



CLASS WEBSITE: <https://courses.commarts.wisc.edu/608I001/>

Overview

Sound plays a crucial but understudied role in experiences of media and cultural life. From the mundane sounds of our daily routines (a bus lumbering by, water dripping from a faucet, the clack of a keyboard, etc.) to more structured and constructed soundworks (i.e. radio, music, sound for television, film, and games, etc.), sound, or lack thereof, is fundamental to communications media and, more broadly, to our perceptions of the world around us. This class aims to introduce you to the emerging field of sound studies, an interdisciplinary approach that takes sound as its primary focus in order to explore “what sound does in the human world and what humans do in the sonic world” (Sterne 2013). We’ll consider the role sound plays in various communications media through topics such as: soundscapes and the way sounds affect our understanding of urban and other spaces, music and the ordering of sound for commercial and aesthetic ends, deafness and silence, listening in an era of digital sound, video game sound, and technologies of sound production. You will also put these theories into practice through audio assignments such as the creation of podcasts and other brief soundworks. Through in-class tutorials, you will learn the basics of digital audio recording and editing software and how to present and distribute amateur/everyday audio content via the Internet. By the end of this class, you will have both practical skills for creating digital audio projects and theoretical concepts for answering questions around what might it mean to think sonically and to be sound students.

Objectives

This course hopes to achieve the following:

1. Introduce you to the field of sound studies
2. Expose you to the explosion of soundwork taking place in podcasting and digital audio
3. Develop your critical listening skills

Outcomes

By the end of this course you will:

1. Be more attuned (intellectually and sonically) to the sounds around you
2. Know how to use digital audio recording and editing technologies
3. Have a portfolio of soundwork and a soundbank of ideas for future projects

Evaluation

Discussion/Lab Work	15%
Reading Responses	20%
Soundlisting	20%
Podcast Pitch	20%
Podcast Launch Episode	25%

Grading

A: 93-100%
AB: 88-92.9%
B: 83-87.9%
BC: 78-82.9%
C: 70-77.9%
D: 60-69.9%
F: 0-59.9%

Class Schedule (Part 1)

Module 1- Pre-Produce		Module 2- Record		Module 3- Edit		Module 4- Export	
DAY	TOPIC	READING	DAY	LISTENING	LAB		
1/19	N/A	N/A	1/21	N/A	Sounding Off		
1/26	Intro to Sound Studies	Sterne: <i>Sonic Imaginations</i> Pinch & Bijsterveld: <i>New Keys to the Sonic World</i>	1/28	Reasonably Sound ep. 1,2 &14: <i>The Ear, The Voice, What 2014 Sounded Like</i>	IMC Tour/Tascam Introductions		
2/2	Listening	Lacey: <i>Listening in the Digital Age</i>	2/4	3620 ep. 28: <i>How to Do the Sound of Scholarship</i> Stylus Radio ep.1: <i>A Brief History of the Waveform</i> The Truth: <i>The Mutiny</i>	Writerly Listening (Soundcloud)		
2/9	Sound-scapes	Schafer: <i>The Soundscape</i> Thompson: <i>Sound, Modernity, History</i>	2/11	Spark ep.128: <i>Noise, Filters, and Birdsong</i> 99% Invisible ep.1&15 <i>99% Noise and Sounds of the Artificial World</i>	Intro to Audio Software I (Interface, Import, Move, Multi Track)		
2/16	Sound-work	Hilmes: <i>The New Materiality of Radio</i>	2/18	Serial ep. 1: <i>The Alibi</i>	Soundlisting Presentation DUE		
2/23	Re-formatted	Heise: <i>Podcasting</i> Sterne et. al.: <i>The Politics of Podcasting</i>	2/25	Start Up ep. 1 & 2: <i>How Not to Pitch a Billionaire and Is Podcasting the Future or the Past</i> The Truth: <i>Keep Running</i>	Create a sonic "environment"		
3/2	Voice	Florini: <i>From #JusticeFor Trayvon to #TMFRH</i>	3/5	This Week in Blackness ep.610: <i>No Indictment</i>	Intro to Audio Software II (Edit, Fade, Effects, Volume, Pan)		
3/9	Noise	Rodgers: <i>Pink Noises Intro</i>	3/11	Bitch Media: <i>Popaganda - Geek Girls</i>	Turning a script into audio		
3/16	Silence	Schama: <i>Silence as Luxury</i> Mills: <i>Do Signals Have Politics?</i>	3/18	WTF with Marc Maron ep. 67: <i>Robin Williams</i>	Interviews and asking good questions		
3/23	Intimacy/ Authenticity	Podcast Pitch Project DUE	3/25	I Seem Fun ep. 7 <i>Headphone Healing</i>	N/A		

SPRING RECESS MAR. 30 – APR. 5

Class Schedule (Part 2)

