

COMM 440: Listening
T,TH 11-12:20
Professor Josh Kun
Office: ASC 326; Email: jkun@usc.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays 2-4

Listen with all your might! Listen goddammit!
Listen!
-Rahsaan Roland Kirk

**I do not know which to prefer, /The beauty of inflections/ Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling/ Or just after.**
-Wallace Stevens

**Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd, Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.**
-John Keats

**I remember everything I've ever heard. Every dropped nickel, raindrop drip-drop, sneaker
squeak and sheep bleat...I can still hear every Hey You, You the Man, and John Philip
Sousa euphonium toot and every tree rustle and street corner hustle. I remember every
sound I've ever heard. It's like my entire life is a song I can't get out of my head.**
-Paul Beatty

Description

“For twenty-five centuries,” the French economist Jacques Attali declared in 1985, “Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for the beholding. It is for hearing.” What does it mean to listen to the world? What does it mean that the world sounds differently than it looks? This seminar is designed to take up Attali’s challenge and explore the role of hearing and listening as critical acts crucial to the formation of knowledge, meaning, culture, and communication. As central as sound and audio are to communication, they are rarely taken seriously as objects of study and analysis. In this class, we will learn to think with our ears, tuning into the world as a vast, dynamic, and ever-changing soundscape. To do so, we will visit some of the greatest hits of sound and audio theory and history, and consider everything from “acoustic communication” and the differences between sound and noise, to the world of sound art and the relationship between sound and cities. The second half of the course will take up listening to music specifically, mostly focusing on music and technology, from the phonograph to mp3s, from ProTools to ringtones and iPods. Students will be asked to engage with the material through a variety of creative projects: you will keep a sound diary, create a sonic self-portrait, and complete a final research project based on the sonic and musical spaces of Los Angeles. By the end of the course, my hope is that not only will we be better listeners, but we will have learned to understand social and cultural experience with more depth and diversity than ever before.

Texts

-This is a paperless class; Course readings, links, and audio available on class website

Course Requirements:

This is a seminar, not a lecture course and therefore designed as a collaborative experience between everyone in the room. You will be listening, but also speaking, sharing ideas and sounds and discussing the week's readings. As you might imagine, students are required to attend class regularly, to contribute to class discussions, and to do weekly reading and listening. Attendance in class is a pre-requisite for doing well in this course. Unlike big lectures, if you don't show up, not only does everyone notice, but your opinions and ideas might actually be missed. The success of this class depends on all of our work together. Just because we will be doing lots of listening (to birds and jackhammers, to mixtapes and mashups, to beats and booms), doesn't mean we won't be working. Listening (and reading about listening and talking about listening and thinking aloud about listening) will be our work all semester long and you will be responsible to not simply tag along, but to be active co-creators in what we we learn and make together.

The final course grade will be based on the following distribution:

*Sound Blog/Diary (to be updated at least once a week)- all students must keep a sound diary by creating a personal blog using Posterous, Tumblr, Wordpress, or any other platform, in order to record their reflections on sound, noise, and music, as well as recordings they make throughout the semester. Posts are due before class on Thursdays. Students are also encouraged to register for an AudioBoo account to cross-post and tag their audio. 15%

*Class Presentations- each student will be responsible for presenting on a selected reading 15%

*Class Participation- because this is a seminar, attendance and participation are crucial to your success in the class- 10%

*Mid-Term Sonic Self-Portrait- 20%

*Final Project: Sound Mapping Los Angeles- 40%

Useful Links

Audioboo: audioboo.fm

Radio Aporee: <http://aporee.org/maps/>

BBC Save Our Sounds: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specialreports/saveoursounds/index.shtml>

British Library Sound Archive: <http://www.bl.uk/nsa>

Library of Congress, American Memory Sound Recordings:
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/browse/ListSome.php?format=Sound+Recording>

Archive.org Audio: <http://www.archive.org/details/audio>

1970 USC audio yearbook: <http://waxidermy.com/el-rodeo-usc-1970-71-audio-yearbook/>

Ear Clips: <http://www.abc.net.au/arts/earclips/default.htm>

Hearing & Perception: http://artsites.ucsc.edu/EMS/music/tech_background/TE-03/teces_03.html

Glossary of sound terms: <http://www.zakros.com/mica/soundart/f02/glossary.html>

NYC soundwalk: <http://www.soundwalk.com>

Urban Sound Ecology: <http://urbansoundecology.org/>

Disability: Any student requesting academic accommodations based on disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

ASC Academic Integrity Policy:

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will receive a failing grade in the course and may be dismissed as a major.

In addition to the formal academic integrity policy, my pedagogical policy is based on mutual respect; all students are encouraged to use the classroom as a space in which to speak and to voice their opinions. My expectation is that you will respect not only the professor but also your fellow classmates when they are participating in discussion.

