**ENGL 604B/2 - (Literary) Listening as Cultural Technique**

Prof. Jason Camlot

Telephone: 514-848-2424 x2353

Class Time: Monday 15:30-17:45 (3:30-5:45pm)

Office Hours: Wednesday 13:00-15:00 and by appointment, held on Zoom

Class Room: Zoom and Moodle

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This seminar will be about listening in different disciplinary and cultural contexts, and especially in the context of literary studies. We assume a lot about listening. In Althussarian terms we might say that we are persistently interpellated, or hailed into listening subject positions, and the cultural or disciplinary assumptions that those listening positions entail. We listen from positions of cultural protocol and assumption and in doing so practice listening as “cultural techniques.” Media theorist Bernhard Siegert argues that “cultural techniques” incite “a more or less complex actor network that comprises technological objects as well as the operative chains they are part of and that configure and constitute them.” They are conceived as “operative chains that precede media”, presuppose “a notion of plural cultures”, “involve symbolic work”, work to operationalize distinctions, and they function both to sustain and institutionalize codes and sign systems, and to destabilize cultural codes, erase signs, and deterritorialize sounds and images. This is but one theory that may be applied to explain how listening practices function as cultural techniques. In our work together we will read a range of discipline-specific theories about audile techniques (listening practices), and will apply concepts from those readings to our discussion and interpretation of audiotexts (recordings of literary performances), and some printed literary works, with the ultimate aim of formulating readings, interpretations and critical definitions that help describe and explain what listening means within the context of “the literary.”

*Required and “Additional” Readings:*

Well, this semester we’ve had to go 100% digital. *Required readings* can be found via our Moodle site either on **Course Reserve (CR)**, or directly via **Moodle (M)**. Further, I have developed a bibliography of potential additional readings ([Bibliography on Listening](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sqkBT3320-JmQMDbe5XH4Tn7DQo3XO9h5WoUoOKwCm0/edit)), some of which will figure into your annotated bibliographies. You should explore the articles listed in this bibliography as we move through our required readings and discussions, thinking about titles that seem relevant to ideas we have been talking about, or that interest you as potential avenues of research and exploration. Most of the articles listed in the bibliography can be found in PDF versions via the library’s databases, either JSTOR or MLA International Bibliography. You will need to be logged into the library site to use these databases. It will be your responsibility to locate and download these “additional” articles on your own. While the Bibliography on Listening is long, it is not exhaustive. Feel free to add additional works to the biblio as you discover them. If you do add works, please be sure to inert them in alphabetical order.

**Charles Dickens**, *A Christmas Carol* is available online via project guttenberg.

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

While the requirement will be to listen to the audio book of Tanya Tagaq’s *Split Tooth*, you may also wish to purchase the paperback: **Tanya Tagaq,** *Split Tooth* (Penguin, 2019), ISBN-13 : 978-0143198055

Extremely useful books that are on course reserve in their entirety in e-book editions are:

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

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

*Sound Recordings:* Audio files and links to recordings are available via Moodle (M).

In addition to these recordings you will need to access and listen to the following audiobooks (available via Audible.ca or other vendors):

[*A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, performed by Tim Curry](https://www.audible.ca/pd/A-Christmas-Carol-A-Signature-Performance-by-Tim-Curry-Audiobook/B071VM47DN?qid=1598632000&sr=1-1&ref=a_search_c3_lProduct_1_1&pf_rd_p=65c74350-6dfb-47fa-85fd-1459a4762abd&pf_rd_r=5BRFR5DTE23EKX4KWRMK) (Audible Audiobook-Unabridged)

[*A Christmas Carol* (version 08 dramatic reading), LibriVox recording](https://librivox.org/a-christmas-carol-dramatic-reading-by-charles-dickens/) (LibriVox version, free)

[*Split Tooth, written and narrated by Tanya Tagaq*](https://www.audible.ca/pd/Split-Tooth-Audiobook/073523745X?qid=1598632968&sr=1-1&ref=a_search_c3_lProduct_1_1&pf_rd_p=65c74350-6dfb-47fa-85fd-1459a4762abd&pf_rd_r=QVMJFHRRACT19TWA31V8) (Audible Audiobook-Unabridged)

*Requirements:*

* Guided Listening Practice **20%**
* Critical Annotated Bibliography (**DUE Thursday, December 10th)**: **20%**
* Participation in Zoom and chat activities: This is a seminar, which means we will be thinking out-loud (and on the virtual page) together. In order for a seminar to work you must complete all of the readings and listenings, and be prepared to talk about them. For this reason, your participation is also calculated into the final grade. **10%.**
* Cylinder Talk (**DUE 5pm, Monday, December 7th**): **20%**
* Final Paper (**DUE Thursday, December 17th**): **30%**

