

Technology and Society: Sound Cultures
First-Year Writing Seminar Syllabus, Spring 2013
Cornell University

Title: Technology and Society Topics FWS: Sound Cultures

Course #: STS 1123-101

Location: Balch Hall - Tatkon Ctr 3343

Time: Tu Th 8:40AM - 9:55AM

Instructor: Owen Marshall

Office: Rockefeller 172

Office Hours: W 4:30-5:30 Th 11-12 or by Appt.

Contact: wom6@cornell.edu

Seminar Description:

How are the realms of the social, aural, and technological interwoven in our everyday lives? How are cultural understandings of sound embedded within and informed by technologies of sonic recording, manipulation, production, and listening? In this course we will explore these questions through reading and writing about the social construction of technology as well as the cultural history and social theory of sound. We will also conduct critical listening and reflection exercises based around specific technologies, including the vocoder, architectural acoustics, and cochlear implants. Through writing, students will engage critically and creatively with the arguments of such authors as Emily Thompson, Trevor Pinch, Friedrich Kittler, and Jonathan Sterne.

Learning Outcomes:

- By the end of this course, you should be able to demonstrate the following skills:
- Identifying the key concepts and central argument of a piece of writing
 - Analyzing texts and putting them into productive conversation
 - Clearly conveying and supporting an argument and/or idea through writing
 - Putting the above skills to use in writing about sound, technology, and culture

Required Texts (Available in the Cornell Bookstore):

Sterne, Jonathan. *The Sound Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
(All other readings will be available on Blackboard or through the library.)

Description of Required Writing:

Scholarly writing is different from normal writing. There are a number of implicit conventions regarding style, register, structure, and argument that can only be learned through practice. This is a writing-intensive “crash course” in university-level

composition, the idea of which is to familiarize you with these conventions. Here's an outline of the writing students will produce:

- Essay 1: ungraded 2-3 pages..
- Essay 2: graded 3-4 pages w/ draft
- Essay 3: graded 4-5 pages w/ draft
- Essay 4: graded 4-5 pages w/ draft
- Essay 5: graded 7-10 pages w/ topic sketch, bibliography, & draft
- Revision of one previous Essay: graded

Requirements for Seminar Participation:

- Complete the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them.
- Bring assigned readings to discussion.
- Bring a pen and paper for in-class writing and note-taking.
- Be polite, generous, and constructive with both the authors read and the fellow seminar participants. It is far easier to criticize than it is to understand and engage with the ideas of others; strive to produce generative, non-dismissive, readings of course materials.

Requirements for submitting written work:

- Printed out and turned in at the beginning of class on the due date
- 12 pt. Times New Roman Font
- 1.25" Margins
- Double-Spaced
- Stapled together (no paperclips, please)
- Name, NetID, assignment number, date, and essay title at the top of page 1
- Proofread and spellchecked
- Appropriate in-text citations (or footnotes) and a complete bibliography

Writing Tips:

We will be exploring a number of strategies and approaches to writing throughout the course, but here are some basic guidelines to start with:

- Academic writing usually takes the form of a conversation between various positions on a particular topic. In constructing your papers, try to bring relevant authors and/or arguments into *conversation* with one another.
- Be sure to proofread all writing before submitting it, but also *read it aloud* in order to determine whether A) the argument makes sense, B) the writing flows well, and C) the tone of the writing is appropriate.
- *Consider your audience* and write with the intention to make them understand. For the purposes of this course, the audience will be your instructor and fellow students.
- Avoid broad generalizations, which are invariably difficult to support, and constantly anchor your writing with specific engagements with course readings.

Individual Conferences:

Students are required to meet with the instructor at least twice over the course of the semester: once to discuss ideas for Essay 4 and once to discuss Essay 5 (at either the draft, bibliography, or topic sketch stage). This can be done during office hours or by appointment.

Lateness and Absence Policy:

Arriving late to class will result in a deduction of the participation grade. Assignments submitted late will receive a reduced grade. If you have a legitimate reason for absence or a late assignment submission, let the instructor know in advance. Students are responsible for finding out from other students (not the instructor) what happened in their absence.

Grading Policy:

Grades will be calculated based on the following percentages:

15% - **Participation** (attending and actively taking part in discussion)

21% - **Essay 1 and all 5 Drafts, Essay 5 Topic Sketch and Bibliography**
(full credit for complete and timely submission)

4% - **2 Individual Conferences** (full credit for timely scheduling and attendance)

60% - **Essays 2, 3, 4, 5, and Revised Essay.** (Individually graded. 12% apiece)

Final percentage to letter-grade equivalences will be curved at the instructor's discretion.

