**ENGL 622A - 801A /4 – Literature and Sound Studies**

Prof. Jason Camlot

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Class Time: Monday 14:45-17:00 (2:45pm-5pm)

Office Hours: Wednesday 15:00-17:00 and by appointment, held in LB 685-5

Class Room: LB 649

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In this seminar we will engage with a wide range of theoretical and interpretive work from the interdisciplinary field of sound studies and mobilize the concepts, vocabulary, information and methods from that work towards the development of critical accounts about literature, literary performance, and “the literary” as an interpretive field. We will read, think out loud, discuss, and listen, to sonic artifacts that we’ll interpret alone and together. And we will listen to each other. A key element of our work will be the development of critical and theoretical vocabularies for analyzing sound-oriented literary texts, and the audible acoustic elements of performed works of literature within their larger technological, aesthetic, cultural, historical, sociological and institutional contexts. A primary challenge of our endeavor will be the development of useful and compelling ways to approach sonic materials, and (primarily non-musical) sound recordings critically. In *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word* (1998), Charles Bernstein proposes the term "audiotext" for the cultural artifact that is the audible signal of a recorded literary performance. His term emphasizes the interplay between written and the audible texts that will inform some of our efforts in this seminar (i.e. Dickens, antin), and he highlights the critical activity of careful, interpretive listening, applied with the same close attention and analysis we (literary scholars) often 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 useful it is for engaging critically with literary sound recordings and where this idea stands in relation to other possibly compelling critical methodologies of engaging with literary sound. Part of our work together will entail devising methodological approaches for engaging with and interpreting audio productions of literary works ranging from acoustic-era recordings, 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, listening, sound and voice. And, beyond even analyzing spoken performances of literature and reading critical theory, we will also study a selection of literary works that themselves thematize the voice, sound and audio media (i.e. Shaw, Beckett, Avasilichioaei), thus giving written literature its own "voice" upon the subject of our seminar.

*Required Texts:*

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

Novak, David and Matt Sakakeeny, ed., *keywords in sound* (Duke 2015) **KS**

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

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

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (Dover)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/46/46-h/46-h.htm>

George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion* ([1958] Dover)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3825/3825-h/3825-h.htm>

Samuel Beckett, *Krapp’s Last Tape and Other Dramatic Pieces* ([1958] Grove)

David Antin, *talking* (Kulchur Foundation 1972/ Dalkey Archive 2001)

Jordan Abel, *The Place of Scraps* (Talon 2013)

Oana Avasilichioaei, *Eight Track* (Talon 2019)

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

The one recording you will need to purchase online is the Folkways record album by Marius C. Barbeau, *My Life in Recording: Canadian-Indian Folk-Lore* (Folkways Records, 1957). The album can be downloaded for $9.99. The link is provided via moodle.

*Recommended Texts (For Sale in Concordia Bookstore)*

*Sound Objects*, ed. James Steintrager, Rey Chow (Duke 2019)

*Digital Sound Studies*, ed. Mary Caton Lingold, Darren Mueller and Whitney Trettien (Duke 2018)

*Requirements:*

* Seminar-Piloting **10%**
* Critical Listening Journal (**DUE In Class, Monday March 9th**): **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%.**
* Short-form Podcast (**DUE** **Friday, April 3rd**): **20%**
* Final Paper (**DUE Monday, April 13th**): **30%**

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

*Seminar Piloting:* For most classes one or two students will be designated “seminar pilots” and will 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 pilot(s), for a period of approximately 20 minutes. These are not formal papers and are not to be read, although you may refer to notes. The pilot 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 you 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. Forgive me if I’ve given too many details—they’ve meant to be helpful, not prescriptive.

*Critical Listening Journal:* The Journal (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 Michel Chion, Kate Crawford, Mladen Dolar, Don Ihde, and James Lastra (to name a few from the SS reader), the chapters on “Notation” and “Classification” in R. Murray Schafer’s *The Soundscape* (available on Course Reserve), and chapters from *Keywords in Sound*—to help you begin to think about different kinds of vocabulary and notation for describing and discussing 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 reading, listening and 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. Some of the questions and answers you pursue in your journal should, however, ultimately lead to the development of a more specific research topic for your final paper, and serve as a venue for planning and scripting your short form podcast. 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 paper and in your podcast. 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 via moodle at the end of WEEK 1.

*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 Journal) that can inform our work together. We’ll listen and respond to each other generously and respectfully.

