

## SOUND STUDIES

### BASIC INFORMATION

Professor: Daniel H. Foster, 213 Bivins Building

Email: dhfoster@duke.edu

Office Hours: Tue/Th 9:25-10:05; 11:20-11:40 in office; or by appointment

Class Times and Location: Tue/Th 11:40-12:55, 214 Bivins Building

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to the new and exciting field of Sound Studies and the way this discipline provides us with ways of thinking historically and culturally about sound and listening. The reasons for the emergence of this field include increased commercial interest in mp3 players, podcasting, and satellite radio; increased scholarly interest in disability studies; and the expansion of musicology to include everything from noise to silence to film music. This course will examine these reasons and approach Sound Studies from a number of different avenues: cultural studies, disability studies, ethnographic research, classic texts on sound and music, and copious examples for student listening. We will consider how listening affects life, thought, and imagination; how the medium of sound is used both in conjunction with other media and by itself; and how the lack of sound can affect our understanding of an artwork and the world. Emphasis will be on sound in theater, film, radio, new media, and music, as well as performance art that strongly features sound.

### READING LIST

Required: Michael Bull and Les Back (eds.), *The Auditory Culture Reader*

All other texts will be made available on Blackboard, at the library reserve, and through handouts

### REQUIREMENTS

#### Audio Project

Students will be required to complete one audio project using free audio editing software—Audacity—that they will be trained on. The type of project they create can be anything from a play to a mash-up to a soundscape. The main criterion is that it be aural. You will be given plenty of time to work on this project in class and you will be given more specific directions throughout the semester.

#### Class Participation

Students are expected to participate in class discussions and to complete reading assignments, listenings, viewings, etc. on a regular basis.

#### Interpret/Exemplify/Question

Four times during the semester each student will be required to interpret a passage from one of our texts (essays, films, or radio broadcasts), give an example that helps one understand that passage, and ask at least one question about the passage. You'll be asked to do this with four different texts. By 5pm on the day before we talk about that reading, you will have to post a 250-500 word interpretation, your question(s), and enough information about your example so that people could acquaint themselves with it before class.

### GRADES

Audio Project: 50%

Class Participation: 25%

Interpret/Exemplify/Question: 25%

### SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

(Note: ACR=*Audio Culture Reader*)

#### I. INTRODUCTION

Thu. Jan. 14 Introduction to the Course

Tue. Jan. 19 ACR, "Introduction," 1-18

#### II. SOUND AND VISION

Thu. Jan. 21 Michelangelo Antonioni, *Blow-Up* (film-on reserve at Lilly Library)

Tue. Jan. 26 NO CLASS

Thu. Jan. 28 NO CLASS

Tue. Feb. 2 Michelangelo Antonioni, *Blow-Up* (film-on reserve at Lilly Library)

Thu. Feb. 4 Francis Ford Coppola, *The Conversation* (film-on reserve at Lilly Library)

Tue. Feb. 9 Francis Ford Coppola *The Conversation* (film-on reserve at Lilly Library)

#### III. THE ORAL VERSUS THE WRITTEN

Thu. Feb. 11 Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (excerpts-handout)

Tue. Feb. 16 Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (excerpts-handout)

#### IV. HISTORIES OF LISTENING

Thu. Feb. 18 ACR, "Hearing Loss," 41-59

Tue. Feb. 23 ACR, "The Indefensible Ear," 487-501

**V. LISTENING TO HISTORY**

- Thu. Feb. 25 ACR, "Tuning in to London c. 1600," 127-35  
 Tue. Feb. 25 ACR, "Listening to the Heard Worlds of Antebellum America," 137-63

**VI. SOUND AND MUSIC**

- Thu. Feb. 26 ACR, "The Sound of Music," 77-90  
 Tue. Mar. 16 ACR, "Songtime," 91-112  
 Thu. Mar. 18 Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice" (handout)  
 Tue. Mar. 23 Theodor Adorno, "The Radio Symphony" (handout)

**VII. RECORDING AND REPRODUCING SOUND**

- Thu. Mar. 25 ACR, "Nostalgia and Radio Sound," 281-95  
 Tue. Mar. 30 Thomas Y. Levin, "Tones from out of Nowhere" (handout)

**VIII. SOUND AND PLACE**

- Thu. Mar. 1 ACR, "The Diabolical Symphony," 165-89  
 Tue. Mar. 6 ACR, "The Sonic Composition of the City," 329-41  
 Thu. Apr. 8 ACR, "How Many Movements," 343-85  
 Tue. Apr. 13 ACR, "Soundscapes of the Car," 357-80

**IX. SPEECH AND THEATER**

- Thu. Apr. 15 Konstantin Stanislavski, "Intonations and Pauses" (handout)  
 Tue. Apr. 30 Raymond Williams, "Argument: Text and Performance" (handout)

**X. RADIO**

- Thu. Apr. 22 Arch Oboler, *Johnny Got His Gun* (radio show-available on blackboard)  
 Tue. Apr. 27 Dalton Trumbo, *Johnny Got His Gun* (film-available on reserve at Lilly Library)

**\*Audio project due by 11:59 pm on the day for which our final is scheduled-check final schedule for date**