

Department of Communication & Culture
COMS 401.12 Lec 01:
Introduction to Acoustic Ecology/Acoustic Communications

Block Week - Fall 2011
TWRFS (Sept 6-10) 10:00-16:00

Instructor: Dr. Marcia J. Epstein
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Office Hours: By appointment

Additional Information

Some fieldwork (off campus) is required. So is research outside of class time.

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.*

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 and music convey meaning. This course is intended to provide an introduction to selected concepts, techniques and applications from AE and AC.

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 healthcare 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 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>

Assignments and Evaluation

Fieldwork project outline -----	10%	Sept.7
Quiz-----	25%	Sept.9 in class
Fieldwork presentation -----	25%	Sept. 10
Fieldwork project paper -----	25%	Sept. 26
Participation -----	15%:	

Listening Journals posted on Bbd (minimum of 2 entries);

Discussion of assigned articles on Bbd Discussion Board;

Other contributions (in-class discussion, relevant questions, leadership of project components)

Information on Assignments

Listening Journal: For at least two days/evenings you will be expected to take at least 30 minutes to consider and write about what you hear in your everyday environment at home, work, recreation, or outdoors. This assignment will be posted on the Discussion

Board on Blackboard. It is not graded separately, but will count as part of your Participation grade.

Quiz: A brief test on concepts, terminology, applications of knowledge. Questions will be drawn from lectures and readings.

Group Project/Fieldwork: This is the major project for the course. On the first day of class you will form groups; on the second day your general outlines will be due (what you plan to concentrate on, some initial resources, where and how you will do the investigation).

This year the projects will focus on the following areas:

AC focus:

Social and auditory impacts of MP3 devices (how are they used, and why?)

Auditory and social aspects of broadcast media (what is being conveyed? To whom? To what effect?)

Speech as sound (this will generally involve either linguistics or performance-art projects)

Music as communication (what are the messages and information being conveyed? To whom are they meaningful, and why?)

AE focus (includes sound mapping):

Community concerns about noise

Preservation of natural soundscapes

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. Penalties may depend on the reason for the delay.

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: www.efwr.ucalgary.ca

Grading System

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

	Grading Scale
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 (MacEwan Student Centre 4th floor, efwr.ucalgary.ca) 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.su.ucalgary.ca/services/student-services/student-rights.html>

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

This course has obtained course-based ethics approval from the faculty research ethics committee. 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 <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/for-researchers/ethics> As well, you **must read** the information provided under concerning the interview assignment. There are additional websites provided in that document.

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/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Some changes may occur to accommodate guest speakers: order of topics is approximate.

Pre-Session Study:

Readings from the website of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology:
Copeland "Ten Questions"; Wrightson, "An Introduction..."; Mayer "Above and Below..."

Sept. 6

Introduction to concepts and vocabulary, soundscapes, ambient noise.
Course structure and ethics for research projects.
Hearing and listening, auditory culture, the influence of sound on learning.
Physics of sound (basic acoustics) & basic physiology of auditory system.
Formation of project groups, initial planning of projects.
Discussion of readings from Pre-Session Study.

Sept.7

Soundscapes and sound mapping, space as resonator,
the acoustics of building materials.
Physics of sound 2
Campus soundwalk and discussion.
Readings: Krause, Redstrom, De Geest.

Sept.8

Sound and health, sound as ambience.
Auditory systems of humans and other species.
Fieldwork session I.
Focus Questions: What information is conveyed by sound or its absence? How does sound affect health?
Readings: Franklin, Schafer, Ferrington.

Sept.9

QUIZ.
Noise and silence, the soundscapes of public space.
Community noise issues; noise abatement.

Fieldwork review.

Fieldwork session II.

Readings: Tatum, Copeland "Indifference".

Sept. 10

Fieldwork reports and discussions.

September 26

Fieldwork projects due.