*Final Paper:* This will, normally, emerge out of materials you began to explore in your Journal, or seminar piloting. 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 8-10 pages. Eight pages double spaced is the typical length of a 20-minute conference paper. You should write your paper with the idea of presenting it to a scholarly audience at a conference.

You are expected to come talk to me about your proposed project some time during the term, but no later than the week of **April 6th**. It is up to you to come talk to me about your paper ideas, and to hand in a 1-page précis or outline of your idea prior to our meeting. Sign-up sheets for paper-discussion meetings will be made available on my office door. The final paper is **DUE Monday, April 13th**.

*Shortform Podcast*: In addition to writing a final paper, you will be required to engage in scripting and producing a short and simple podcast of 4-6 MINUTES in length. The podcast may adapt to this sonic form of digital publishing an idea from your final paper, or it may go in a different direction, entirely. We will discuss the podcast at length in class, including some of the basic tools (recorder and software) you will need to produce this assignment. Your shortform podcast must be completed and submitted to me using wetransfer < <https://wetransfer.com/>> or on USB key **by Friday, April 3rd**. We will hold a listening session and discussion of all podcasts during our final clas on Monday, April 6th.

*Other relevant points of information*:

*Language*: Writing and podcast 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 GradProSkills Workshop called “Avoiding Plagiarism at the Graduate Level” available to all graduate students:

<<https://www.concordia.ca/students/gradproskills/workshops/details.html?subject_area=GPLL&catalog_number=32>>

*Term Dates and Deadlines*: For information on academic deadlines (registration, DNE, DISC, etc.) consult the Term Dates and Deadlines (2019-20) page on the Student hub:

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

***WEEKLY SCHEDULE***

WEEK 1 (JAN 6): *Introductions (including tour de table); Review of Syllabus and Requirements; First Reading and Listening Exercises*; *Close Listening Journal Brainstorming Session; Plan and Schedule Individual Meetings for WEEK 2.*

WEEK 2 (JAN 13): *Individual meetings in lieu of class meeting.*

Due to an unavoidable obligation that I can’t change there will be no class this week.

HOWEVER: On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday I will hold office hours and meet with each of you for 30 minutes. This will be an opportunity 1. to discuss your broader research interests, 2. To answer any questions you may have about the course and WEEK 2 readings, and 3. for you to select three possible dates for your Seminar Piloting.

*Readings*: **Charles Bernstein,** “Introduction” to *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*; **R. Murray Schafer**, “Notation” and “Classification”from *The Soundscape*; **Craig Dworkin**, “A Handbook of Protocols for Literary Listening”.

WEEK 3 (JAN 20): *Sound and Listening: Opening Theories and Definitions*

*Readings:* **Jonathan Sterne**, “Sonic Imaginations” (SS); **Don Ihde,** “The Auditory Dimension” (SS); **R. Murray Schafer,** “The Soundscape” (SS); **Michel Chion**, “The Three Listening Modes” (SS); **Jonathan Sterne**, “Hearing” (KS); **Mara Mills**, “Deafness” (KS); **Tom Rice**, “Listening” (KS).

WEEK 4 (JAN 27):  *Early Phonographic Adaptations*

*Recordings:* **Herbert Beerbohm Tree**, “Svengali”; **Len Spencer**, “Jeckyll & Hyde”; **Bransby Williams**, “Dream Scene from *The Bells*” (Take 1); **William Sterling Battis,** “Micawber” from Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield*; **Bransby Williams**, “A Christmas Carol in Prose”; **Bransby Williams**, “The Awakening of Scrooge”; **Bransby Williams**, A Christmas Carol—Scrooge—After the Dream”; **Bransby Williams**, “A Christmas Carol—Bob Crachit Telling of Scrooge”; **Jason Camlot** (Creator and Co-Producer), **Cheryl Gladu** (Producer), “Sound Recordings Are Weird” (SpokenWeb Podcast #2).

*Readings:* **Charles Dickens**, *A Christmas Carol*; **Lisa Gitelman,** “The Phonograph’s New Media Publics” (SS); **Friedrich Kittler,** “Gramphone” (SS); **Patrick Feaster,** “Phonography” (KS).

WEEK 5 (FEB 3): *Podcast as Form -*

This week, in addition to discussing readings about the podcast as a form of digital publication, we will discuss the shortform podcasting assignment, and go over some digital tools and resources you will require to complete the assignment. Have a look at the SpokenWeb podcasting resource page: <https://spokenweb.ca/podcast/resources/>.

