

COMM 440: Sound & Music as Communication

Fridays 2:00-4:50

Professor Josh Kun

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Office Hours Tuesdays 11-1 and by appointment

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? How do we approach human communication through sound and music? 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 and music, 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 and the cloud. 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.

The bulk of the project work of the course will be focused on "Remixing Lummi," a collaboration we will spearhead with the Southwest Museum and their singular collection of digital music files.

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, 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. Students are also encouraged to learn Audacity or other sound editing software and to experiment with sound map websites. 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: Remixing Lummis- 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

8.30 I listen to the wind...

Steve Roden, from *I Listen to the Wind That Obliterates My Traces*
James Joyce, "The Dead"

9.6 Introducing Charles Fletcher Lummis

Charles Fletcher Lummis, "Catching Our Archaeology Alive"
John Koegel, "Mexican-American Music in 19th Century California"
Erika Brady, "Collectors and the Phonograph"
Jonathan Sterne, "Preserving Sound in Modern America"

9.13 The eye, the ear, the soul, and the self

Walter Ong, "The Shifting Sensorium"
Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity"
Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book 2 Chapter 8
Don Ihde, "In Praise of Sound"
Steven Connor, "Sound and the Self"

9.20 Nada Brahma, OM, and the Sound of the Spirit

Joachim Ernst-Berendt, from *Nada Brahma*
Federico Garcia Lorca, "Play and Theory of the Duende"
Judith Becker, "Rethinking Trance"
George Prochnik, "Listening for the Unknown"

9.27 Bring the Noise

Garret Keizer, "The Unwanted Sound of Everything We Want" & "The Noise of Political Animals"
Luigi Russolo, "The Art of Noises"
John Cage "The Future of Music: Credo"
Jennifer Stoeber-Ackerman, "The Noise of SB 1070"

10.4 Enter the Soundscape

Murray Schafer, Introduction and Chapters 1-3, *The Soundscape*
Corbin, "Identity, Bells, and the Nineteenth Century French Village"

Mark Smith, "Listening to the Heard Worlds of Antebellum America"
Henry David Thoreau, "Sounds"

10.11 Living for the City

Sophie Arquette, "Sounds Like City"
Michael Bull, "No Dead Air!: The iPod and the Culture Mobile Listening"
Trevor Cox, "Planning the New Sounds of the City"
JG Ballard, "The Sound-Sweep"
Josh Kun, "Los Angeles is Singing"

10.18 The Arts of Sound

Alan Licht, "Sound Art"
Douglas Kahn, "Art and Sound"
Tara Rodgers, "Interview with Pauline Oliveros" & "Interview with Jessica Rylan"
Christian Marclay, "Record, CD, Analog, Digital"

10/25 Musical Technologies of the Self

Greg Milner, "Testing, Testing"
Andre Millard, "A Phonograph in Every Home"
Tia DeNora, "Music as a Technology of Self"
Kate Crawford, "Following You: Disciplines of Listening in Social Media"

11/1 The Mix and the Cloud

Greg Milner, "Tubby's Ghost"
Mark Katz, "Listening in Cyberspace"
Nicholas Bourriaud, from *Postproduction*

11/8 I'm With the Brand

Timothy Taylor, from *The Sounds of Capitalism*
Devon Powers, "The Branded Sensorium and the Intrigue of Musical Sound"
Fast Company, "Portrait of the Rapper as a Young Marketer"
<http://www.soundlikebranding.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

11/15 Streaming (Storing?) the Future

Council on Library and Information Resources, "The State of Recorded Sound Preservation in the United States: A National Legacy at Risk in the Digital Age"
Sasha Frere-Jones, "You, the DJ" & "If You Care About Music, Should You Ditch Spotify?"

11/22 TBD

12/6 Final Presentations