

**HDCC208E: Seminar in Digital Cultures & Creativity: Digital Music and Sound, Fall 2012**  
Tues/Thurs 3:30-4:45pm • Women's Studies Multimedia Studio, University of Maryland  
Instructor: Dr. Tara Rodgers • [www.analogtara.net](http://www.analogtara.net)

## **Course Description**

Digital music and sound is all around us. In this seminar, we will assess it as a historical and cultural phenomenon, learn to interpret some of its many meanings, and embrace it as a creative medium. The course will survey the history of digital audio and electronic musical genres alongside hands-on explorations of associated technologies. We will read about, listen to, and discuss creative work in DJing, hip hop, electronic and experimental music genres. We will engage debates around technological progress, authorship, ownership, and community formation which are integral to digital media and cultures. In both collaborative and individual projects, students will develop skills in digital music production using free or low-cost software such as the audio editor Audacity and sound apps for iPads.\* Upon completion of the course, students will be conversant in historical and cultural dimensions of digital music and sound, and able to complete creative projects using sound as a primary mode of expression.

\*Each student has access to an iPad through the DCC program and to two shared iMac workstations and audio equipment in the WMST Studio.

## **I. Introductions to Digital Music and Sound**

### **Thurs Aug 30 – Greetings; Course Overview**

Read and consider the “Read, Write, Cite” document.

### **Tues Sept 4 – Culture and Technology**

Slack, Jennifer Daryl, and J. Macgregor Wise, *Culture + Technology: A Primer*. “Section I: Culture and Technology: The Received View – Progress, Convenience, Determinism, Control” (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 9-64.

### **Thurs Sept 6 – Hearing and Listening**

Oliveros, Pauline. “Preface,” *Deep Listening: A Composer's Practice* (New York: iUniverse, 2005), xv-xix.

McCartney, Andra. “Soundscape Works, Listening, and the Touch of Sound,” in *Aural Cultures*, edited by Jim Drobnick (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2004), 179-85.

In class:

Watch excerpts of TEDTalk: “Evelyn Glennie Shows How to Listen”:

[http://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn\\_glennie\\_shows\\_how\\_to\\_listen.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn_glennie_shows_how_to_listen.html)

Oliveros, Pauline. “The Poetics of Environmental Sound” (1984) / Deep Listening exercise

## **Tues Sept 11 – Music and Sound in Context: Beeps, Sports, Campaigns**

Heffernan, Virginia. “Beep!” *New York Times*, March 19, 2010.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/21/magazine/21FOB-medium-t.html> (Read and check out media examples)

Sullivan, Becky. “Making The Olympics Sound Right, From a ‘Swoosh’ to a ‘Splash’,” *All Things Considered*, NPR, July 28, 2012 (5 min. 54 sec)

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetorch/2012/07/28/157442046/making-the-olympics-sound-right-from-a-swoosh-to-a-splash> (Listen to the story or read text with audio examples)

“Political Attack – Background Music for Negative Campaign Ad,” *AudioSparx: The Music That Powers Hollywood*, 2012. [http://www.audiosparx.com/sa/summary/soundpack.cfm/sound\\_iid.499914](http://www.audiosparx.com/sa/summary/soundpack.cfm/sound_iid.499914) (Read text and listen to a couple audio examples)

Recommended:

Farinella, David John. “The Sounds of Summer,” *Mix*, September 1, 2001. [http://mixonline.com/mag/audio\\_sounds\\_summer/](http://mixonline.com/mag/audio_sounds_summer/)

Costa, Robert. “Songs for Campaign Seasons Past and Present,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 2, 2008. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122290103509796055.html>

In class:

Descriptive writing exercise

## **Thurs Sept 13 – Sound and Digital Audio Basics**

Huber, David Miles, and Robert E. Runstein. “Sound and Hearing,” ch. 2 in *Modern Recording Techniques*, 5th ed. (Boston: Focal Press, 1997), 23-52.

