

Communications Studies (COMS) 391 L01
Introduction to Acoustic Communications and Acoustic Ecology
Winter 2014
T/R 11 – 12:15

Instructor: Dr. Marcia Epstein
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Web Page: See *Blackboard* for
course pages
Office Hours: By appointment

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- There will be some continuity of material between COMS 391 and COMS 381, but historical content in 391 will be interpreted in a different context.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

There is a Reading Package for the course, available at the Bookstore.

Additional 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

Fieldwork project Outline/ Annotated Bibliography	-----10%	Due Jan. 30
Midterm Exam	-----20%	March 6
Fieldwork/Research presentation	-----20%	March 11-25
Fieldwork/Research paper	-----25%	Due March 13 -27
Final Exam (in class)	-----10%	April 10

Participation -----15%:

Listening Journals posted on B-bd (*minimum* of 2 entries);
Other contributions (in-class or *Blackboard* discussion, relevant questions, etc.)

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

-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. Each group will choose a focus in AE (fieldwork) or AC (research), and prepare a plan of research with an annotated bibliography of sources, a 15-minute presentation to the class, and a research paper. All topics must be cleared with the instructor; specific advice will be given to each group about methodology.

-Outline & Annotated bibliography: This is a preliminary plan for your research project, including a statement of what you are investigating, what sources and methods you will use, how you plan to divide and carry out the work involved, and how you will ensure that work is fairly divided and that all group members do their share. The annotated bibliography will consist of at least three written or recorded sources that will enable you to start your work, cited with correct bibliographic format (APA or MLA) and annotated with brief descriptions of the source, the author's or artist's expertise, and how the source will be useful to your project. Length: avg. 3 pages.

-Presentation: Each group will give a 15-minute presentation to the class, summarizing their project and incorporating audio and visual materials that will enhance the class's understanding of the project. This can take the form of a live or videotaped performance.

-Paper: Each group will hand in a research paper or equivalent comprehensive document within 2-5 days of their presentation date. Each paper or document must contain complete citations for all bibliographic sources, including audio and video clips. Length: Depends on topic; avg. 7-12 pages double-spaced for papers. Audio-visual and pre-recorded projects must be accompanied by:

- a script and/or storyboard, or a *detailed* outline of contents;
- a bibliography of all written and "clipped" sources;
- a statement from each group member of what you learned from doing the project.

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Note: Please hand in your essays directly to your 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. *If you need an extension, ask ahead of time.*

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://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:

	Grading Scale	Meaning (for papers):
A+	96-100	Professional quality work
A	90-95.99	Outstanding and well expressed
A -	85-89.99	Excellent; needs more attention to detail
B+	80-84.99	Very good; well expressed
B	75-79.99	Good: basic expectations are met
B-	70-74.99	Good: needs more attention
C+	65-69.99	Shows promise; improvements needed
C	60-64.99	Adequate: covers the basics only
C-	55-59.99	Barely adequate
D+	53-54.99	Shows gaps in comprehension
D	50-52.99	Grim: see me immediately
F	0-49	Failing

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 Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) 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/cfreh>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Jan. 9 **Overview of Concepts**

Introduction of concepts: acoustics, auditory system, psychoacoustics, acoustic ecology, acoustic communications.

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"

The rest of the schedule will be posted on Blackboard during the week before classes start.