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

*Guided Listening Practice:* For most classes one or two students will be designated “listening practice guides” and will lead discussion in one assigned sound recording of the day, 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 guide(s), for a period of approximately 30 (or more) minutes. These are NOT formal papers and are not to be read, although you may refer to notes. The responsibilities of the listening practice guide are, 1. To *do some background research/exploration around the sound recording in question*, and to provide the other listeners in the class with some framing context about a) what we’re listening to and b) info about the artist, work and/or scene of the sound recording’s production. In short, the guide should provide some set-up context for the sound recording. 2. *Conceptualize and articulate some “pre-listening”* questions you have about the recording that you think will be interesting to share with the rest of us, and to explore together in conversation. These questions will guide our listening in particular directions and will work to shape our listening responses that we’ll begin to express via the zoom chat function, while listening. 3. *Play the recording or some strategic selections from it.* We will all listen together and add comments to the chat while listening, as guided by your pre-listening questions. 4. *Guide discussion following our group listening,* which entails responding to questions and comments that arose in the chat, and bringing at least one concept from a reading listed on our syllabus into the conversation for us to consider in relation to the sounds that we’ve heard. Throughout the listening practice, I will be serving as moderator and will assist in keeping track of comments in the chat, playing audio (if you want) and participating in guiding the conversation.

*Critical Annotated Bibliography:* In addition to completing the required readings, I have also developed a bibliography of ‘additional readings’ available as a working google doc: [Bibliography on Listening](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sqkBT3320-JmQMDbe5XH4Tn7DQo3XO9h5WoUoOKwCm0/edit). For each week there will be one or two critical readings assigned as required reading, and the readings listed in the Bibliography on Listening are there for you to browse, look into, and potentially read more closely. You will be required to choose a minimum of eight (8) of these items (articles, chapters, or books) to read and engage with closely, so that you can produce a bibliographical annotation on each of those selected articles, to be submitted at the end of the term as your Critical Annotated Bibliography assignment. Each annotation should be approximately 250 words (one double spaced page) in length, and should accomplish the following: 1. Summarize the subject, argument and methodology used in the article you are annotating; 2. Select and cite one or two key passages that resonate with you and that you feel have given you something to respond to or say in your own words; and 3. Explain how that passage (or the article as a whole) can be used/mobilized in your own critical thinking about listening, sound, and/or a particular literary or cultural artifact. In other words, don’t *just* reiterate what the article is about, but demonstrate how you feel it us useful to you, and explain how you might write against, or build upon, the ideas you are interested in addressing from the article. NOTE: You may find that some of these bibliographical annotations may turn into paragraphs in your final paper, as you engage in writing about these secondary sources not just as things to describe, but as articles to respond to, use, and shape to your own critical will.

*Participation:* Attendance counts as part of the participation grade, as you cannot participate if you are not present to listen and engage. Come to class prepared by having done the required reading(s) and listening, and with notes (that I recommend you keep in a single file or notebook for this course) that can inform our work together. We’ll listen and respond to each other attentively, generously and respectfully.

*Cylinder Talk (spoken and recorded)*: In advance of writing your final paper, you will be required to produce a short talk with accompanying sound as a 3-4 minutes-long (maximum!) sound-recorded exploration of one of the main ideas you will explore in your paper, that is, a talk the approximate length of an Edison wax cylinder. In this Cylinder Talk you will need to: a) present a main idea/argument/concept to be explored in your paper, and b) integrate at least one sound other than that of your own voice as illustration of, or sonic support for, the idea you have chosen to explore or present in your short talk. In other words, you’ll produce a sonic exploration of an idea that you will then write about at length in your final paper. In addition to the short sound recording (in mp3 format), you will also submit a script of your Cylinder Talk, that will include the text you speak, and indications of the sounds you have integrated into the recording. The Cylinder Talk may use any number of spoken audio genres (radio, audio essay, podcast, radio play, audio collage) as inspiration for its approach, and may integrate whatever accompanying sounds seem useful to make the goal to present an idea effective in this audio format. We will discuss this assignment at some length, in class, including some of the basic tools (recorder and software) you will need to produce this assignment. Your Cylinder Talk (and talk script) must be completed and submitted to me using wetransfer <<https://wetransfer.com/>> **Monday, December 7th**. We will hold a listening session and discussion of all the Cylinder Talk recordings the following day, on Tuesday, December 8th.

*Final Paper (written)*: This may emerge out of materials you began to explore in your listening practice and annotated bibliography assignment, or it may be something that has emerged from other readings and sounds (within or without the course). 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 invited (indeed, expected) to talk to me during office hours about your proposed Cylinder Talk and final paper project some time during the term, but no later than the week of **November 30th** (WEEK 13). I will post a signup sheet for zoom meetings about these final assignments on Moodle a few weeks before. The final paper is **DUE Thursday, December 17th**.