Roads, Curtis. “Digital Audio Concepts,” excerpts from ch. 1 in *The Computer Music Tutorial* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 7-31.

In class:

Quiz on Huber & Runstein and Roads

File format and speaker/headphone comparisons

## **II. Digital Music Production**

### **Tues Sept 18 – Microphone Techniques**

Rodgers, Tara. Interview with Annea Lockwood, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 115-27.

Schroder, Carla. “Microphones,” in *The Book of Audacity*, 40-44.

Recommended:

White, Paul. Excerpts from *Basic Microphones* (London, UK: Sanctuary Publishing, 1999), 13-43, 97-124.

In class:

Microphone demos; Tascam digital recorders

### **Thurs Sept 20 – Electronic Musical Instruments: Histories and Futures**

Chadabe, Joel. “The Early Instruments,” ch. 1 of *Electric Sound: The Past and Promise of Electronic Music* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 1-20.

Gitelman, Lisa, and Geoffrey B. Pingree. “Introduction: What’s New About New Media?” *New Media, 1740-1915* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), xi-xxii.

Recommended:

Burton, Charlie. “How Bjork’s ‘Biophilia’ album fuses music with iPad apps,” *Wired UK*, July 26, 2011. <http://www.wired.co.uk/magazine/archive/2011/08/features/music-nature-science?page=all>

**\*\* Reading Response #1 due \*\***

In class:

Electronic music instrument history

Review subtractive, additive, and wavetable synthesis

Explore Björk’s *Biophilia* – buy and install app before class; bring iPads to class and headphones if you have them

### **Tues Sept 25 – Introduction to Audacity; iPad apps; Work Session**

Schroder, Carla. “Audacity from Start to Finish,” ch. 1 in *The Book of Audacity* (San Francisco: No Starch Press, 2011), 1-30.

In class:

Audacity & iPad instrument demos

Discuss & begin Group Project #1 – Create a sample library (“pack”) for Freesound.org

Assignment objectives: Critical listening; collaborative creativity; recording and exporting audio files at correct levels; making clean edits; using fades

### **Thurs Sept 27 – Group Project #1 – Work Session**

### **Tues Oct 2 – \*\* Group Project #1 due \*\* – Presentations and Discussion**

### **Thurs Oct 4 – Sampling: History, Aesthetics, Politics**

McLeod, Kembew. “The Private Ownership of Culture,” ch. 1 in *Owning Culture: Authorship, Ownership, and Intellectual Property Law* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 1-26.

Bartlett, Andrew. “Airshafts, Loudspeakers, and the Hip-Hop Sample,” in *That’s the Joint! The Hip-Hop Studies Reader*, 2nd ed., edited by Murray Forman and Mark Anthony Neal (New York: Routledge, 2012), 565-78.

In class:

Sampling discussion

Mix assignment distributed

Assignment objectives: Multitrack editing and mixdown; effective use of panning and effects; careful crafting of a sonic or musical “narrative” over the designated length of time.

## **Tues Oct 9 – Sampling and Mash-ups (cont'd)**

Cutler, Chris. "Plunderphonia," in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, edited by Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Continuum, 2004), 138-56.

"The Recombinant DNA of the Mash-Up – Interactive Feature," *New York Times*, January 6, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/01/09/magazine/mashup-timeline.html?ref=magazine>

Watch:

*Scratch* hip hop documentary

Owen Chapman, "The Evolution of Mash-up Culture," TEDxConcordia:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83lhAlmp5vY>

**\*\* Reading Response #2 due \*\***

## **Thurs Oct 11 – Mixing Techniques and Work Session**

White, Paul. Excerpts from *Basic Mixing Techniques* (London, UK: Sanctuary Publishing, 2000), 31-60, 79-106.

