**ENGL 447/2 AA - Advanced Studies in Literary Theory: Literary Sound Studies**

Prof. Jason Camlot

Telephone: 514-848-2424 x4272 / x2353

Class Time: Tuesday 18:00-20:15

Office Hours: Tuesday 15:00-16:00 and by appointment held in LB 685-5.

Class Room: LB 646

Email: [jason.camlot@concordia.ca](mailto:jason.camlot@concordia.ca)

In this seminar we will study critical attempts to define the differences between oral culture and print culture and theories concerned with the cultural and aesthetic implications of sound and sound media. A key element of our work will be the development of a critical and theoretical vocabulary for analyzing the audible acoustic elements of a performed works of literature within its larger technological, aesthetic, cultural, historical, sociological and institutional contexts. The primary challenge of our endeavor will be the development of useful and compelling ways to approach literary recordings critically. In *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word* (1998), Charles Bernstein proposes the term "audiotext" for the cultural artifact in question. His term emphasizes the interplay between the written and the oral that will inform our efforts in this seminar, and he highlights the critical activity of careful, interpretive listening, applied with the same close attention and analysis we (literary scholars) use to engage with written works. While his application of the New Critical idea of close reading to the domain of literary audio is evocative, it remains to be seen just how we, as critics, can develop it into a compelling critical methodology. Part of our work together will entail devising methodological approaches for engaging with and interpreting audio productions of literary works ranging from the earliest recordings made in England of by actors and eloctionists, to the Caedmon poetry recordings of the 1930-50s, to recent poetic experiments in recorded talk and sound poetry. Beyond the analysis of the audio signal of literary recordings we will immerse ourselves in the theories and approaches that have come to define the new critical field of sound studies, and consider how this diverse range of theories can inform our understanding of the relationship between literature, sound and voice. And, beyond even analyzing spoken performances of literature and reading critical theory, we will also study a small selection of literary works that themselves thematize the voice, sound and audio media (i.e. those of Du Maurier, Shaw, Beckett, etc.), thus giving written literature its own "voice" upon the subject of our seminar.

*Required Texts:*

Jonathan Sterne, ed. *The Sound Studies Reader* (2012) **SS**

*Literary Sound Studies Moodle Course Reader* **M**

*Course Reserve* (usually as pdf) **CR**

George Du Maurier, *Trilby* (Broadview)

George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion* (Dover)

T.S. Eliot, *The Wasteland and Other Poems* (Norton Critical)

Samuel Beckett, *Krapp’s Last Tape and Other Dramatic Pieces* (Grove)

david antin, *Talking* (Kulchur 1972 / Dalkey Archive, 2001)

<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Antin.php>

*Sound Recordings: Audio files and links to recordings are available via our Moodle site.*

*Recommended Texts (For Sale in Concordia Bookstore)*

Charles Bernstein, Ed., *Close Listening* (Oxford UP, 1998)

<http://dss-edit.com/prof-anon/sound/library/Bernstein\_Close-Listening.pdf>

*Requirements:*

* Seminar-Piloting **20%**
* Critical Listening Notebook (DUE In Class, WEEK 10) **30%**
* Final Seminar Project (DUE by 4pm, Friday, December 11th) **30%**
* This is a seminar, which means we will be thinking out-loud together. In order for a seminar to work you must complete all of the readings and be prepared to talk about them. For this reason, your participation is also calculated into the final grade. Participation**10%.**
* Cylinder Talks: On TUESDAY December 1st we will have a roundtable of short talks—that is, wax cylinder length talks about your final project. You will each have exactly 3 MINUTES (the length of an Edison wax cylinder) to present the main idea you are interested in exploring in your final project, and to provide one example of how you will go about exploring or illustrating that idea. I’ll explain more about what this will entail as the date approaches. Your Cylinder Talk will count for **10%** of your grade.

