
 SUBJECT DESCRIPTION
50253 Culture and Sound

Course Name:	Bachelor of Arts in Communication. (Writing and Cultural Studies)
Level:	300
Number of Credit points:	8
Prerequisites:	50108/50229 Contemporary Culture No prerequisite for graduate students
Grading:	Graded

HANDBOOK DESCRIPTION

The subject focuses on the meaning and significance of sound in different cultural contexts and historical settings. The aim is to study the emergence of sound as a specific object of theoretical analysis and to understand the impact of sound on human perception. Subject areas covered may include: methodological approaches to sound; ethnography of sound; sound, voice, music, silence; sound in various media; the politics and aesthetics of sonic practices.

CONTRIBUTION TO GRADUATE PROFILE

- have a broad range of skills and knowledge, making for creative and critically informed communications professionals
- have a critical knowledge of Australian cultural traditions industries and institutions
- have a critical knowledge of cultural and aesthetic debates, and their implications for cultural policy developments
- be able to think critically and creatively about future developments in cultural industries
- have a strong awareness of the needs of specific communities and the ability to evaluate a range of strategies for dealing with cultural and social problems
- be able to function within groups and be sensitive to the multiple dimensions of social and cultural difference.

OBJECTIVES

- Deepen understanding of sound as a medium and as a sensory domain
- Explore cultural conceptions of sound through attention to different critical, historical, political and anthropological approaches to the auditory world.
- Study the way in which aesthetic and cognitive structures determine the value and meaning of sounds, and the kinds of social practices that shape human relationships to sounds.
- Develop a critical and comparative understanding of the significance of sounds in musical, performative, artistic, design and other experimental contexts
- Engage with a range of situations in which sounds transform human perception.
- Acquire a substantial knowledge of sound in its cultural context. through an analysis of the relations between theoretical texts, “sound events,” aesthetic pleasure and critical reflectiveness

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- Lectures followed by a tutorial, for most sessions
- Weekly readings dealing with the main issues relating to each topic
- Each student presents a tutorial paper based on one of the readings
- Each student submits a group-based study of a “sound event,” such as an ethnographic study, to refine students’ grasp of the primary readings. .
- Each student completes a final assignment on a topic relating to the subject.
- Discussion, research, group exercises and class presentations focus on defining concepts and analysing practices.
- Develop analytical listening skills.

CONTENT

Sound is studied within both its cultural and phenomenological context, including topics such as: sound, music and composition with their modern, post modern and experimental context; cultural and cognitive structures of auditory perception; the nature of silence; the role of sound in its technological contexts; sound and language; aesthetic and literary experiences of sound; and subjective dimensions of sound and auditory experience.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment item 1: At least four significant research documents logged in the appropriate discussion board. Two each of these document must be logged on a different discussion board (in other words, choose two of the four available module options). Each document must be accompanied by an at least two hundred word statement about the document.

Objectives: a,b,c,d,e,f
Due: Not later than 24th October
Value: 30%
Task: See above

Assessment criteria:

- Demonstrated ability to:
- Use the concepts discussed in the lectures and tutorials.
- Analyse a specific “sound event”.
- Undertake sustained research.
- Successfully complete a comparative analysis of a cultural object.

Assessment item 2: A written study of a “sound event,” whether musical or landscape, recorded or live, multimedia or broadcast, which reflects key themes in one of the modules. The approach to the essay can be critical, philosophical, ethnographic, aesthetic, documentary or historical, or a combination of all or some of these ways of thinking about sound. 2000 words.

Objectives: a,b,c,d,e,f
Due: Not later than 10th October
Value: 35%
Task: see above

Assessment criteria:

- Demonstrated Ability to:
- Use the concepts discussed in the lectures and tutorials.
- Analyse a specific “sound event”.
- Undertake sustained research.
- Successfully complete a comparative analysis of a cultural object.

Assessment item 3: An exploration of a “sound event,” whether musical or landscape, recorded or live, multimedia or broadcast, which reflects key themes in one or more of the modules. The approach to this assignment can be critical, philosophical, aesthetic, documentary or historical, or a combination of all or some of these ways of thinking about sound. It can be presented in written, poetic, story, visual, scored or live performance format. (Please note there is no media equipment allocation for this class, so studio produced works must be home or independently produced.) For presentation and/or performance on final week.

Objectives: a,b,c,d,e,f
Due: Not later than 7th November
Value: 35%
Task: See above

Assessment criteria:

- Demonstrated ability to:
- Use the concepts discussed in the lectures and tutorials.
- Analyse a specific “sound event”.
- Undertake sustained research.
- Successfully complete a comparative analysis of a cultural object.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Attend 80% of classes
Satisfactory completion of all assignments (pass level)

TEXT AND REFERENCES

Selected Reading:

Adorno, Theodor W., *The Philosophy of New Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster, (London: Sheed & Ward, 1973)
Altman, Rick, Editor, *Sound Theory Sound Practice*, (New York: Routledge, 1992)
Bourdieu, Pierre, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, reprint: 1999)

Chanan, Michael, *Repeated Takes: A Short History of Recording and Its Effects on Music* (London: Verso, 1996)

Chernoff, John Miller, "Music in Africa," *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979)

Chion, Michel, *The Voice in Cinema*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999)

Dunn, Leslie C., and Jones, Nancy C., Editors, *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

Johnson, Bruce, *The Inaudible Music: Jazz, Gender and Australian Modernity* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2000)

Kahn, Douglas, *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999)

Kartomi, Margaret, "Indonesian-Chinese Oppression and the Musical Outcomes in the Netherlands East Indies," *Music and the Racial Imagination*, Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman, editors, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000)

Kerman, Joseph, *Musicology*, (London: Fontana, 1985)

Radano, Ronald, and Bohlman, Philip V., *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000)

Sahlins, Marshall, *Culture in Practice*, (New York: Zone Books, 2000)

Scarry, Elaine, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)

Schwartz, Elliott, and Childs, Barney, editors, *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998)

White, Shane, and White, Graham, "Us Likes A Mixtery': Listening to African-American Slave Music," *Slavery and Abolition*, Volume 20, Number 3, December 1999

Wishart, Trevor, *On Sonic Art*, (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996)