And, if you have a laptop, please download the audio software Audacity prior to the class and bring your laptop so we can look at Audacity together: <https://www.audacityteam.org/>.

*Recordings*: Come prepared to discuss and share sounds from your favorite podcasts (if you have any). And listen to an episode or two from the SpokenWeb podcast series (you’ve already listened to one last week) < <https://the-spokenweb-podcast.simplecast.com/>> and Song Exploder < <http://songexploder.net/episodes>>

*Readings:* From **Dario Llinares, Neil Fox, and Richard Berry, eds.**, *Podcasting: New Aural Cultures and Digital Media*: **Llinares, Fox, and Berry** “Introduction: Podcasting and Podcasts—Parameters of a New Aural Culture” (pp. 1-7); **Dario Llinares**, “Podcasting as Liminal Practice: Aural Mediation, Sound Writing and Identity” (pp. 123-141) (CR); **Brandon LaBelle**, “Auditory Relations” (SS).

WEEK 6 (FEB 10): *Caedmon. Hi-Fi Midcult.*

*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,** “Daddy, “The Thin People”.

*Readings:* *Find your own* print versions of poems above and bring them to class, where possible; **Jacques Derrida**, “The Voice that Keeps Silence” (SS); **Jacob Smith,** “Hi-Fi Midcult” (CR)

WEEK 7 (FEB 17): *The Poetry Series*

*Recordings*: Listen to the following recordings from the Sir George Williams Poetry Series available at <<https://montreal.spokenweb.ca/sgw-poetry-readings/>> 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)

WEEK 8 (FEB 24): Reading Week. No Class Meeting. A good time to journal and do some work for the shortform podcast.

WEEK 9 (MARCH 2): *Voice and Speech*

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

*Readings:* **George Bernard Shaw,** *Pygmalion*; **Roland Barthes,** “The Grain of the Voice” (SS); **Mladen Dolar,** “The Linguistics of the Voice” (SS); **Amanda Weidman,** “Voice” (KS)

WEEK 10 (MARCH 9): *Memorex* ***(Critial Listening Journal DUE)***

*Readings:*  **Samuel Beckett,** *Krapp's Last Tape*; **John Durham Peters,** “The Telephonic Uncanny and the Problem of Communication” (SS); **John Mowitt,** “The Sound of Music in the Era of Its Electronic Reproducibility” (SS); **James Lastra,** “Fidelity Versus Intelligibility” (SS); **Stefan Helmreich,** “Transduction” (KS).

WEEK 11 (MARCH 16): *Talk Poetry*

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

*Readings:* **david antin,** “talking at the boundaries” (M); **Shuhei Hosokawa,** “The Walkman Effect” (SS).

WEEK 12 (MARCH 23): *Performing Poetry and Technology*

*Recordings*: **Oana Avasilichioaei**,TBA,documentary recordings from performances of sections from *Eight Track*.

*Readings*: **Oana Avasilichioaei**, *Eight Track*; **Douglas Kahn**, “Noises of the Avant-Garde” (SS).

*Collective Reading/Interview/Discussion:* Oana Avasilichioaei will visit our class, and she will lead us in readings from *Eight Track*, and we will hold a collective interview and discussion about the book with her.

WEEK 13 (MARCH 30): *Hungry Listening*

*Recordings:* **Jordan Abel,** The Place of Scraps Audio Treatment, 2014; **Jordan Abel**, launch of *The Place of Scraps* at the Western Front, 10 October 2013; **Jordan Abel,** performs “The Poet is Artificially Replaced” in Vancouver 2012; **Jordan Abel,** performs “The pole transported to Toronto” in Vancouver 2012; **Marius C. Barbeau,** *My Life in Recording: Canadian-Indian Folk-Lore***.**

*Readings*: **Jordan Abel,** *The Place of Scraps;* **Tara Rodgers,** “Synthesis” (KS); **Dylan Robinson,** “Introduction” and “Hungry Listening” from *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (hard copies to be handed out prior to the February 24th reading week); **Marius Barbeau,** liner notes to *My Life in Recording: Canadian-Indian Folk-Lore* (M)

WEEK 14 (APRIL 6): *Podcast Listening Session*

Please *wetranfer* <<https://wetransfer.com/>> or deliver by USB key your podcast to me by **Friday, April 3rd**. We will listen to the podcasts that you’ve all produced, talk about them, and have snacks while we do so.

**FINAL PAPERS DUE in my LB 646 mailbox by 5PM, Monday, April 13th**