

Cultures of Listening



Cheshire Academy for Lifelong Learning (CALL)
Keene State College
Spring Semester 2018
Instructor: Dr. Martin Roberts
Class: Friday 10:00-11:15 a.m.
Location: Morrison Hall 109
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Overview

How do we listen to music today? How is that different from how people listened to it a decade ago? A generation ago? A century ago? Why listen to music at all? This course provides an introduction to how to listen to music, and sound more generally, in a digital age of playlists and short attention spans. Rather than a traditional music-appreciation course, however, it focuses on listening itself as a cultural practice of the modern age. Topics include easy listening, hi-fi, and stereo in 1950s suburbia; jukeboxes and the rise of popular music; multitrack recording and headphone music in the 60s; portable listening from the Sony Walkman to the Apple iPod; elevator music, and ubiquitous listening; field recording and acoustic ecology; audiophile

culture and the vinyl revival; streaming media and the playlist. Each class will be structured around relevant reading materials and a collective listening session and discussion. The course's objective is to develop an understanding of listening as a deeply cultural practice, and to teach us to listen more attentively to the sounds of the world around us.

Instructor Bio

Dr. Martin Roberts holds a Ph. D. in French Studies from Cambridge University. He has taught at Harvard University, MIT, The New School, and NYU, and is currently Visiting Professor in the Department of Film and Media Studies at Dartmouth College. He has published essays on world music, and his courses on music include Music as Communication and BeatleMedia: Popular Music and Cultural Heritage.

Reading Assignments

Readings are either available online or as PDF files for download and printing: see links below.

Recommended Reading

John Himmelman, **Cricket Radio: Tuning In the Night-Singing Insects**. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Damon Krukowski, **The New Analog: Listening and Reconnecting in a Digital World**. New York: The New Press, 2017.

Joseph Lanza, **Elevator Music: A Surreal History of Muzak,[®] Easy-Listening, and Other Moodsong**. Revised and expanded edition. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004.

Pauline Oliveros, **Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice**. Lincoln, NE: Deep Listening Publications, 2005.

Ben Ratliff, **Every Song Ever: Twenty Ways to Listen to Music Now**. London: Penguin Books, 2016.

R. Murray Schafer, **The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World**. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994. Originally published as **The Tuning of the World**. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

Paul Théberge, Kyle Devine, and Tom Everett, eds., **Living Stereo: Histories and Cultures of Multichannel Sound**. New York: Bloomsbury, 2015.