Module 1- Pre-Produce		Module 2- Record		Module 3- Edit		Module 4- Export	
4/6	Music Online	Kot: <i>Do Not Insult Death Cab</i>	4/8	Song Exploder ep.1: <i>The Postal Service</i> Pitch ep. 1: <i>The Clearmountain Pause</i>	Loops and echoes		
4/13	Music Inline	Sterne: <i>The Mall of America</i>	4/15	Radio Lab ep. 7: <i>Musical Language</i>	Intro to Audio Software III (Normalize, Export)		
4/20	Sound Design	Wittington: <i>The Sonic Playpen</i>	4/22	99% Invisible ep. 127: <i>The Sound of Sport</i>	Sound Design (score visuals)		
4/27	Sound Games	Grimshaw: <i>Sound in Digital Games</i>	4/29	Love and Radio s. 3 ep. 3: <i>Jack and Ellen</i>	RSS feeds, Web publishing, etc.		
5/4	Sounding Out	Van Dijck: <i>Record and Hold: Popular Music Between Personal and Collective Memory</i>	5/6	This American Life ep. 283: <i>Remember me</i> Sleep with Me ep.160– <i>A Bjork'ed Love Story</i>	Podcast Launch Episode Project Due		

Extensions and Late Work

Extensions will be granted only in rare and unavoidable circumstances (at the instructor's discretion). Late projects will be penalized 2% for each day the assignment is late.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Plagiarism – passing off someone else's work as your own without proper citation or reference – is unacceptable. See UW's policy on the matter: <http://students.wisc.edu/doso/acadintegrity.html>
Abuses of this policy will be reported to the Dean of Students and given a failing grade.

Illness and Missed Classes

If you have to miss class due to illness please notify the instructor as far in advance as possible. Students with influenza-like illness (fever of 100 degrees F or higher, with a cough and/or sore throat) should not participate in face-to-face discussion until fever-free for 24 hours.

Accommodations

I hope to foster a safe and comfortable learning environment for all students. I will not tolerate any form of discrimination or harassment. Please let me know if and how I can improve the class environment. If you require special testing or classroom modifications, please contact me to discuss your situation within the first two weeks of class. <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>

Communication Policy

I encourage you to make use of my office hours or to set up additional times with me to discuss your progress in the course, or any aspect of the class that concerns you. I will endeavor to respond to you as quickly as I can and to have your papers/assignments/quizzes/ exams graded in a timely fashion, though please allow for extra time during busy periods of the semester.

Assignment Details (for web, not handout):

Discussion and Lab Work: 15%

This is a theory/discussion class, so your regular and enthusiastic participation in class conversations is crucial to the success of this class. You are thus expected to attend class, contribute to discussions and to complete readings, listenings, and lab work. More than two absences from class without due cause will negatively affect your participation grade. This is also a production class, so your eager and dedicated participation in the class workshops is crucial to the success of this class. You are thus expected to work diligently and collaboratively during lab time and to submit final products to the course blog/share them in class when required.

Reading Responses: 20% (2x10%)

1) Listen and Tell: 10%

In groups of two, you will each bring in a sound that relates in some way to the readings for our Monday sessions. You will present it to the class and discuss its sonic character as well as indicate why and how the sound links to the key concepts and ideas in the reading. Your group will also briefly summarize the key points in the article and formulate 5 questions about the reading to fuel the day's discussion. In essence, you'll manage the discussion for around 20-30 minutes. You should post questions to the blog 48 hours before the class in which they are to be discussed.

2) Writerly Listening: 10%

In groups of two (different partner from the first exercise), you will deconstruct the sonic components of the audio "listening" assigned for our Wednesday sessions. In a post of about 1000 words, you are expected to note some of the key sound choices the producers made during the podcast/soundwork and discuss the effect they had on your understanding of the narrative. Were there any interesting or odd sonic decisions? Were there sounds that had a particular effect on your experience of the piece? What role did sound play in creating an imagined environment? How do you think the producers created the sounds they did?

Soundlisting: 20%

You've all heard of a playlist? This assignment asks you to compile between 8 to 15 recordings of sound in your daily life (a playlist of sounds, or soundlist). Like any good playlist, these sounds should be ordered and organized around a particular theme or idea (i.e. "10 sounds that bug me", "13 Sounds that make me smile", "9 Sounds from Friday night"). Be creative with the theme. Then go out and capture the sounds, compile them with an audio editing program into a 2-3 minute piece. Other than lining up the sounds, there should be no other editing (minor volume adjustments excepted). There is no narration allowed. You'll present these in class **on Feb. 18** (i.e. use common sense and keep it SFS-safe for school...no sounds of illegal or otherwise questionable activities).

Podcast Pitch: 20%

This project requires you to pitch an idea for a potential podcast/soundwork. You will compile a 3-5 minute audio recording, designed to "sell" the class and I on your idea. The pitch should introduce us to your vision for the podcast: What will the podcast be about? What kind of audience might it appeal to? What are some similar podcasts to it out there? What will it sound like? How will you record it and how often? While you need to provide some basic outline of the project, you should also do so creatively by using sound to bring your pitch to life. It should include your voice, background music or sound tracks, as well as sound effects and other editing choices. You will post the pitch to the class blog on **Mon. Mar. 23** and we will discuss them in class. You will also submit a 2-page summary to me further explaining the project, in terms of style, content and techniques.

Podcast Launch: 25%

This project builds on the podcast pitch project by asking you to create the inaugural "launch" episode for the podcast/soundwork you (or your partner) proposed in the earlier assignment. In groups of 2, you will compile a 10-16 minute audio recording that will combine voice, well-placed sound effects, creative audio editing, music and other skills/techniques discussed in class. This is your opportunity to put on display the skills you've picked up during the class. The podcast should also include relevant metadata and an image that will serve to identify your "show" on the web and in various podcast aggregators. The final project will be due on **Wed. May 6**