

Music Machines: Sound, Technology, Body

(STS: 5 units, Summer 2013)

Instructor: Vanessa Chang

Course Description:

“Sound history,” Jonathan Sterne writes, “indexes changes in human nature and the human body – in life and in death.” This interdisciplinary course considers the intertwined histories of sound and society, asking how developments in sound technologies in the past century have engaged with the culture at large. Through a study of history, film, literature, music and media theory, we will look at the ways in which sound technologies have both provoked and reflected cultural change, as well as evolving attitudes towards human bodies – bodies that sing, dance, perform, create, love, live and die. We will also examine phonography in a broader sense, listening to the ways in which sound has been theorized in relation to writing. Is there no difference between the spoken and written word? Or can approaching post/modernity in terms of the aural, rather than the visual, allow us to hear the experiences of marginalized subjects – for example, those marked by race, gender and/or sexuality?

Course requirements:

Students will be required to write two formal papers (a 4-5 page paper due mid-term and a 9-10 page paper due at the end of term) and participate in one in-class group presentation.

Final grade breakdown:

Class participation will account for 15% of your grade, the presentation will be 25%, Paper #1 will be 25% and Paper #2 will be 35%.

Schedule of readings and assignments

Week 1 **Early Phonography and the Victorian Imagination**

Day 1: Introduction

Day 2:

Bellamy, Edward. (1898). "With the Eyes Shut." Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004.

Edison, Thomas. "The Phonograph and its Future." *The North American Review*, Vol. 126, No. 262 (May-Jun, 1878): 527-536.

Week 2 **History of Early Sound Technologies**

Day 1:

Gitelman, Lisa. "Imagining Language Machines." *Scripts, Grooves and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. pp. 62-96.

Gunning, Tom. "Re-newing Old Technologies: Astonishment, Second Nature, and the Uncanny in Technology from the Previous Turn-of-the-Century." *Re-thinking Media Change*. Pp. 39-60.

Listen: Orson Welles' "War of the Worlds" original broadcast.

Day 2:

Martin, Michele. "The Culture of the Telephone." *'Hello, Central?': Gender, Technology and Culture in the Formation of Telephone Systems*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. Pp. 140-166.

Hilmes, Michele. "Radiating Culture." *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting 1922-1952*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. Pp. 1-33.

Week 3 **Phantom Phonography and the Dead Body**

Day 1:

Kittler, Friedrich. "Gramophone." *Gramophone Film Typewriter*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. Pp. 21-83.

Sterne, Jonathan. "A Resonant Tomb." *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound*

Reproduction. Durham : Duke University Press, 2003. Pp. 283-311.

Day 2:

The Invisible Man. Dir. James Whale. Perf. Claude Rains, Gloria Stuart. Universal Pictures, 1933.

Laing, Dave. "A Voice without a Face: Popular Music and the Phonograph in the 1890s." *Popular Music* 10/1: 1-9.

Chion, Michael. "Phantom Audio-vision." *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Tr. Claudia Gorbman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. Pp. 123-137.

Week 4 *The Menace of Mechanical Music: Race, Realism and The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*

Day 1:

Johnson, James Weldon. *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. Penguin Classics, 1990.

Read: pp. 1-92.

Sousa, John Philip. "The Menace of Mechanical Music." *Appleton's Magazine*, Vol. 8 (1906): 278-284.

Best, Stephen. "Fugitive Sound." *The Fugitive's Properties: Law and the Poetics of Possession*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Pp. 29-64.

Day 2:

Johnson, James Weldon. *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, to the end.

Ruotolo, Cristina L. "James Weldon Johnson and the Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Musician." *American Literature* 72.2 (June 2000): 249-274.

Week 5 *Orality, Literacy and Writing*

Day 1:

Havelock, Eric. "The Modern Discovery of Orality." *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. pp. 24-33

McLuhan, Marshall. "Radio: The Tribal Drum." *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York, Toronto and London: McGraw-Hill, 1964. Pp. 297-307.

Ong, Walter. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London and New York: Methuen, 1982. Pp. 31-135.

