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**Course Time**: Daily M-F, 12n-3 p.m.

**Office Hours**: T & W 3-4 p.m., by apt.

**Office**: Cole Library 217

# **ENG 274-2: PODCASTS MATTER: SOUND WRITING**

# **AT THE INTERSECTION OF LITERATURE & SOCIAL JUSTICE**

*Block 2: September 24 – October 17, 2018, Thomas Commons, The Paris Room*

# **Course Description**

This course focuses on the art of writing for podcasts and audio, playing particular attention to how the medium of sound writing can be used to explore the intersection between literature and social justice. In the class, we will examine podcasts that feature long-form interviews with authors, activists, and thinkers, such as *On Being*, *Longform*, and *Origins: The International Writing Program Podcast;*podcasts that present and/or analyze texts, such as PennSound’s *PoemTalk*or *The New Yorker’s Fiction, Poetry,*or*Author’s Voice* podcasts; and we will look at podcasts that take mixed-genre approaches, such as *The Organist* and *This American Life*. Through these and other model podcasts, you will be exposed to the wide variety of possibilities available within the burgeoning podcast medium and find inspiration for writing your own. You will learn to pitch story ideas, research topics, write and conduct interviews, develop narrative sequences, and other skills to bring your podcast ideas from ideation to publication. In addition to independent writing projects, you will also collaborate on group writing projects to further expand your podcast writing and production skills. No experience is necessary. Prerequisite: W-designated course or ENG 201, 202, or 215. (Fine Arts)

# **Course Objectives**

In this course you’ll learn to…

-Develop critical listening practices for engaging and composing with sound

-Design and produce sonic projects using digital tools

-Describe and apply key concepts of audio storytelling

-Develop interviewing skills

-Practice creative writing as a form of critical inquiry

-Assess your own and your peers’ work in reflections and discussions

-Collaborate with a team of peers on a creative multi-genre podcast project

-Recognize the value of sound as a powerful form of expression

# **Required Course Materials & Technologies**

*-Out on the Wire: The Storytelling Secrets of the New Masters of Radio*, Jessica Abel

*-Sound Reporting: The NPR Guide to Audio Journalism and Productions*, Jonathan Kern

-Additional reading and listening as per the course schedule

-Audacity (a free, open source digital audio editing platform):<http://www.audacityteam.org/>

-Earbuds or headphones

# **Learning Activities & Grading Scale**

Participation ………………………………………………………………………………15%

Listening Journals………………………………………………………………………... 15%

Sound Mapping & Sonic Postcard Assignment **(DUE: Thursday, Sept. 27)** ..……….... 10%

Interview & Text Analysis Podcast **(DUE: Friday, Oct. 5)**….…………………………. 20%

Multi-Genre Podcast Series **(DUE: Tuesday, Oct. 16)**……………..………………….... 40%

**Grades**: You can find information about the Cornell College grading scale [here.](http://catalog.cornellcollege.edu/content.php?catoid=3&navoid=74&hl=incomplete&returnto=search#grades)

# **Major Assignments**

## **Listening Journals**

Make sure to include the name of the podcast, the title of the episode you listened to, and the date of the podcast publication in your post.

Journal entries should focus on your observations about how the podcast is composed. In other words, you might write about the storytelling style or narrative structure, interviewing techniques, how music or sound is integrated, etc. It is also fine to include your observations about the content of the podcast (e.g. why the topic made for an interesting story, or what questions the episode raised for you), but the majority of your writing should be devoted to addressing how the podcast works—or not—to engage you as a listener. You should approach this assignment as a listener who is interested in what happens behind the scenes as a podcast creator. Please take notes while you listen so that you can keep track of the thoughts and observations you’d like to focus on in your journal entry.

Some podcast episodes will be assigned for your listening journals. Others will be your choice. Podcasts vary in length—some are over an hour, some are under 15 minutes. Please choose a mix of shorter and longer podcasts for your journals.

Your listening journals are intended to help you cultivate critical listening practices that will ultimately help you learn to compose and produce your own podcasts during the block. So, it is very important that you take your journaling seriously. I will be looking for thoughtful, well-written entries that demonstrate a careful attention to the podcasts under examination. For example, making connections to class discussions or readings would also help to enrich your entries. I will be checking to make sure that each of your entries adhere to the guidelines stated above as well. *Further assignment details will be provided in class.*

## **Sound Mapping & Sonic Postcard Assignment**

You will create a Sonic Postcard using audio collected during a field recording that will be layered with open-sourced (non-copyrighted music) ambient music that is combined with a photographic image, taken by you. You will use Audacity—a free digital audio editor—to learn digital sound production techniques to create your Sonic Postcard. In addition, you’ll write an artist statement describing your experience, and detailing your perceptions of the relationship between sound and environment. *Further assignment details will be provided in class.*