**What the above list of requirements means:**

*Seminar Piloting:* For each class one or two students will be designated “seminar pilots” and will be required to lead discussion in one reading/recording of the day (primary, secondary, as you decide) with the goal of directing the rest of the class in discussion and exploration of aspects of the texts according to a line of thinking, argument, or exegesis-in-progress developed by the leader(s), for a period of approximately 20 minutes. These are not formal papers and are not to be read, although you may work from notes. The leader will be required to distribute to the class a handout (maximum one page single spaced) of the key points and issues that will be touched upon. This handout may also include quotations from the readings as a means of focusing our work together. You are required to include on this handout at least one formally posed question and one formulated thesis to test out on the class. In your piloting, you will call our attention to these questions/theses, elaborate a bit upon how you arrived at them, and then work to solicit responses from your peers. The attention of the seminar pilot should be on the readings and listenings we have done for class, and your seminar piloting should not be dependent upon other sources (although your might use outside sources as a means of framing a question or thesis). Think of this as an exercise in pedagogy as well as an exercise in criticism. Think about what will work to invite participation or discussion in a seminar context. Be organized, creative, thoughtful and attuned to the collaborative goals of the seminar.

*Critical Listening Notebook:* The Notebook (either handwritten or computer-typed) should involve several things: 1) basic responses to the weekly readings, noting aspects of the readings that seem particularly useful or perplexing to you, and evidence of your attempt to engage with the ideas forwarded in them; 2) basic responses to the recorded materials, in terms of describing, in the most basic of ways, what you hear, and what questions the recordings raise for you; 3) consideration of the recordings in relation to the readings, again, in terms of the kinds of questions you think are interesting to ask (so, a combo of 1 & 2); 4) early (or developed) formulations of how you might go about answering some of those questions (lists of possible theses, hypotheses, outlines of possible papers you could write, etc.); 5) lists of keywords from the readings that you don’t understand, and evidence of your attempts to come to understand them; 6) self-conscious work on developing a useful critical vocabulary and/or methodology for talking critically and interestingly about literary sound. For this last aspect of your journal you may find readings by Don Ihde, Michel Chion, Kate Crawford, James Lastra, and Mladen Dolar (to name a few from the SS reader), as well as the chapters on “Notation” and “Classification” in R. Murray Schafer’s *The Soundscape* (available on Course Reserve)—to help you begin to think about different kinds of vocabulary and notation for recording the audible. You can bring the recordings or readings to bear on any number of literary or critical works you have already encountered (in your previous studies), or simply work with the materials for this course as a contained unit. You can expand the range of materials you listen to as much as you like. The questions and answers you pursue in your journal should, however, ultimately lead to the development of a more specific, research paper. So think of it as an opportunity to experiment on the page with the ultimate goal of determining the questions you're most interested in asking, questions you will attempt to answer, through more extensive research and thought, in your final seminar project. In short, the notebook is open to whatever questions seem most important to you. Try to be as focused as possible in your lines of inquiry. A long list of the kinds of questions you may be asking yourself in these journals—based upon ideas generated in our first class together—will be distributed in WEEK 2.

*Participation:* Attendance counts as part of the participation grade, as you cannot participate if you are not present. Come to class prepared by having done the required reading and listening, and with notes (perhaps already recorded in your notebook) that can inform our work together. In addition to fulfilling this seminar requirement, there will be a few small 1-page writing assignments during the course of the term that will contribute to your participation grade.

*Final Project, Option 1—Seminar Paper:* This will, normally, emerge out of materials you began to explore in your journal, or oral presentation. Your final seminar paper should develop a theory or reading of a cultural artifact (a work of literature, a material object, an event, etc.) so that a persuasive thesis and illustration of that thesis is effectively presented in a written work of 10-12 pages.