A final note about Academic Integrity: at the Annenberg School, we are fortunate to have classrooms with wireless Internet connection. This is not, however, an opportunity for students to surf the Internet for something more interesting than the class lecture, update their Facebook profiles, IM friends, or play solitaire. If this kind of activity gets to be a problem, laptop computers will not be allowed in the auditorium.

Schedule of Readings

8/24 Introduction: Listening as a critical practice

8/26 Intimate Soundscapes, Distant Music: James Joyce, "The Dead" (http://www.online-literature.com/james_joyce/958/); Sound Walk: USC campus

8/31 The Eye, the Ear: Walter Ong, "The Shifting Sensorium"; Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity".

9/2 Sound, Soul, & Self: Aristotle, De Anima, Book 2 Chapter 8; Don Ihde, "In Praise of Sound"; Steven Connor, "Sound and the Self"

9/7 Listening & Awareness: George Prochnik, "Listening for the Unknown"; Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, misc. teachings on silence; Ramakrishna, excerpts from The Gospel of Ramakrishna; Meditation class held at The Art of Living

9/9 discussion of the film Into Great Silence

9/14 The Brain's Ear: Daniel Levitin, "Behind the Curtain: Music and the Mind Machine," Oliver Sacks, "Music on the Brain"

watch: <http://www.worldsciencefestival.com/video/notes-neurons-full>

watch: http://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn_glennie_shows_how_to_listen.html

9/16 Sound and Noise 1: Garret Keizer, "The Unwanted Sound of Everything We Want"; Luigi Russolo, "The Art of Noises," John Cage "The Future of Music: Credo"

9/21 Sound and Noise 2: Garret Keizer, "The Noise of Political Animals"; Jennifer Stoecker-Ackerman, "The Noise of SB 1070"- <http://soundstudiesblog.com/2010/08/19/the-noise-of-sb-1070/>

9/23 visit from Dave Tompkins

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126781688>

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/sashafrerejones/2009/02/unvoiced-hiss-e.html>

<http://120years.net/machines/vocoder/>

<http://howtowreckanicebeach.com/>

9/28 The Soundscape: Murray Schafer, The Soundscape, introduction and chapters 1-3

9/30 Acoustic Communication: Barry Truax, "Acoustic Tradition and the Communicational Approach," "The Listener"

10/5 SONIC SELF-PORTRAIT DUE American & European Soundscapes: Corbin, "Identity, Bells, and the Nineteenth Century French Village"; Mark Smith, "Listening to the Heard Worlds of Antebellum America"; Henry David Thoreau, "Sounds"

10/7 The Voice: Steven Connor, "What I Say Goes;" Thomas Levin, "Before the Beep: A Short History of Voice Mail"

10/12 Eavesdropping and Surveillance; discussion of The Conversation; readings from John L. Locke, Eavesdropping

10/14 Sound and the City 1: Sophie Arquette, "Sounds Like City;" Michael Bull, "No Dead Air!: The iPod and the Culture Mobile Listening"

10/19 Sound and The City 2: Trevor Cox, "Planning the New Sounds of the City"; JG Ballard, "The Sound-Sweep"

10/21 Sounds as Brands; George Prochnik, "Retail: The Soundtrack";

<http://www.soundslikebranding.com/>;<http://www.thesoundagency.com/home.asp>;
http://www.ted.com/talks/julian_treasure_the_4_ways_sound_affects_us.html
<http://www.aiga.org/content.cfm/building-brand-value-through-sound>
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/8748854.stm

10/26 Sound/Cinema: visit from William Whittington; William Whittington, “Acoustic Infidelities: Sounding the Exchanges between J-Horror and H-Horror Remakes”; Rick Altman, “Sound/History”

10/28 Sound as Art 1: Alan Licht, “Sound Art;” Douglas Kahn, “Art and Sound”

11/2 Sound as Art 2: Tara Rodgers, “Interview with Pauline Oliveros;” Tara Rodgers, “Interview with Jessica Rylan;” Christian Marclay, “Record, CD, Analog, Digital”

11/4 The Sample, The DJ: Chris Cutler, “Plunderphonia;” DJ Spooky, “Algorithms: Erasures and the Art of Memory”

11/9 The Phonograph: Greg Milner, “Testing, Testing;” Andre Millard, “A Phonograph in Every Home”

11/11 Listeners as Musicians: Tia DeNora, “Music as a Technology of Self”

11/16 NO CLASS

11/18 The Age of the Mix: Greg Milner, “Tubby’s Ghost”

11/23 The Age of the Cloud: Mark Katz, “Listening in Cyberspace”

11/25 Thanksgiving

11/30 Presentations

12/2 Presentations