## **Interview & Text Analysis Podcast**

You will record an interview and analysis of a text with your partner. As an interviewer, you should come up with questions that will give the conversation focus. We will be reading about and listening to interviews as well as practicing the art of interviewing in class. To ensure that you have enough material to work with, your full interview and conversation should produce a minimum of 30-minutes of audio. However, feel free to go longer than that. You may want to do a couple of different interview sessions. You need to ensure that you have a lot of good material to work with. Once you have completed the interview and text-analysis, you’ll need to make decisions about what parts to leave in and what parts to cut. You must also integrate music or ambient sound to enhance your piece. Though you will have a lot of material to work with, the challenge of this assignment involves making choices about what information to include or exclude in order to present the most poignant and powerful version of the conversation that you collected. The final oral history must be **4-5 minutes** in length. In addition to the audio file, you will write a 500-word reflection that addresses your experience as an interviewer and editor. As a part of this assignment, you will also be an interviewee for your partner. *Further assignment details will be provided in class.*

## **Multi-Genre Podcast Series**

In groups of three, you will write creatively to explore a social justice issue of your choice. You will script, produce, and edit a three-part podcast series. Though the genres may be varied, you will create an engaging podcast series with a consistent structure, style, and delivery. We will be spending a lot of time reading about and discussing how to choose an interesting topic for your podcast—how to find a good story. We will also be spending a lot of time reading poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and play excerpts, analyzing both the creative craft and skillful exploration of social issues that may be found in contemporary literature. We will explore creative writing exercises designed to help you practice your craft and to discover which literary genre you’d like to further develop in the podcast series. Working together at every stage of this project will be vital to your podcast’s success. In class, we will work through the important steps of brainstorming, story-boarding, researching, composing, and editing. During class, your scripts will be workshopped, and you will have team conferences with me to aid you in your drafting and revising process. Each section of the podcast will be about **5 minutes** for a total project of about **15 minutes**. You must integrate music or ambient sound to enhance the storytelling of your podcast. In class, we’ll discuss drafting required intros and outros, crediting musicians, and transcripts. A 1000-word reflection will also be submitted with the final audio file. *Further assignment details will be provided in class.*

# **Class Policies**

## **Attendance:**

On time attendance is mandatory for this class**—students must come to class on time.** Punctuality is crucial. Each unexcused absence will directly affect one’s grade by one-letter, for example an A would become an A-. Three tardies will equal one absence. Please contact me right away if you will need to miss a class for any reason. Assigned work for missed classes must be made up. Our time together is valuable. I ask that you attend all class sessions prepared with the necessary reading in hand, in hard copy form, ready to participate fully in all activities.

## **Academic Integrity**

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College’s requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading “Academic Honesty."

This course supports the Educational Priorities and Outcomes of Cornell College with emphases on knowledge, communication, citizenship, and intercultural literacy.

## **Students with Disabilities**

Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities.  Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format.  For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see

<http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml>.

# **Resources on Campus**

## [**The Writing Studio**](https://www.cornellcollege.edu/library/ctl/writing-studio/index.shtml)

When you come to the Studio for a conference, you’ll meet one-on-one with a consultant and have their full attention for an hour. Our top priority is teaching you to express your ideas in your own voice, so you’ll work with the consultant to set an agenda for the conference. To schedule a conference, please come to the Writing Studio and make an appointment in person. *314 Cole Library*. Or call the Studio at 319.895.4462. Walk-ins are welcome, but making an appointment guarantees you a spot. Monday–Thursday: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.; 6–11 p.m.; Friday: 8 a.m.–5 p.m.; Sunday: 1–5 p.m.; 6–11 p.m.

## [The Academic Technology Studio](https://www.cornellcollege.edu/library/ctl/ats/)

Academic Technology supports students, faculty, and staff in a variety of ways by offering training for faculty interested in implementing new technologies in the classroom, as well as technical support for using Cornell's current learning management system, Moodle. Through Audiovisual Services, faculty can check out laptops, projectors, and other equipment for classes and academic work. For students, the Center for Teaching and Learning houses the Academic Technology Studio, an open space for students to learn and collaborate with peer technology consultants on projects--personal, professional, or academic. Students are also able to use Audiovisual Services, and can check out a variety of equipment, including microphones and video cameras. The Studio is open M-F 8 a.m. to 11 p.m., but is not staffed between 5-7 p.m. Location: Cole Library; 319-895-4261.