



“Let us wander through a great modern city with our ears more attentive than our eyes, and distinguish the sounds of water, air, or gas in metal pipes, the purring of motors (which breathe and pulsate with an indubitable animalism), the throbbing of valves, the pounding of pistons, the screeching of gears, the clatter of streetcars on their rails, the cracking of whips, the flapping of awnings and flags. We shall amuse ourselves by orchestrating in our minds the noise of the metal shutters of store windows, the slamming of doors, the bustle and shuffle of crowds, the multitudinous uproar of railway stations, forges, mills, printing presses, power stations, and underground railways.”

-Russolo, *The Art of Noises*, page 180

HL3043 Modernist Soundscapes

While the Western world may not have gotten noisier in the early twentieth century, there is evidence that people perceived the world as noisier. Emily Thompson explains that in the Victorian period the “sounds that so bothered Carlyle and Goethe were almost identical to those that had been identified by the Buddha centuries earlier: organic sounds created by humans and animals at work and at play” (*Soundscape* 116). It is not until the early twentieth century, according to Thompson, that machine-generated noises started to impinge upon the everyday lives of people. Called the “Age of Noise,” the turn of twentieth century was filled with the sounds of auditory technologies (the microphone, radio, telephone, and phonograph), public transportation (the elevated train and subway), World War I, construction, factories, steam locomotives, industrial whistles and bells, machine shops, cash registers, washing machines, sewing machines, vacuum cleaners, typewriters, printing machines, automobiles, trucks, and motorcycles.

This course explores how modernist writers represented this soundscape. How did they make their narratives sound out? How did the changing soundscape influence and shape their representations of sound and listening?

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Analyse and write critically about the representation of sound and listening in literature.
2. Apply theories from sound studies to literary texts and your personal experiences to generate claims.
3. Draft, workshop, and revise argumentative essays that closely analyse a primary text, draw on sources, and thoughtfully develop an argument.

Primary Texts:

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (student purchase)

Jean Rhys's *Good Morning, Midnight* (student purchase)

Millen Brand's *Outward Room* (student purchase)

Dorothy Richardson's *Pointed Roofs* (found online: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3019>)

Samuel Beckett's Trilog, excerpts (provided by teacher)

Weekly Schedule:

Week	Topic	Reading
1	The Reading Voice What is a Video Essay?	Introduction to Sound Studies and Literature Video Essay Guidelines Steven Connor "The Modern Auditory I"
2	Sound Theory I *Readings on NTULearn	Ihde, <i>Listening and Voice</i> Schwartz, "The Indefensible Ear: A History" Barthes, "Listening"
3	Sound Theory II *Reading on NTULearn	Schafer, <i>Tuning of the World</i> Truax, <i>Acoustic Communication</i> Chion, excerpt
4	The Soundscape	Virginia Woolf's <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> Draft of First Essay Due
5	Acts of Listening	<i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> ; Melba Cuddy-Keane's "Modernist Soundscapes and the Intelligent Ear: An Approach to Narrative through Auditory Perception"
6	Listening to Interior Monologue	Jean Rhys's <i>Good Morning, Midnight</i> Video Essay Due
7	The Gramophone	<i>Good Morning, Midnight</i> ; Adorno's "The Form of the Phonograph Record"
8	Urban Noise	<i>Outward Room</i> ; William Griffith, "New York Noisiest City on Earth" (<i>The New York Times</i> , July 2, 1905) First Essay Due
9	Factory Noise	Millen Brand's <i>Outward Room</i> ;
10	The Voice and the Talkie	Dorothy Richardson's <i>Pointed Roofs</i> ; Barthes's "The Grain of the Voice"
11	WWI	Luigi Russolo, "The Noises of War" and TBA
12	The Sound of Words, the tape recorder, and <i>Musique Concrète</i>	Samuel Beckett's Trilog excerpts; excerpts from Pierre Schaeffer
13	Peer Workshop	Draft of Second Essay Due
14 18 Nov		Final Essay 2 Due

Student Assessment:

Essay 1 (30%)

Based on your video essay, you choose a sound theory and explain it to your reader. You then use that sound theory to develop an interesting argument about a sound you commonly here in your life.

Essay 2 (35%)

In your essay, you can choose one novel from the syllabus. Your goal is to use one of the theoretical texts we have read from sound studies to present a compelling argument about the primary text.

Class Participation (10%)

This entails coming to each class ready to discuss the readings for the day and actively participating in the two peer workshops (bringing in a draft of your essay and doing a peer review with it).

Video Essay (25%)

Individually, you are expected to produce a short video essay that considers a specific aspect of your soundscape in the present day. You should present this specific aspect of the soundscape to your audience and make use of a theory within sound studies to analyse and develop an argument about the significance of this element of the soundscape.

Supplemental Readings:

Attali, Jacques. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977.

Cultural Histories of Noise, Sound and Listening in Europe, 1300-1918, 1-14. Edited by Kirsten Gibson and Ian Biddle. London: Routledge, 2016.
<http://doi.org/remotexs.ntu.edu.sg/10.4324/9781315575308>

Bijsterveld, Karin. "The Diabolical Symphony of the Mechanical Age: Technology and Symbolism of Sound in European and North American Noise Abatement Campaigns, 1900-40." In *The Auditory Culture Reader*, edited by Michael Bull and Les Back, 165-189. Oxford: Berg, 2003.

Cuddy-Keane, Melba. "Modernist Soundscapes and the Intelligent Ear: An Approach to Narrative Through Auditory Perception." In *A Companion to Narrative Theory*, edited by James Phelan, Peter J. Rabinowitz. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
Dolar, Mladen. *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.
<https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/7137.001.0001>

Griffith, William. "New York Noisiest City on Earth." *The New York Times*, July 2, 1905. 1-3.
<http://www.documentcloud.org/documents/681856-new-york-noisiest-city-on-earth-the-new-york.html>

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- Khan, Douglas. *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001.
- LaBelle, Brandon. *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*. New York: Continuum, 2010.
- Mansell, James G. *The Age of Noise in Britain: Hearing Modernity*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2016.
- Marinetti, F. T. "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism." In *Futurism: An Anthology*, edited by Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman, 49-53. 1909. Reprint, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009..
- McKenzie, Dan. *The City of Din: A Tirade against Noise*. London: Adlard and Son, 1916.
<https://archive.org/details/b2981070x>
- Picker, John M. *Victorian Soundscapes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Pye, Patricia. *Sound and Modernity in the Literature of London, 1880-1918*
James G. Mansell, *The Age of Noise in Britain: Hearing Modernity*
- Russolo, Luigi. "The Art of Noises: Futurist Manifesto." In *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources*, edited by Daniel Albright, 177-183. 1913. Reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Schafer, R. Murray. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1977.
- Schwartz, Hillel. "The Indefensible Ear: A History." In *The Auditory Culture Reader*, edited by Michael Bull and Les Back, 487-501. Oxford: Berg, 2003.
- Thompson, Emily. *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in American, 1900-1933*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.
- Truax, Barry. *Acoustic Communication*, ABC-CLIO, 2000.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ntusg/detail.action?docID=492436>.
- Woolf, Virginia. "Oxford Street Tide." In *The London Scene*, 25-34. 1932. Reprint, UK: Snowbooks, 1975.

Wynne, Shirley W. "New York City's Noise Abatement Commission." *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 2, no. 12 (1930); doi: 10.1121/1.1915231