Day 2:

Derrida, Jacques. "Signature Event Context." *Limited Inc*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988. Pp. 1-21.

Hayles, Katherine N. "Voices out of Bodies, Bodies out of Voices: Audiotape and the Production of Subjectivity." *Sound States: Innovative Poetics and Acoustical Technologies*. Ed. Adalaide Morris. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997. Pp. 74-96.

******Paper #1 due Friday 5pm******

Week 6 ***Replaying the Postmodern***

Day 1:

Delillo, Don. *White Noise*. New York and London: Penguin, 1984.
(Read: Parts I and II.)

Day 2:

Delillo, Don. *White Noise*. New York and London: Penguin, 1984.
(To the end.)

Week 7 ***Analog and Digital, Original and Copy, Presence and Absence***

Day 1:

Sterne, Jonathan. "The MP3 as Cultural Artifact." *New Media and Society* 8 (2006):
825-842.

Rothenbuhler, Eric W. and John Durham Peters. "Defining Phonography: An Experiment in Theory." *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 2 (Summer, 1997):
242-264.

Day 2: ***Liveness and Mediation***

Théberge, Paul. "The New 'Sound' of Music: Technology and Changing Concepts of Music." *Any Sound You Can Imagine: Making Music/Consuming Technology*. Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1997. Pp. 186-213

Auslander, Philip. "Introduction: 'an orchid in the land of technology,'" "Tryin' to Make it Real: Live Performance, Simulation and the Discourse of Authenticity in

Rock Culture." *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 2008. Pp. 1-10, 73-127.

Week 8 ***Creativity in the Era of Sound Recording
(Modern and Postmodern perspectives)***

Day 1:

Gaddis, William. *Agapē Agape*. New York: Viking, 2002.

Adorno, Theodor. "The Curves of the Needle." Tr. Thomas Levin. *October* Vol. 55, (Winter, 1990), pp. 48-55

Day 2:

Eno, Brian. "The studio as compositional tool." *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*. Ed. Daniel Warner. Continuum, 2004. Pp. 127-130.

Mowitz, John. "The sound of music in the era of its electronic reproducibility." *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*. Ed. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3-27.

Listen: Brian Eno & David Byrne. *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*. Sire Records, 1981

Week 9 ***Sound Spaces: Contest and Control***

Day 1:

Schaefer, R. Murray. "Introduction," "Listening" and "The Acoustic Community." *The Tuning of the World*. New York: Knopf, 1977. Pp. 3-14, 205-225.

Attali, Jacques. "Listening." *Noise: The Political Economy of Music (Theory and History of Literature Vol. 16)*. Tr. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985. Pp. 3-20.

Thibaud, Jean-Paul. "The Sonic Composition of the City." *The Auditory Culture Reader*. Ed. Michael Bull and Les Back. Oxford and New York: Sensory Formations Series, 2003. Pp. 329-341.

Listen: "The Great Animal Orchestra" on Soundcheck, WNYC (March 12, 2012).
<http://soundcheck.wnyc.org/2012/mar/12/>

Day 2:

Rose, Tricia. "Soul Sonic Forces: Technology, Orality, and Black Cultural Practice in Rap Music." *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*.

Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1994. pp. 62-96.

Listen: Afrika Bambaataa & the Soulsonic Force. *Planet Rock: The Album*. Tommy Boy Records, 1986.

Week 10: ***Counter-acoustics: Remixing the Subject***

Day 1:

Space is the Place. Dir. John Coney. Perf. Sun Ra. Plexifilm, 1974.

In-class screening:

Scratch. Dir. Doug Pray. Perf. DJ Shadow, Mixmaster Mike, Grand Wizard Theodore. Palm Pictures, 2001.

Day 2:

Eshun, Kodwo. "Transmaterializing the Breakbeat," "Sampladelia of the Breakbeat," "Synthesizing the Omniverse." *More Brilliant than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction*. London: Quartet Books, 1998. Pp. 13-61, 154-163.

******Final Paper Due******