
SUBJECT DESCRIPTION

50910 Ways of Listening

Course Name:	Graduate Program in Media Arts and Production
Level:	400
Number of Credit points:	8
Prerequisites:	None
Semester offered:	Spring
Grading:	Graded

HANDBOOK DESCRIPTION

Ways of listening presents a range of critical perspectives and approaches to the uses of sound and the act of listening across film, television, radio and new media platforms. While the subject overall is aimed at understanding the uses of sound within various media, the emphasis (both in practice and theory) is on *listening*; students are encouraged to attend closely to their own acoustic environments, and will have the opportunity to audition a range of audio art and radiophonic works. With a focus on contemporary practice, a number of key historical 'sound texts' will also be presented.

CONTRIBUTION TO GRADUATE PROFILE

Students:

- Have some knowledge of aesthetic and industry issues in relation to the production of sound works
- Have had the opportunity to develop their conceptual skills and critical thinking in relation to various areas of media production.
- Are able to develop and critically revise their own work.

OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this subject, students are expected to be able to:

- a) demonstrate a sophisticated and critical awareness of the ways in which sound operates to create meaning within a variety of media and environmental contexts;
- b) to address theoretical issues regarding the use of sound within media, art and environmental contexts through extensive reading, in-depth discussion and analysis of case studies;
- c) apply these conceptual and critical tools within their own production and theoretical activity.
- d) Developed listening skills

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Reading.
- Listening/viewing film, video, websites, CD ROMs, radio programs and other media productions.
- Researching, writing and presentation of seminar papers in small teams/pairs.
- Listening skills activity such as individual keeping of a 'sound journal'.
- The subject will be conducted as weekly seminars throughout the semester.
- Lectures, seminar discussions and an extensive program of audition (in film, video new media and radio).
- Students present seminar papers, produce a 'listening journal' and participate in workshops

CONTENT

- The subject presents a range of critical and conceptual approaches to listening and the uses of sound.
- Topics such as the physical properties of sound; acoustics and psychoacoustics; sound and subjectivity; intimacy, interiority and memory; sound as site for producing meaning; an ecology of sound.

ASSESSMENT

Assignment 1: A Listening Exercise such as a Listening Journal

Objectives: a, d

Due: by negotiation (class presentation), within first 1/2 of semester

Value: 30%

Task: A listening exercise such as compiling a journal of sounds heard over time in two locations (one familiar, the other not). In the case of the familiar site, the journal should begin with a recollection of the sounds heard there at various times, and then move to an account of what is *actually* heard there. This site should be 'sampled' at three separate times of the day. The record of listening at the second (unfamiliar) site should commence with first impressions, and then move to a description of sounds experienced over an extended duration.

Assessment criteria:

Demonstrated ability to:

- effectively listen and describe and analyse what is heard
- effectively present the material with an awareness of the critical contexts of the discussion

Assignment 2: Seminar Presentation

Objectives: b, c

Due: by negotiation (class presentation) Continuous throughout semester

Value: 30%

Task: Responding to the readings and/or audition material set for a chosen week, to prepare and lead a class based discussion on the topic/theme of the class.

Assessment criteria:

Demonstrated ability to:

- effectively engage with critical writing
- discuss sound within a variety of critical frameworks.

Assignment 3: Major Research Project

Objectives: a,b,c,d

Due: Final weeks of class

Value: 40%

Task: Major research project, such as to research and prepare a major project on any of the themes and topics discussed in the subject. This can include close analysis of the uses of sound in one or more media and/or art works or within a given a sound environment. It might also be based upon the student's own work in sound, or the work of another sound designer or sound artist.

The work must be more than descriptive, engaging with the critical and conceptual tools presented throughout the subject. However, innovative and creative forms of engagement will be welcomed.

The project can involve presentation of audio and/or video, but must include a written component of no less than 3,000 words.

Assessment criteria:

Demonstrated ability to:

- to engage critically, creatively and independently with any aspect of the uses of sound and ways of listening arising from the subject
- attend closely to the nature and character of sounds within a given work or environment
- understand the ways in which sound produces meaning

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Attend 9 of classes

Satisfactory submission of all assignments

TEXT AND REFERENCES

Attali, Jacques, Noise, *The Political Economy of Music*, Trans. Brian Massumi, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1985.

Barthes, Roland, *The Responsibility of Forms*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1985

Essays in Sound, Eds. Cavallaro, Davies, Dyson, Jonson Sydney, 1999

#3 and #4 Sydney, Contemporary Sound Arts 1999 - 2000

Chion, Michel, *AudioVision*, Columbia University Press, 1994

Fontana, Bill 'The Relocation of Ambient Sound: Urban Sound Sculpture' in *Leonardo* Vol 20 No2 1987

Forster, E.M. 'The Story of a Panic' in *Short Stories* Penguin Books, London & Sydney 1965

MacGregor Tony 'The Jericho Effect' and 'The Black Box' from *Sympathetic Vibrations* unpublished Master thesis, UTS 2000.

Labelle, Brandon, Migone, Christof, and Roden, Steve (eds) *Site of Sound: of Architecture and the Ear*, Errant Bodies Press, Los Angeles, 2000

Labelle, Brandon and Migone, Christof (eds), *Writing Aloud: the sonics of language*, Errant Bodies Press, Los Angeles, 2001

Mills, Jane 'Andrew Plain: an eye on the sound' in *Real Time* #46, Sydney 2002

Rothenberg, David (ed), *Terra Nova: Nature and Culture, Music from Nature*, Vol. 2, no 3, Summer 1997

Russolo, Luigi 'The art of Noises' in *Futurist Manifestos* U. Appollonio, ed, Thames & Hudson, London 1973

Serres, Michel 'Noises' in *The Parasite*, University of Chicago Press, 1982

The Drama Review 40, 3 (T151), Fall '96 New York University and MIT, 1996

Richards, M.C. 'John Cage and the way of the ear' *TriQuarterly* #34 Northwestern University Press, 1982

Thomas, M (ed.), *Uncertain Ground*, Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1999

Thompson, Emily Ann, *The Soundscape of Modernity Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900 – 1933*, MIT Press, 2002
Sound by Artists, Arts Metropole, Ontario 1990
Weiss, Allen S, *Experimental Sound and Radio*, MIT Press, 2000
Williams, Neville 'Sound Waves' in *HiFi: An Introduction* An Electronics Australia Publication. 1991