your benefit. It is helpful to make an appointment with me ahead of time, if possible, if you know that you would like to meet. If you are not able to meet during office hours, I am happy to arrange another time to meet. Feel free to email about class assignments, but in many cases it would be more helpful for you to bring these questions to me during open office hours. However, any questions about a written assignment should be asked at least 36 hours before that assignment is due. Do not e-mail with a question the night before a paper is due.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Unless you have been told that we are using them for a specific purpose in class, laptops should be stowed. Cell phones should be turned off, and placed in a pocket, bag or purse. I should not see you looking at your phone in class. If I do, you will be marked absent. It is fine if you would like to bring a beverage such as coffee, water or soda, but please do not eat during class.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides students and faculty with information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in the classroom. For more information, see: www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/

STATEMENT ON HARRASSMENT

UF provides an educational and working environment for its students, faculty, and staff members that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide/studentconductcode.php#s4041

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GRADING

A	4.0	93-100	C	2.0	73-76
A-	3.67	90-92	C-	1.67	70-72
B+	3.33	87-89	D+	1.33	67-69
B	3.0	83-86	D	1.0	63-66
B-	2.67	80-82	D-	.67	60-62
C+	2.33	77-79	E	0.00	0-59

GRADE APPEALS

Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Department of English, Program Assistant. Appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

GRADE POINT EQUIVALENCIES

UF has recently instituted minus grades. As a result, letter grades now have different grade point equivalences. For more information, see: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.htmls>

STATEMENT OF COMPOSITION (C) CREDIT

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx>

STATEMENT OF WRITING REQUIREMENT (WR)

This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/gordon.aspx>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Section One: Sound Technology, Reproduction, and Mediation

- 8/21 **Class:** Introduction; review syllabus and assignments
- 8/23 **HW:** “Introduction—Discourse/Device/Practice/Institution: Representational Technologies and American Culture” (*Sound Technology and the American Cinema*)
- 8/26 **HW:** “Introduction: Histories of Sound Once Removed,” Douglas Kahn (*Wireless Imagination*)
- 8/28 **HW:** “Inscriptions and Simulations: The Imagination of Technology” (*Sound Technology*)
- 8/30 **HW:** “Performance, Inscription, Diegesis: The Technological Transformation of Representational Causality” (*Sound Technology*)
- 9/2 **NO CLASS**
- 9/4 **HW:** “The Phonograph’s Horned Mouth,” Charles Grivel (*Wireless Imagination*)
- 9/6 **HW:** “Making America More: Musical: The Phonograph and ‘Good Music’” (*Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music*)
- 9/9 **HW:** “The Matter of Numbers: Sound Technologies and the Experience of Noise According to Analogue and Digital Models,” José Cláudio Siqueira Castanheira (*Reverberations*)
- 9/11 **HW:** “The Evolution of Sound Technology,” Rick Altman (*Film Sound: Theory and Practice*)
- 9/13 **HW:** “Ideology and the Practice of Sound Editing and Mixing,” Mary Ann Doane (*Film Sound*)
- 9/16 **HW:** “Floating the Social: An Electronic Art of Noise,” Brian Massumi (*Reverberations*)
- 9/18 **Class:** Group review
- 9/20 **HW: FIRST WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE**

Section Two: Noise and Silence

- 9/23 **HW:** “Music to the Nth Degree,” Brandon LaBelle (*Experimental Sound and Radio*)
- 9/25 **HW:** “Noise” (*Listening to Noise and Silence*)
- 9/27 **HW:** “What is Noise?: An Inquiry into Its Formal Properties,” Saeed Hydaralli (*Reverberations*)
- 9/30 **HW:** Selections from *The Art of Noises*
- 10/2 **HW:** “Immersed in Noise: Sentient Sound; Interpolation of Noise; Protean Noise; Oscillator Noise” (*Noise, Water, Meat*)
- 10/4 **HW:** “Noises of the Avant-Garde: Bruitism; Noise and Simultaneity; The Future of War Noises” (*Noise, Water, Meat*)
- 10/7 **HW:** “The Parameters of All Sound: Loud Sounds; Conceptual Sounds” (*Noise, Water, Meat*)
- 10/9 **HW:** “Maximal Objects in Drone Music, Dub Techno, and Noise” (*Listening Through the Noise: The Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music*)
- 10/11 **HW:** “A Chronic Condition: Noise and Time,” Paul Hegarty (*Reverberations: The Philosophy, Aesthetics and Politics of Noise*)
- 10/14 **HW:** “Silence” (*Listening to Noise and Silence*)
- 10/16 **HW:** “The Ear That Would Hear Sounds in Themselves: John Cage 1935-1965,” Frances Dyson (*Wireless Imagination*)
- 10/18 **HW:** “John Cage: Silence and Silencing: Much to Confess About Nothing; Canned Silence; Silencing Techniques; Cage and the Impossible Inaudible” (*Noise, Water, Meat*)
- 10/21 **HW:** “Minimal Objects in Microsound” (*Listening Through the Noise: The Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music*)
- 10/23 **HW:** “The Future of Music: Credo,” “Experimental Music,” “Experimental Music Doctrine” (*Silence*)
- 10/25 **HW: SECOND WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE**

Section Three: Intermedia

- 10/28 **HW:** “Thunder and Lightning: Noise, Aesthetics and Audio-Visual Avant-Garde Practice,” Rob Gawthrop (*Reverberations*)

- 10/30 **HW:** “Ubiquitous Recording: The Rotary Revolution; Russian Revolutionary Film” (*Noise, Water, Meat*)
- 11/1 **HW:** “Technology and Aesthetics of Film Sound,” John Belton (*Film Sound*)
- 11/4 **HW:** Selections from *The Noises of American Literature, 1890-1985: Toward a History of Literary Acoustics*, Philipp Schweighauser
- 11/6 **HW:** “Sound Identity Fading Out: William Burroughs’ Tape Experiments,” Robin Lydenberg (*Wireless Imagination*)
- 11/8 **NO CLASS**
- 11/11 **NO CLASS**
- 11/13 **HW:** “Cruelty and the Beast: Antonin Artaud and Michael McClure: Artaud in America; Musical Artauds: Tudor and Cage; Beats Language; Beast Language; Affected and Afflicted Screaming; Seraphic Screams and the Tortuous Blast” (*Noise, Water, Meat*)
- 11/15 **HW:** “Exposing the Sound Object: Musique Concrete’s Sonic Research” (*Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*)
- 11/18 **HW:** “Rhythms of Chaos: Happenings, Environments, and Fluxus” (*Background Noise*)
- 11/20 **HW:** “Finding Oneself: Alvin Lucier and the Phenomenal Voice” (*Background Noise*)
- 11/22 **HW:** “Sound Manifesto: Lee Ranaldo’s Notes for Robert Smithson,” Felicity J. Colman (*Reverberations*)
- 11/25 **HW:** “Tuning Space: Max Neuhaus and Site-Specific Sound” (*Background Noise*)
- 11/27 **NO CLASS**
- 11/29 **NO CLASS**
- 12/2 **HW:** “Listening in Cyberspace” (*Capturing Sound*)
- 12/4 **THIRD WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE**