

University of Calgary

Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 491 L01: *Introduction to Acoustic Communications and Acoustic Ecology*

Fall 2019: Monday September 9 – Wednesday December 4 (excluding Oct. 14 and Nov. 10-16)

Lecture: M/W 14:00 – 15:15

Instructor:	Dr. M. J. Epstein
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Web Page:	D2L available through MyUofC portal
Office Hours:	By appointment, Mondays & Wednesdays

Course Description

In an increasingly noisy and 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 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, music and silence convey meaning.

This course will provide an introduction to selected concepts, techniques and applications from AE and AC.

Additional Information

-There will be some continuity of material between COMS 491 and COMS 381, but historical content in 491 will be interpreted in a different context.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;

-Demonstrable familiarity with 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;

Readings

Stocker, Michael - *Hear Where We Are* (at Bookstore)

“Epstein Readings” posted on the course site in D2L

Articles available on the website of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE):
<http://ecoeear.proscenia.net/wfaelibrary/library/articles/index.html>

Recommended listening:

Sound Blogs <http://soundexplorations.blogspot.ca/>

Earth Ear: <http://earthear.com/acousticecology.html>

Internet and electronic communication device information

Phones and pagers must be turned off during class unless you are a health care or law enforcement professional with credentials, or responsible for the care of a dependent family member. Computers of any variety are welcome as long as they are used appropriately. Research and note-taking* are appropriate during class. Social sites, Twitter, games, YouTube, e-mail and texting are not.

*Be aware that recent research shows that taking lecture notes on a keyboard produces results that are inferior to handwriting:

http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/?&WT.mc_id=SA_MB_20140604

and

<http://pss.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/04/22/0956797614524581.abstract>

Assignments and Evaluation

Project Plan & Annotated Bibliography – 15%	Due Oct. 7
Midterm Exam -----25%	Oct. 9
Listening Exercise -----15%	Due Nov. 6
Presentation and written document-----	25%(15+10) Due by arrangement, Nov. 18-27
Participation in class & D2L -----10%	Dec. 4 (see instructions below)
Final Exam (in class) -----10%	Dec. 4

Exams (closed-book) will consist of a combination of short-answer questions and speculative essay questions.

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.

Each group will choose a focus in AE (fieldwork) or AC (research), and prepare:

- a plan of research with an annotated bibliography of preliminary sources; and
- a presentation to the class followed by a written document (see below)

Topic areas for projects (topics will develop from these general categories):

Speech – as carrier of information, emotion, identity, or means of discrimination

Music – as communication, inspiration, remedy, relaxation, and/or addiction

Noise – as celebration, protest, territorial boundary, and/or hazard to health

Silence – as contemplation or restriction

All topics must be cleared with the instructor; specific advice will be given to each group about methodology.

Examples of topics:

AE: You may choose to describe and sound-map a place (e.g. business, neighbourhood, restaurant, rink). This usually involves a focus on environmental Noise or Music, or perhaps Silence (e.g. mapping the campus for quiet study spaces). Comparing two or more examples can be a feasible approach; so can interviewing employees or residents about their reactions to the soundscape.

AC: Research for Speech can be focused on history (e.g. radio in WWII), sociology (e.g. how the voice changes in gender reassignment), or biology (e.g. how birds communicate). Research for Music will focus on music as communication (but not the merits of your favourite band, please). Research for Silence can involve historical or biological approaches (e.g. the effects of quiet environments on stress reduction).

Topics about film soundtracks –Music and/or Speech --require at least one Film Studies student in your group; topics about Music require at least one group member with some training in music.

-Project Plan & 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 written and/or recorded sources that will enable you to start your work, cited with correct bibliographic format (APA or MLA) and annotated with concise descriptions of each source, the author's or artist's background, and how the source will be useful to your project. Annotations are usually sufficient at 1 or 2 paragraphs. Each group member should contribute at least two entries.

Length: avg. 3-5 pages.

-Presentation: Each group will present to the class, explaining their research methods and findings 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: in either case, the group must be prepared to answer questions on the work.

Both presented and prerecorded projects must be accompanied by:

- a written document (detailed script and/or storyboard, or a detailed and orderly outline of contents). Each document must be clearly written, proofread and corrected.

-a bibliography of all written and “clipped” sources, including audio and video sources.

-a statement from each group member of what you learned from doing the project.

Presentation length: usually 20-25 minutes; depends on topic, size of group, and number of presentations in the schedule.

Each presentation document must contain complete citations for all bibliographic sources, including audio and video clips, cited by means of URLs or recordings of 6 minutes or less. If you use any recordings, be sure that they are clearly associated with the document, in the same document envelope, and labeled with the course number and the name of at least one group member. This prevents losses.