*Final Project, Option 2—Essay on The Poetry Series*: Close Listening and contextual analysis of a reading from the Sir George Williams Poetry Series: 1966-1972. For this final project option you will be required to explore the SpokenWeb digital archive of spoken recordings that document (audibly) a reading series that was held at Sir George Williams University (now Concordia) between 1966-74. You will have a look at the series as a whole, but ultimately will choose a way to focus your research on a single reading, or small cluster of readings, in relation to historically contextualizing research about any of the following: the import of a particular reader/poet (say, Robert Creeley, Irving Layton or George Bowering) in relation to the poetry reading as cultural event in the 1960s and 70s, performance and poetics, digital interfaces for documentary literary recordings, the Quiet Revolution (and parallel Québécois poetry readings taking place around this time, i.e. Michèle Lalonde’s “Speak White” < <http://youtu.be/B-VrPNpyy2g> >), nationalist arguments for Can Lit, the Canadianization Movement, the poetry reading and particular ‘scenes’ of poetry Montreal, New Wave Canada, TISH, Beat, Black Mountain, San Francisco Renaissance, etc.; American vs. Canadian poetics, etc., etc. You may access the archive using this url: <<http://spokenweb.concordia.ca/>>. Of possible use to you: A special issue on The Reading Series can be found at

< [www.amodern.net](http://www.amodern.net) >.

Whether you selection Option 1 or 2 for your Final Project, you will have to come talk to me about your proposed project some time during the term, but no later than the week of **November 30th**. It is up to you to come talk to me about your essay ideas, and to hand in a 1-page précis or outline of your idea. Sign up sheets will be available on my office door. The final paper is **DUE at 4PM, Friday, December 11th** . I will not be inclined to grant “In Progress” grades, so be sure to get your work in on time.

*Other relevant points of information*:

*Language*: Writing assignments may be completed in English or French.

*Plagiarism*: This is defined in Concordia’s *Academic Code of Conduct* as “the presentation of the work of another as one’s own or without proper acknowledgement.” Familiarize yourself with the Code and an extended definition of plagiarism at the Student hub page concerned with Academic Integrity:

< https://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity.html>

There is also a useful Student Services document entitled “Avoiding Plagiarism” at:

< https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/concordia/offices/cdev/docs/writing/help-academic-writing/AvoidingPlagiarism.pdf>

*Term Dates and Deadlines*: For information on academic deadlines (registration, DNE, DISC, etc.) consult the Term Dates and Dedlines (2015-16) page on the Student hub:

<http://www.concordia.ca/students/registration/term-dates-deadlines.html>

***WEEKLY SCHEDULE***

WEEK 1 (SEPT 8): *Introductions (including tour de table); Review of Syllabus and Requirements; “What is Literary Theory?”; First Reading and Listening Exercises*; *Close Listening Notebook Brainstorming Session.*

*Recordings*: **Basil Rathbone,** reading “The Bells” by Edgar Allen Poe; **Allen Ginsberg,** “A Mad Gleam”; **Michael McClure,** “Ghost Tantra 71”; **William S. Burroughs,** “The Last Words of Hassan Sabbah”; **C.D. Wright,** excerpt from Master Class at Concordia 2013.

NOTE: Lachine Canal Audiowalk, September 10, 12-1:30pm:

<http://www.concordia.ca/events/cuevents/artsci/history/2015/09/lachine-canal-audio-walk.html>

Point St. Charles Audiowalk, September 11, 12-1:30pm:

<http://www.concordia.ca/events/cuevents/artsci/history/2015/09/pointe-saint-charles-audio-walk1.html>

WEEK 2 (SEPT 15): *Theories and Methodologies: Sound, Print, and Other Media*

*Readings:* **Don Ihde,** “The Auditory Dimension” (SS); **R. Murray Schafer,** “The Soundscape” (SS); **Charles Bernstein,** "Introduction", from *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word* (CR/M)

**Murray Schafer,** “Notation”, “Classification”, from *The Soundscape* (CR/M); **Michel Chion**, “The Three Listening Modes” (SS); **Craig Dworkin,** *A Handbook of Protocols for Literary Listening* (M)

*Recordings:* TBA. ALSO: *You will sign up for Seminar Piloting this week.*

WEEK 3 (SEPT 22): *Early Recordings: The Voice of the Phonograph, circa 1900.*

*Recordings:* **Horatio Nelson Powers,** “The Phonograph’s Salutation”; “The Charge of the Light Brigade” as read by **Alfred Tennyson, Lewis Waller, Canon Fleming, Henry Ainley and Rose Coughlin**; **Len Spencer,** “I Am The Edison Phonograph”; **Russell Hunting,** “Casey at the Telephone”; **Joe Hayman**, “Cohen on the Telephone”.

