**ENGLISH 372.01 WINTER 2021**

**CLOSE LISTENING ASSIGNMENT**

Value: 20% of your final grade Due: Varies (see course schedule)

This assignment will ask you to work with an audio recording of a poem or story in order to: demonstrate an ability to segment a digital audio recording in order to cite it to support a claim; engage with different prosodic elements of a sound performance which might be ignored in a written text; and compare an oral performance of a text with its written variant. It will also ask you, in many cases, to consider the context of a literary reading, that is, a public performance, as impacting the meaning and reception of a poem or story.

Each student will sign up to work on one of the following poets, recordings of which are available at the SpokenWeb archive of the Sir George Williams reading series (<https://montreal.spokenweb.ca/sgw-poetry-readings/>), PennSound (<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/>), or on YouTube: Dorothy Livesay, F.R. Scott, Margaret Atwood, Phyllis Webb, bpNichol, Christian Bök, Alistair MacLeod, Wayde Compton, or Marilyn Dumont. The print versions of some of the poems available online as sound recordings are also available online, but not all. Where print versions are not readily available online, students will take the necessary step of acquiring a print version of that poem, through a request with our library; TDFL staff have been informed of the assignment and can create and email you a pdf of the poem you have selected to work with. Students may also consult with Dr. Wiens about locating print versions of these poems. In the case of bpNichol or Christian Bök, some students may choose to work with a “sound poem” for which a written version may not exist. This is a valid option, but students who choose it should consult with Dr. Wiens about how to proceed (you will probably need to do some further research on sound poetry). Students who sign up to work with poems other than the ones listed on the signup sheet need to indicate on the signup sheet which poem they intend to work with (once they have determined which poem that is), and should work to make it available to the rest of the class, through posting to D2L a print version of the poem they are working with as well as the sound file. All students should also post the audio recording of the reading of the text to the appropriate discussion board in D2L, so that the rest of the class can listen to the recording.

Once you have selected your text, the next step will be to produce a file that you can edit through Audacity. In the case of PennSound files, which are downloadable, this is straightforward. In the case of YouTube, or of the SpokenWeb Sir George Williams recordings, which archives entire readings and makes them available for streaming, you will need to take the extra step of creating a “single” of your selected text, either by recording it directly through your laptop, or through your phone. *Please note: you are asked to do this only in the context of this assignment, and the created file should not be shared publicly outside of D2L.*

Each student will write a 4-5 page close listening essay on their selected poem or story, which discusses the performance of the text in terms of tone, pitch, volume, enunciation, or any other elements of the performance you find significant. For this part of the assignment, Marit Macarthur et al’s essay on “Beyond Poet Voice,” and the general categories of performance styles it elaborates, may be of use here: <http://culturalanalytics.org/2018/04/beyond-poet-voice-sampling-the-non-performance-styles-of-100-american-poets/>. Students may also wish to use digital tools (or simple arithmetic) to quantify elements of the performance (e.g. determining words per minute in a recording as a measure of speech velocity). Your essay should also compare the oral version of the text to the written, noting any significant differences between them and their implications. All of this should be done in the context of a coherent argument about the text; it may be surprising how often these texts can be read as being “about” speaking and writing. The essay must conform to MLA style, and should involve citation from both the written and audio versions of the text – hence the need, for the latter, to segment the audio. These essays, with accompanying audio files, must be submitted in Dropbox on D2L. **As they will be graded digitally through track changes, the essays must be submitted in Word format rather than pdf.**

Students do not need to consult secondary sources on this assignment; however, any secondary sources consulted or referenced must be properly cited according to MLA format.