Public Domain Statement:

All student writing for the course may be read and shared by all members of the class.

Calendar:

Week 1. STARTING POINTS: What do sound, technology, and culture mean?

1/22 Intro

1/24 Sterne, Jonathan – Bourdieu, Technique, and Technology (24pp)
Ingold, Tim – Culture, Nature, Environment (13pp. Ch. 1 of *Perception of the Environment*)

Week 2. NOTATION and FORMAT

1/29 Sterne, Jonathan – Format Theory (30pp)

1/31 Essay 1 Due

Ingold, Tim – “Language, Music and Notation” (32pp) in *Lines, A Brief History*.

Week 3. PHONOGRAPHY

2/5 Sterne, Jonathan – A Machine to Hear for Them (36pp)

- 2/7 Essay 2 Draft Due
Kittler, Friedrich – Gramophone (Excerpt – 12pp) *IN STERNE READER*

Week 4. SOUND & SCIENCE:

- 2/12 Essay 2 (Metaphors we Listen By) Draft due.
In-class peer review exercise
2/14 Essay 2 (Metaphors we Listen By) Due
Mody, Cyrus – The Sounds of Science: Listening to Laboratory Practice (24pp)

Week 5. ARCHITECTURAL ACOUSTICS:

- 2/19 Essay 2 Prompt (Sound Spaces) distributed
Rath, Richard Cullen – No Corner For the Devil to Hide (8pp)
IN STERNE READER
2/12 Thompson, Emily – Sound, Modernity, and History (10pp)
IN STERNE READER

Week 6. BELLS (VILLAGE & VIRTUAL):

- 2/26 Essay 3 (Sound Spaces) Draft Due
Corbin – Auditory Markers of the Village (8pp)
2/28 Essay 3 (Sound Spaces) Due
Guest: Enongo Lumumba-Kasongo – Audio Games and Virtual Sonic Space
Read over her online account of playing the Audio Game “Papa Sangre” at
<http://enongo.wordpress.com/> and come to class prepared with a question for
discussion.

Week 7. TELEPHONE:

- 3/5 Essay 4 prompt distributed
Martin, Michele – Gender and Early Telephone Culture (15pp)
IN STERNE READER
3/7 Peters, John Durham – The Telephonic Uncanny and the problem of
Communication (9pp) *IN STERNE READER*

Week 8. COCHLEAR IMPLANT

- 3/12 Essay 4 Draft Due
Helmreich & Friedner – Sound Studies Meets Deaf Studies (15pp)
Mills, Mara – Hearing Aids and the History of Electronics Miniaturization (6pp)
IN STERNE READER
3/14 Essay 4 Due
In-Class Film – Sound and Fury (80mins)

<<<<SPRING BREAK (3/19 & 3/21)>>>>

Week 9. RADIO

- 3/26 Fanon, Frantz – This is the Voice of Algeria (excerpt 7pp)
IN STERNE READER
- Berland, Jody – Contradicting Media: Toward a Political Phenomenology of
Listening (8pp) *IN STERNE READER*
- 3/28 Wallace, David Foster – Host (23pp) (Read online, not PDF version):
<<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/04/host/303812/>>.

Week 10. SAMPLING (and its antecedents)

- 4/2 Smith, Jacob - Laughing Machines (6pp) *IN STERNE READER*
- 4/4 Essay 5 Draft Due
Thompson, Emily – Remix Redux (7pp)

Week 11. THE RECORDING STUDIO

- 4/9 Porcello, Thomas – Speaking of Sound (27pp)
- 4/11 Essay 4 Due
Schmidt Horning, Susan – Engineering the Performance: Recording Engineers,
Tacit Knowledge, and the Art of Controlling Sound (30pp)

TWO OPTIONS FOR WEEK 12 (we'll decide in advance which one we want to do):

Week 12a. AUDIOPHILIA and HEADPHONE ILLUSIONS

- 4/16 Perlman, Marc – Golden Ears and Meter Readers (26pp)
- 4/18 Essay 5 Topic Sketch Due
Deutsch, Diana – Illusions for Stereo Headphones (13pp)

OR:

Week 12b. NOISE

- 4/16 Bijsterveld, Karin – Listening To Machines (16pp) *IN STERNE
READER*
- 4/18 Essay 5 Topic Sketch Due
Attali, Jacques – Noise: The Political Economy of Music (11pp)
IN STERNE READER

Week 13. THE SYNTHESIZER (And other breaching experiments)

- 4/23 Essay 5 Bibliography Due
Pinch, Trevor & Karin Bijsterveld– Should One Applaud? (25pp)
- 4/25 Essay 5 Draft Due
In-Class Film: Moog (70mins)

Week 14. VOCODER/AUTO-TUNE

- 4/30 Meet w/ Owen about Essay 5 by this point

Weheliye, Alexander – Desiring Machines in Black Popular Music (28pp)
IN STERNE READER

5/2 Essay 5 Due

Revised version of one of the previous essays (1-4) due

Tompkins, Dave – How to Wreck a Nice Beach (excerpts TBA)

OPTIONAL: Marshall, Owen – Tuning the (Non)human: Pitch Correction in Practice (26pp)

University Policies and Regulations:

The course instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired students; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor. You will be expected to understand and comply by the Cornell code of Academic integrity: <http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>.

Statement for Students with Disabilities:

In compliance with the Cornell University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except in unusual circumstances, so that arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

Statement on Academic Integrity:

All of the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course and not another and must originate with you in form and content with all the contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Make yourself familiar with Cornell's Academic Integrity Code, which is distributed to students in the *Policy Notebook*. The code, together with a guide to *Acknowledging the Work of Others*, can be downloaded at <http://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/pdfs/AIAckWorkRev90620.pdf>. In this course, the normal penalty for a violation of the code is an "F" for the term.

***Often the difference between plagiarism and good scholarship is a footnote or a set of quotation marks. It is **highly recommended** that you take the tutorial/quiz at the following URL in order to acquaint yourself with the proper citation of sources: <http://plagiarism.arts.cornell.edu/tutorial/index.cfm>

Collaborative work of the following kinds is authorized (and indeed encouraged) in this course: peer review and critique of students' essays by one another and, when approved by the instructor in particular cases, collaborative projects by pairs of students.

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Corbin, Alain. "The Auditory Markers of the Village." *The Auditory Culture Reader*. Ed. Michael Bull and Les Back. Oxford, UK: Berg, 2003. 117-25. Print.

Deutsch, Diana. "Illusions for Stereo Headphones." *Audio March* (1987): 36-48.

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Helmreich, Stephen, and Michele Friedner. "Sound Studies Meets Deaf Studies." *Senses & Society* 7.1 (2012): 72-86. Print.

Illich, Ivan. "The Loudspeaker on the Tower." *Commonplaces Of Transition*. N.p., 8 Apr. 2000. Web. 21 Jan. 2013.

Ingold, Tim. "Culture, Nature, Environment." *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling & Skill*. London: Routledge, 2000. 13-26. Print.

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Peters, John Durham. "The Telephonic Uncanny and the Problem of Communication." *The Sound Studies Reader*. Ed. Jonathan Sterne. New York: Routledge, 2012. 363-371. Print.

Pinch, Trevor & Karin Bijsterveld. "'Should One Applaud?' Breaches and Boundaries in the Reception of New Technology in Music." *Technology and Culture* 44.3 (2003): 536-559. Print.

Porcello, Thomas. "Speaking of Sound: Language and the Professionalization of Sound Recording Engineers." *Social Studies of Science* 34.5 (2004): 733-58. Print.

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Roosth, Sophia. "Screaming Yeast: Sonocytology, Cytoplasmic Milieus, and Cellular Subjectivities." *Critical Inquiry* 35.Winter (2009): 332-50. Print.

Schmidt Horning, Susan. "Engineering the Performance: Recording Engineers, Tacit Knowledge and the Art of Controlling Sound." *Social Studies of Science* 34.5 (2004): 703-31. Print.

Smith, Jacob. "Laughing Machines." *The Sound Studies Reader*. Ed. Jonathan Sterne. New York: Routledge, 2012. 533-538. Print.

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Sterne, Jonathan. "Format Theory." *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*. Durham: Duke UP, 2012. 1-31. Print.

Sterne, Jonathan. "A Machine to Hear for Them: On the Very Possibility of Sound's Reproduction." *Cultural Studies* 15.2 (2001): 259-94. Print.

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<<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/04/host/303812/>>.

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