*Readings:* **Thomas Edison,** "The Phonograph and its Future" (1878) (M); **Lisa Gitelman,** “The Phonograph’s New Media Publics” (SS); **Friedrich Kittler,** “Gramphone” (SS)

(NOTE: SEPT 25 6-8:30pm. Homecoming Dramatic Readings of Mordecai Richler: <http://www.concordia.ca/cuevents/offices/vpdersg/aar/2015/09/25/resolute-forest-products-presents-homecoming-keynote-lecture.html>)

WEEK 4 (SEPT 29):  *Phonographic Reading and Sound Adaptations*

*Recordings:* **Herbert Beerbohm Tree**, “Svengali”; **Len Spencer**, “Jeckyll & Hyde”; **Bransby Williams**, “Dream Scene from *The Bells*” (Take 1)

*Readings:*  **George Du Maurier,** *Trilby*; **John Durham Peters,** “The Telephonic Uncanny and the Problem of Communication” (SS); **Roland Barthes,** “The Grain of the Voice” (SS)

NOTE: October 1, Irish poet Paula Meehan reads at Concordia:

<http://www.concordia.ca/artsci/artsci/english/cuevents/artsci/canadian-irish-studies/2015/10/01/irish-poet-paulameehanreadsatconcordia.html>)

WEEK 5 (OCT 6): *Phonographic Drama*

*Recordings:* **George Bernard Shaw,** Spoken and Broken English (London Linguaphone Institute 1927).

*Readings:* **George Bernard Shaw,** *Pygmalion*; **Mladen Dolar,** “The Linguistics of the Voice” (SS)

WEEK 6 (OCT 13): *Recorded Modernism and the New Criticism*

*Recordings:* **T.S. Eliot,** *The Waste Land* (Library of Congress 1946); “A Game of Chess” (alternate unreleased take, 1935); “The Three Voices of Poetry” (National Book League Annual Lecture, 1956); **Robert Spaeight,** “A Game of Chess” (Spoken Arts, 1956).

*Readings:* **T.S. Eliot,** *The Waste Land*, the poem, plus readings by I. A. Richards, F.R. Leavis, and Cleanth Brooks in the “Criticism” section of the Norton Critical Edition; **Adriana Cavarero,** “Multiple Voices” (SS).

WEEK 7 (OCT 20): *Caedmon. Hi-Fi Midcult.*

*Close Listening of a Single Poem* [For this class, everyone should prepare notes towards a ‘close listening’ of one recordings listed below to share in class, and to hand in to me, max. 1 page.]

*Recordings:* **William Butler Yeats,** "The Lake Isle of Innisfree"; **Ezra Pound,** "Moeurs Contemporaines"; **Gertrude Stein,** "If I Told Him (A Completed Portrait of Picasso)"; **Dylan Thomas,** "Fern Hill"; “Do Not Go Gentle to That Good Night”; **Robert Frost,** “The Road Not Taken”; **Robert Lowell,** “Skunkhour”; **Robert Penn Warren,** “Sirocco”; “**e.e. Cummings,** “If everything that happens can’t be done”; **Joseph Brodsky,** “Nature Morte”; **Sylvia Plath,** “The Thin People”.

*Readings:* *Find your own* print versions of poems above and bring them to class, where possible, plus, **Jacob Smith,** “Hi Fi Mid-Cult” from *Spoken Word* (CR/M);

WEEK 8 (OCT 26): *Def Poetry*

*Viewing: The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, “Def Poet’s Society”, Season 1, Ep. 7, 23 mins.