Document length: Depends on topic and size of group.

Listening Exercise

Attend a live performance, on campus or off, of music or theatre. (Concerned about ticket prices? Campus performances at the Music and Drama departments are free for students.)

Write a brief essay or review about what you heard, how it affected you (Memories? Emotions? Images? Ideas?) and how the experience relates to the content of this course. Integrate reference to an assigned reading into your commentary, if appropriate.

-Prepare to concentrate primarily on the sound, not on dancing, drinking, eating or socializing. You might enjoy the event in a completely new way.

Specify: Title of event, date, venue. Attach ticket stub or screenshot of e-ticket.

Length: 1-3 pages.

Participation grade

Besides your in-class participation, the following exercise will be counted toward your participation grade:

Commentaries, posted on D2L, describing your thoughts about two presentations given in class (not your own group). Comments should be kept sincere and polite: they will be available to the class. A concise paragraph is sufficient (if aiming for excellence, more detail is recommended). This assignment will not be counted for the grade of the group you comment on; it will count for your participation score.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

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

Submission of Assignments:

Annotated bibliographies will be submitted in hard copy.

Presentation documents may be hard copy or electronic, depending on your topic: this will be determined for each group.

Note: *If submitting electronically, title your file as follows:*

COMS 491_surnames of all group members (alphabetical and separated by commas).

Department Regulations:

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. In case of assignments authorized for online submission, use the Dropbox function of D2L.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

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 know that the assignment is going to be late for a good reason (Illness? University sports team travel? Extreme stress?), ask for an extension before it's due.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students

who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*.

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film

Final grades are reported as letter grades. However, assignments, exams, and other work in this course will be graded using raw scores (e.g., a score out of 15 for an assignment worth 15 /100 of the final grade)

The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department. If letter grades are used for an assignment or other course component, the percentage equivalent in the final column will be used for calculating the final grade:

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%

1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Academic Misconduct

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

Research 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 <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

If you plan to conduct any interviews with people or observations of them for your Project, see your instructor about Ethics clearance

Important information, services, and contacts for students

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Note: The schedule may change somewhat to accommodate guest speakers. Changes will be announced in class and on D2L

9/9 - Introduction of concepts; acoustics, auditory system, psychoacoustics, acoustic ecology, acoustic communications, auditory culture; speech, music, noise, silence.

Perspectives on sound: from science, sociology, communications, biology, aesthetics.

Slide set 1

9/11 Hearing and Listening; noticing and describing sound, sound and silence

Stocker - p.1-24.

WFAE website: Copeland "Ten Questions"; Wrightson "An Introduction"

<http://ecoear.proscenia.net/wfaelibrary/library/articles/index.html>

9/16 Sound and Culture; how sound communicates

Stocker - p.24-53

WFAE: Westerkamp, "Listening to the Listening"

Slide set 2

Slide set 3 (preparation for next class)

9/18 What We Hear: Science of Sound

Basic acoustics

Stocker - p. 67-82

Guest: Teresa Drew, Industrial project manager (noise & environmental impacts)

9/23 How We Hear: Auditory System

Stocker - p. 83-101

Slide set 4

WFAE: Ferrington, "Keep your ear-lids open"

Epstein 1

Formation of groups for projects (BE THERE!)

9/25 Campus Soundwalks / Project Planning (class divided into groups)

Formation of groups for projects, preliminary discussion of possible topics

9/30 Speech and its Anatomy

Stocker - p. 138-148

Slide set 5A

10/2 Acoustic Community: Language, Identity, Boundaries

Stocker - p. 31-61

-What We Don't Hear:

WFAE: de Geest, "The Negative Persona of Silence"

Epstein 4

10/7 - Review

10/9 Midterm Exam

10/16 Project planning

10/21 Noticing Noise

Slide sets 6A, 6B

WFAE: Westerkamp, "Noise control, Acoustic...Listening".

Epstein 2 and 3

10/23 Noise Abatement: Stories from the field

Guest: Jess Roy, acoustic engineer

10/28 Listening to Music

Slide set 7

10/30 Sound and Health

Stocker - p. 61-66

Slide set 8

Group check-in

11/4 Natural Soundscapes

Stocker -p.148-160.

WFAE: Krause, "The Niche Hypothesis"

Epstein 4

11/6 Sound: Science or Art?

Guest: / Dr. Daryl Caswell, engineer and musician

11/11-13 Reading week

11/18 Presentations 1-2

Group check-in

11/20 Presentations 3-5

11/25 Presentations 6-8

11/27 Presentations 9-11

12/2 Review

12/4 Final Exam