*Other relevant points of information*:

*Language*: Assignments may be completed in English or French.

*Wellness*: Our work together is important, but the circumstances (due to COVID) under which we are pursuing this work may prove stressful at times. Wellness is a priority. If we find the demands of the course are too much under the circumstances, we’ll make adjustments accordingly. If you are having difficulty at some point during the semester and need to take care of yourself, please just check in with me and let me know.

*Respect*: It is my intent for students from all backgrounds and perspectives to feel safe and be well served in our seminar. I see the diversity in gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture that we bring to our seminar as a resource, strength and benefit. As we proceed, please feel free to let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students.

*Content*: Some content in the materials we will read and listen to may be experienced as difficult and disturbing. I have done my best to indicate such instances in the syllabus. If you need to opt out of a reading or listening for your own sense of safety and well-being, that is fine.

*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”](https://www.concordia.ca/students/gradproskills/workshops/details.html?subject_area=GPLL&catalog_number=32) available to all graduate students.

*Term Dates and Deadlines*: For information on academic deadlines (registration, DNE, DISC, etc.) consult the [Term Dates and Deadlines (2020-21) page on the Student hub](http://www.concordia.ca/students/registration/term-dates-deadlines.html).

***WEEKLY SCHEDULE***

**WEEK 1 (SEPT 7): Labour Day, No class meeting. Warm up readings and listenings are assigned for your preparatory pleasure (and some will be discussed next week).**

*Readings*: **Jonathan Sterne,** “6. Hearing” (CR); **Tom Rice,** “9. Listening” (CR); **Mara Mills**, “4. Deafness” (CR).

*Listenings*: Pauline Oliveros, “The Difference Between Hearing and Listening” (M); R. Murray Schafer, “Listen” (NFB 2009) (M).

### WEEK 2 (SEPT 14): Introductions; Review of Syllabus; Class Methods; Discussion of Preparatory Required Readings and First Listening Exercises.

*Readings*: **Jonathan Sterne,** “6. Hearing” (CR); **Tom Rice**, “9. Listening” (CR); **Mara Mills**, “4. Deafness” (CR); **Robert Browning,** “My Last Duchess” (M); **Jane Austen,** from *Pride and Prejudice* – Chapter 58 (M).

### *Listenings*: Alfred Tennyson, “The Charge of the Light Brigade” (recorded 1898) (M); Lewis Waller, reciting “The Charge of the Light Brigade” (M); Henry Ainley, reciting “The Charge of the Light Brigade” (M).

*Suggested Additional:* S.T. Coleridge and William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, With a Few Other Poems* (1898) (M); John Stuart Mill, “What is Poetry?” (1833, 1859) (M)**.**

### WEEK 3 (SEPT 21): Listening and/as Cultural Technique

*Readings*: **Jonathan Sterne,** “Audio Technique and Media”; **Bernhard Siegert,** “Cultural Techniques: Or the End of the Intellectual Postwar Era in German Media Theory”; **Mara Mills,** “Lessons in Queer Voice”.

### *Listenings*: Alvin Lucifer, “I am Sitting in a Room” (Lovely Music Ltd., 1981) (M); Jordan Scott, “Performs at the SpokenWeb Symposium, Vancouver, 20 May 2019”.

*Suggested Additional:* Grant Wythoff, ed. *Amodern 9: Techniques and Technologies* (2020) (M).

**WEEK 4 (SEPT 28): Listening Modes**

*Readings*: **Pierre Schaeffer,** “4. Acousmatics”, “6. The Four Listening Modes”, “8. The Listening Intention”; **Michel Chion**, “2. The Three Listening Modes” (CR); **Roland Barthes,** “Listening”

### *Listenings*: The Dial-A-Poem Poets, 1972 (via ubuweb) (M)

**WEEK 5 (OCT 5): Relational and Rhetorical Listening**

*Readings*: **Brandon LaBelle**, “Auditory Relations” (CR); **Krista Ratcliffe,** “Rhetorical Listening” (CR).

### *Listenings*: Jackson MacLow, “Number of Symmetries” [21:12-41:13] at SGWP Series (M); The Four Horsemen, “Two Nights” (1988) (M).

**WEEK 6 (OCT 12): Thanksgiving. No Class Meeting.**

**WEEK 7 (OCT 19): Listening to Vocal Timbre and Race**

*Readings*: **Nina Sun Eidsheim,** “Introduction” and “Chapter 1” from *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre and Vocality in African American Music* (2019) (CR); **Amiri Baraka,** “Three Modes of History and Culture”; “Black Art” (M).