*Recordings:* **Tennyson, Waller, Fleming, Ainley,** “The Charge of the Light Brigade”; **Sylvia Plath,** “Daddy”, **Amiri Baraka,** “Three Modes of History and Culture”, from a reading at the Asilomar Negro Writers Conference, Pacific Grove, CA, 1964, Track 14 (at Pennsound); “Black Art”; "Kongo Bells"; **Vachel Lindsay,** “The Congo – complete reading”, item #10; **Jack Kerouac,** “American Haikus”; **Ice Cube,** “AmerikKKA’s Most Wanted”; “Turn Off the Radio”’; **Will Smith and DJ Jazzy Jeff**, “Parents Just Don’t Understand”

*Readings:* **Sylvia Plath,** “Daddy” (M); **Amiri Baraka,** “Three Modes of History and Culture”; “Black Art” (M); **Vachel Lindsay,** “The Congo” (M); **Brandon LaBelle**, “Auditory Relations” (SS)

WEEK 9 (NOV 3): *The Reading Series: SpokenWeb*

*Recordings*: Listen to the following recordings from the Sir George Williams Poetry Series available at < <http://spokenweb.org>> under the SGW Reading Series link (M): **Robert Creeley** (1967); **Irving Layton** (1967); **Robert Creeley** (1970); **Allen Ginsberg** (1969); **Jackson Mac Low** (1971); **Margaret Atwood** (1974)

*Readings:* From the special issue of *Amodern* 4 < <http://amodern.net>> read: **Jason Camlot and Christine Mitchell,** “The Poetry Series” (M); **Jason Camlot and Darren Wershler,** “Theses on Discerning The Poetry Series” and familiarize yourself with the rest of the issue (M); **Kate Crawford,** “Following You: Disciplines of Listening in Social Media” (SS); **Charles Bernstein,** “The PennSound Manifesto” (M)

***CRITICAL LISTENING JOURNALS DUE, Tues November 10th, In Class.***

WEEK 10 (NOV 10): *Talking Book:* *Audio Fiction*

*Recordings:* **William Sterling Battis,** “Micawber” from Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield*; **Librivox Contributor** readings of Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (Versions 1-8, plus “Condensed by the Author” version)

*Readings*: Sven **Birkerts,** "Close Listening [The Metaphysics of Reading an Audio Book] (M); **Matthew Rubery,** “Canned Literature: The Book After Edison” (CR/M).

WEEK 11 (NOV 17): *Memorex*

*Readings:*  **Samuel Beckett,** *Krapp's Last Tape*

**John Mowitt,** “The Sound of Music in the Era of Its Electronic Reproducibility” (SS)

**James Lastra,** “Fidelity Versus Intelligibility” (SS)

WEEK 12 (NOV 24): *Sound/Poetry*

*Literary Event Analysis* [For this class, you will each prepare notes towards an analysis of one live literary event you have attended during the semester to share in class, and to hand in to me, max. 1 page.]

*Recordings:* **Jaap Blonk,** “Rhotic” for voice (Reading at Kelley Writer’s House, University of Pennsylvania, November 11, 2004); Excerpt from demonstration of notations and sounds at Concordia (2013); **Christian Bok,** EUNOIA, Chapter e (June 22, 2002).

*Readings*: **Jaap Blonk,** “Rhotic” (Phonetic Etude #1, 1991, about the r);

**Christian Bok,** Digital setting of EUNOIA, Chapter e (for rené crevel)

*Readings*: **Douglas Kahn**, “Noises of the Avant-Garde” (SS)

WEEK 13 (DEC 1): *Talk Poetry*

Recordings*:* **David Antin**, "The Principle of Fit II" (M via PennSound).

*Readings:* **david antin,** *Talking*, especially “Talking at Pomona” plus the Introduction by Marjorie Perloff and afterward by antin; **Shuhei Hosokawa,** “The Walkman Effect” (SS)

WEEK 14 (DEC 8): *Cylinder* *Talks on final projects*.

In this class each seminar participant will present a 3-minute (wax cylinder length) talk about their final project.

**FINAL PROJECTS DUE in my LB 646 mailbox by 4PM, Friday, December 11th**