

Course Syllabus

Module Overview

SPECIFIC AIMS

The aim of this course is for the students to develop a conceptual and contextual understanding of sound arts in practice and in theory. A part of the process of understanding sound is the practice of listening. The module will look at practical techniques to the art of listening, exploring the soundscape and documenting sound using a series of methods such as deep listening, sound walking and recording. (The soundscape is any environment, which contains sound-includes the natural world, cinema, theatres and gallery spaces). They will apply this knowledge of sound and sounding to an awareness of the role of sound in media spaces such as film, theatre, radio and art spaces.

Course includes

- Topics covered will normally include:
- Soundwalking and recording the soundscape as practice: A practice of walking and documenting different sound environments through various means, from field notes to audio recording.
- Deep listening as practice: A practice of learning to listen through a series of workshops developed by the Deep Listening organisation, these workshops are intended to heighten awareness of sound, silence and sounding.
- Building piezo microphones: Contact or piezo microphones are a strong component of creating sounding objects and building new instruments. They introduce the student to the concept of sound as a material with basic structural properties that may be manipulated.
- Use of distribution technologies such as radio, Internet, and others: they will explore presence (the voicing body) and absence (the disembodied voice); voices of authority; uses of text -- communication, propaganda, seduction, translation, misinformation, poeticization, interruption, etc.; language as a malleable material; simulacra and appropriation; scales of transmission (broadcast and narrowcast).
- Live performance, improvisation, and audio installation: This class will focus on the ambiguous relationship of the body as an agent of meaning and control in live audio visual art.
- The age of technology: the impact of recording on listening: This class will explore the history of audio technologies and the impact this has had on mediated performances, electroacoustic music and digital processes including live coding and audio editing.
- Audio cultures and sound design: This class examines how listening, despite its obvious physiological basis, is a practice inflected by cultural, historical, sociological and contextual factors. We will examine the writings of Leppert, Drobnyck and Feld. We will also examine how this has shaped acoustic architecture- Blesser and Salter.
- Film and sound art: This class examines (briefly) the changes in cinematic sound since the invention of sound for film, working from the text of Michel Chion's Film, A Sound Art.
- Soundscape studies and the art of listening: This class will examine the work of acoustic ecologist Murray Schafer, it will explore soundmapping, sound ecologies and noise. The class will be theory and practice based.

- The soundscape of the stage: This class explores sound for theatre, including sound design, performance and the stage.

Teaching and learning

The module will be taught through a series of lectures/seminars/workshops designed to explore the role of sound in the creative arts, as well as technologies including digital and electrical, for the use of recording, editing and creating sound. A number of the in class workshops will involve the students working in groups.

Students will be required to complete reading in advance of certain classes, and sometimes also to find material (publications, artworks, soundworks) suitable for bringing to class discussions.

Learning Outcomes

The assignment will enable students to: -

- On successful completion of the module students will be able to:
- Critically engage with sound in various mediums, from film to theatre, installation to performance art.
- Relate their own practice to the history of sound art
- Demonstrate an understanding of the processes involved in using audio technologies for the presentation of works of sound
- Link historical and contemporary art practices and theory to the development of sound studies.
- Apply concepts of sound to various fields including but not limited to: sociology, anthropology, ecology and noise studies

Assessment

On completion the students will complete an essay on one field of research for example, sound in film, sound in theatre, the history of the sonic arts and/or performance.

Recommended reading

Adams. 2009. "Hearing the City: Reflections on Soundwalking." *Qualitative Researcher* (10):6–9.

Chion, Michel. 2009. *Film: A Sound Art*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gibbs, Tony. 2007. *The Fundamentals of Sonic Art and Sound Design*. Switzerland: AVA Publishing.

Hendy, David. 2013. *Noise: A Human History of Sound and Listening*. London: Profile Books.

Kelly, Caleb, ed. 2010. *Sound*. London: Cambridge, Mass: Whitechapel Art Gallery.

Labelle, Brandon. 2006. *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*. London; New York: Continuum.

Home-Cook, George, (2015) *Theatre and Aural Attention: Stretching Ourselves*, UK, Palgrave Macmillan,

- Oliveros, Pauline. 2005. *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice*. USA: iUniverse, Inc.
- Schafer, R. Murray. 1993. *The Soundscape*. USA: Destiny Books.
- Carlyle, Angus and Cathy Lane, eds. 2013. *On listening*. Axminster, Devon: Uniformbooks.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2007. *Listening*. New York: Fordham UP.
- Norman, Katharine. 1996. Real-world music as composed listening. *Contemporary Music Review* 15.1-2, 1-27.
- Norman, Katharine. 2012. Listening together, making place. *Organised Sound* 17.3, 257-265.
- Nudds, Matthew and Casey O'Callaghan, eds. 2012. *Sounds and perception: new philosophical essays*. Oxford UP.
- Schafer, R. Murray. 1994. *The Soundscape: our sonic environment and the tuning of the world*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books.
- Smalley, Denis. 1996. "The listening imagination". *Contemporary Music Review* 13(2): 77-107.
- Voegelin, Salomé. 2010. *Listening to noise and silence: towards a philosophy of sound art*. London: Continuum.
- Hull, John. 2001. "Sound: an enrichment or state": *Soundscape: The Journal of Acoustic Ecology* 2.1: 10-15.