Senior, Mike. "Mix Mistakes," *Sound on Sound* (September 2011). <http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/sep11/articles/mix-mistakes.htm?print=yes>

In class:

Mixing lecture; Introductions to Traktor and Ableton Live

## **Tues Oct 16 – Mixing Work Session**

Ableton Live demo videos TBA

## **Thurs Oct 18 – Mixing Work Session**

## **Tues Oct 23 – Mix Presentations and Critique**

**\*\* Mix due in Dropbox folder by 1 pm \*\***

## **Thurs Oct 25 – Mix Presentations and Critique (cont'd)**

### III. Listening in a “Digital Age”

#### **Tues Oct 30 – Digital Formats and Distribution**

Sterne, Jonathan. “The MP3 as Cultural Artifact,” *New Media & Society* 8 (2006): 825-42.

White, Emily. “I Never Owned Any Music To Begin With,” *All Songs Considered: The Blog*, NPR, June 16, 2012. <http://www.npr.org/blogs/allsongs/2012/06/16/154863819/i-never-owned-any-music-to-begin-with>

Lowery, David. “Letter to Emily White at NPR All Songs Considered,” *The Trichordist: Artists For An Ethical Internet*, June 18, 2012. <http://thetrichordist.wordpress.com/2012/06/18/letter-to-emily-white-at-npr-all-songs-considered/>

Recommended:

Hilton, Robin. “A Perpetual Debate: Owning Music In The Digital Age,” *All Songs Considered: The Blog*, NPR, June 19, 2012. <http://www.npr.org/blogs/allsongs/2012/06/19/155313212/a-perpetual-debate-owning-music-in-the-digital-age>

In class:

Digital music ownership debate

Discuss digital distribution formats: Soundcloud, Bandcamp, podcasts, more...

#### **Thurs Nov 1 – Complete Mobile Listening exercise and response**

Bull, Michael. “No Dead Air! The iPod and the Culture of Mobile Listening,” *Leisure Studies* 24, no. 4 (October 2005): 343-55.

\*\* Reading Response #3 due \*\*

### IV. Sound, Space, and Experience

#### **Tues Nov 6 – Sound and Space**

Blessner, Barry, and Linda-Ruth Salter. “Auditory Spatial Awareness,” ch. 2 in *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 11-66.

Recommended:

Than, Kher. “Ancient Maya Temples Were Giant Loudspeakers?” National Geographic, December 16, 2010. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2010/12/101216-maya-acoustics-speakers-audio-sound-archaeology-science/>

In class:

Review mobile listening assignment

Introduce multichannel sound installations and Group Project #2

**Thurs Nov 8 – Introduction to Sound Art and Data Sonification**

Licht, Alan. "Sound Art: Origins, Development and Ambiguities," *Organised Sound* 14, no. 1 (2009): 3-10.

Additional short readings and URLs TBA

In class:

Sound art examples

Introduce Group Project #2 – Sound Installation Art – Work Session

**Tues Nov 13 – Group Project #2 – Work Session**

**Thurs Nov 15 – Group Project #2 \*\* Presentations due in class \*\***

**Fri Nov 16 – \*\* Final project proposal due via email by 5pm \*\***

**Tues Nov 20 – Individual meetings to discuss final project proposals**

**Thurs Nov 22 – NO CLASS – Thanksgiving holiday**

**Tues Nov 27 – Sound, Bodies, and Power**

Henriques, Julian. "Sonic Dominance and the Reggae Sound System," in *The Auditory Culture Reader*, edited by Michael Bull and Les Back (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003), 451-80.

Cusick, Suzanne G. "'You are in a place that is out of the world...': Music in the Detention Camps of the 'Global War on Terror,'" *Journal of the Society for American Music* 2, no. 1 (Feb. 2008): 1-26.

**\*\* Reading Response #4 due \*\***

**Thurs Nov 29 – TBA – Final Project Individual Meetings / Work Session**

**Tues/Thurs Dec 4/6 – TBA – Work Sessions ? Presentations ?**

**Tues Dec 11 – LAST DAY OF CLASSES – Presentations**

**\*\* Final projects due by 9PM Tues Dec 11 \*\***