

Communications Studies COMS 391 L01
Introduction to Acoustic Communications and Acoustic Ecology
Winter 2013
TR 11-12:15

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Course Description

In an increasingly visually-oriented culture, are we losing the ability to access information about the world through hearing? What are the implications of sound for communication and learning? What is a soundscape? *What is acoustemology???*

Acoustic Ecology (AE) studies the effects of sound -- including speech, music, noise, and silence -- in natural and human environments, as well as its effects on health, cognition and culture. It is an emerging interdisciplinary field which weaves together aspects of physical sciences, health sciences, communication theory, cognitive psychology, sociology, musicology and aesthetics.

The field of Acoustic Communications (AC) is concerned with the ways in which speech, sound and music convey meaning. This course will provide an introduction to selected concepts, techniques and applications from AE and AC.

Additional Information

-There will be some fieldwork required outside of class time and possibly off campus.

-There will be some continuity of material between COMS 391 and COMS 381, but historical content in 391 will be interpreted in a different context.

- Because this course is about sound and listening, *please let me know on the first day of classes if you have a significant hearing impairment.*

Objectives of the Course

Participants will be expected to demonstrate the following skills upon completion of the course:

- Ability to learn and use descriptive terminology and mapping techniques for environmental sound;
- Ability to perceive and describe a variety of acoustic environments;
- Familiarity with and discussion of concepts and issues presented in the course, including those related to acoustic communications and auditory culture;
- Ability to conceptualize, plan and complete individual and group assignments;
- Ability to write clearly and coherently in English.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Cellphones and pagers must be turned off during class unless you are a health-care or law enforcement professional, or responsible for the care of a family member. Computers are welcome as long as they are used appropriately. Research and note-taking are appropriate during class; social sites, Twitter, games, YouTube and e-mail are not.

Textbooks and Readings:

All assigned readings will be available on the website of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology -- <http://wfae.proscenia.net> -- on other websites, or on Blackboard.

Assignments and Evaluation

Plan of research for project -----	10%	Due Jan. 24
Midterm Quiz (in class)-----	20%	Jan. 31
Fieldwork/Research presentation -----	20%	TBD March 19-26
Fieldwork/Research paper -----	30%	Due by March 28
Final Exam (in class) -----	10%	April 16
Participation -----	10%	
Listening Journals posted on Bbd (<i>minimum</i> of 2 entries);		
Other contributions (in-class discussion, relevant questions, etc.)		

Exams will cover material presented/discussed in the lectures plus readings that have been assigned.

All assignments must normally be completed or a grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Note: You will be graded on the results of your work. Hard work does not merit an A unless it produces outstanding results.

Instructions for Assignments

Fieldwork/Research Projects: These must be done in groups of 3 - 4 members: groups will be organized by affinity, background, and/or interest in particular topics.

Each group will choose a focus in AE (fieldwork) or AC (research), and prepare a plan of research, a presentation to the class, and a paper. All topics must be cleared with the instructor; specific advice will be given to each group about methodology. Students may be asked to rate the contributions of other group members to ensure fair and equal participation.

Plan of research: includes description of project, plan for methodology, and bibliography: 2-5 pages.

Presentation: includes script or outline and audiovisual components; description of project and methods used, 15-20 minutes.

Paper: describe project, resources, methods, findings, conclusions; 10 -15 pages (depends on topic and size of group) + statistics/charts/visuals, sound recordings (disc or URL) and bibliography. Bibliographies must follow APA rules.

You are responsible for checking format of sound recordings with me.

Sample topic areas

AC: topics in radio, communication for/with the deaf, music in film

AE: analysis and mapping of soundscapes in Calgary, social impacts of noise

Listening journals: Take 30-60 minutes to focus on listening to a specific environment. *(No distractions: don't talk, and turn off that smartphone!)* Describe what you hear, along with any images, memories or questions that result. Post the description on the Discussion Board on Blackboard. *This must be done at least twice during the term.*

Note:

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. Please hand in your essays directly to your tutor or instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented.

If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

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A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources.

Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see <http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see

The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site: <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics>

or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/ethics/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

A complete schedule will be posted on Blackboard in the week before classes start.

The class will occasionally be divided into subgroups that meet on different days for sound-mapping exercises.

Jan. 8-10 **Hearing and Listening**

Introduction of concepts: acoustics, auditory system, psychoacoustics

Focus questions: How do I hear? How do I listen?

Readings from the website of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology:

<http://wfae.proscenia.net>

Copeland "Ten Questions"; Wrightson "An Introduction" ; Mayer "Above & Below"