### *Listenings*: 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"(M); Jack Kerouac, “American Haikus” (M).

### *Suggested Additional*: Jennifer Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line* (2016) (CR).

**WEEK 8 (OCT 26): Listening Dimensions**

*Readings*: **Don Ihde,** “17. A Phenomenology of Voice”; “18. Auditory Imagination”; “19. Listening”; “15. Dramaturgical Voice” from *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound* (CR); **T.S. Eliot,** *The Waste Land* (M).

### *Listenings*: T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* [1946] (M).

**WEEK 9 (NOV 3): “Literary” Listening I: Prosodic Listening**

*Readings*: **Peter Miller,** “Prosody, Media and the Poetry of Edgar Allen Poe” (CR); “English Prosody” from *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (M).

### *Listenings*: Bransby Williams, Edgar Allen Poe, “The Bells” as performed by Basil Rathbone (M); Christian Bok, “Synth Loops”, “Mushroom Clouds”, “Motorized Razors” from *The Cyborg Opera*; “Ubu Hubbub” (M).

### *Suggested Additional*: Charles Bernstein, “Introduction” to *Close Listening* (CR); Craig Dworkin, *A Handbook of Protocols for Literary Listening* (M).

**WEEK 10 (NOV 10): Ubiquitous Listening**

*Readings*: **Anahid Kassabian,** “1. Ubiquitous Listening” from *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention and Distributed Subjectivity* (CR); **Kate Crawford,** “Following You: Disciplines of Listening in Social Media” (CR).

### *Listenings*: Rupi Kaur, selected videoed performances from *Milk and Honey* and other works (M); Dylan Thomas, “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Goodnight” (M); Robert Frost, “The Road Not Taken”.

### *Suggested Additional*: T.W. Adorno, “On Jazz” (M).

**WEEK 11 (NOV 17): Listening with the Body**

*Readings*: **David Wills,** “4. Positive Feedback: Listening Behind Hearing” from *Thresholds of Listening: Sound, Technics, Space* (2015) (CR); **Deborah Kapchan,** “3. Body” from *Keywords in Sound* (CR).

### *Listenings*: Laurie Anderson, “Late Show” from the album *Home of the Brave* (1984) (M); Laurie Anderson performs “Walk the Dog” on Late Night with David Letterman (8 May 1984) (M).

### *Suggested Additional*: Stephen Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (CR).

**WEEK 12 (NOV 24): Listening and Sound Pedagogy**

*Readings*: **Steph Ceraso,** “Sounding Bodies, Composing Experience: (Re)Educating the Senses” (28-50), “Reverberation: My Listening Body” (51-67) from *Sounding Composition: Multimodal Pedagogies for Embodied Listening* (2018) (CR).

### *Listenings*: Hannah MacGregor, SpokenWeb Podcast, Episode 7, “The Voice is Intact: Finding Gwendolyn MacEwen in the Archive” (M); Gwendolyn MacEwen, “I Should have Predicted” (00:07:18 – 00:09:32), and full reading at Sir George Williams poetry Series. 18 November 1966 (M).

**WEEK 13 (NOV 30): Hungry Listening**

**Content warning for this week’s listening/reading of Tanya Tagaq’s *Split Tooth*.** This powerful work contains vivid, indeed visceral accounts of sexual violence, violence, racism, abuse and other events that may be difficult hear and cope with. Please put your own self-care first. If you feel you are unable to listen to such a work, you do not have to, nor do you have to attend the class in which *Split Tooth* will be discussed. I will schedule an additional meeting to discuss the Dylan Robinson reading and the other Tanya Tagaq listening material for any students who decide not to read and listen to *Split Tooth*.

*Readings*: **Dylan Robinson,** “Introduction”, “Hungry Listening”, “Conclusion” from *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (CR).

*Listenings*: **Tanya Tagaq,** “Punk Inuit Throat Singer Tanya Tagaq – TedxMet”; **Tanya Tagaq,** *Split Tooth* (Audible Audiobook performed by Tanya Tagaq).

*Suggested Additional*: "SENSATE SOVEREIGNTY: A Dialogue on Dylan Robinson’s Hungry Listening" *Amodern* (Currents), by Sadie Couture, Jonathan Sterne, et al.

**WEEK 14 (DEC 7): “Literary” Listening II: Generic Listening**

*Readings*: **Charles Dickens**, *A Christmas Carol* (M); **Jason Camlot**, “Charles Dickens in Three Minutes or Less: Early Phonographic Fiction” from *Phonopoetics: The Making of Early Literary Recordings* (CR).

### *Listenings*: 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” (CR); Charles Dickens*, A Christmas Carol, narrated by Tim Curry* (Audible Audiobook) and/or, Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (LibriVox multivoice narration).

*Additional:*Matthew Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book* (print only ☹)

**WEEK 14B (Tuesday, DEC 8): Makeup day for October 12th.**

Listening and discussion of Cylinder Talks.

**FINAL PAPERS DUE (via email) by 5PM, Thursday, December 17th**