



English 380W How We Listen Spring 2014

Dr. Jennifer Stoeber-Ackerman | Binghamton University

Office: LNG-33 | 607.777.5494 | jsa@binghamton.edu | oh: R 12:00-2:00

Class | Tuesday and Thursday 4:25-5:50, Science Library 302

"I think I will do nothing for a long time but listen" – Walt Whitman

"Really listening, when it goes bone deep into that hidden ark of bones, is something other than itself. It doesn't alternate with but is seeing" –Fred Moten

Course Description:

This course will introduce you the idea of listening as a critical practice. It will ask you to consider the many ways that humans make and experience sound, both by itself and in conjunction with the other senses. In addition to exploring individual listening practices, we will consider the larger social implications of listening, particularly how it impacts and embeds sound within our history, cultures, institutions, literatures, and technologies. In our course discussions, we will tackle questions such as:

- *Did the invention of the iPod actually change the way we listen to music?*
- *Do we all listen in the same way?*
- *Why does the crackle, pop, and hiss of old vinyl records comfort some and annoy others?*
- *Does the sound of your voice impact your chances at employment and good housing?*
- *Do supposedly neutral "noise ordinances" actually affect some people more than others? Is our environment getting "noisier"? Is there such a thing as "noise pollution"?*
- *How has sound played a crucial role in contemporary social movements like #Occupy and the Montreal #Casseroles protests?*

Along the way, you will be introduced to the exciting new interdisciplinary field of sound studies and some of its primary theories and research, especially in regards to the role of listening in film, music, the environment, history, literature, urban space, and politics.

Required Texts: @ University Bookstore

Analog Days – Trevor Pinch and Frank Truocco (Harvard University Press)

**Additionally, you will be required to keep up with the Monday postings of *Sounding Out!: The Sound Studies Blog*, which you may find online at <http://soundstudiesblog.com> We will often use these blogs to kick off our class session, so come prepared to discuss the entries. I will also assign blogs from the archives that deal with our seminar's keywords and themes, which you will see on the syllabus.

Unless otherwise marked, all other readings and listenings will be available through **Blackboard via links on the "Content" page. You are expected to print out copies, read them in advance, organize them in an accessible fashion, and bring them regularly to class.

Learning Objectives: *Students Will. . .*

- analyze and critique listening as a critical, cultural, social, and historical practice essential to the daily life of our contemporary society
- recognize and analyze the arguments, methodologies, and assumptions that unite and distinguish Sound Studies as a field of inquiry.
- explore the major intellectual concerns and political debates that shape the interdisciplinary field of Sound Studies.
- acquire a critical vocabulary and knowledge base for the continued analysis of the field of Sound Studies.
- develop and hone skills of interdisciplinary cultural analysis such as close reading, close listening, critical argumentation, and academic essay writing.

Course Requirements:

To pass this course, all of the following elements must be satisfactorily completed:

- 10% Participation and Attendance
- 10% **5 Bi-Weekly Sound Provocations** (Week Three to Week Thirteen)
- 20% Sound Walk Assignment #1
- 20% Midterm
- 20% Sound Walk Assignment #2
- 20% Final Group Poster Presentation

- **PARTICIPATION (10%)** Among the many things this course aims to do is help you learn to discuss your ideas in a friendly, intellectually engaged atmosphere. What will keep this class interesting for everyone are the comments and questions generated by you. My primary duties in this course are to structure, moderate, and facilitate critical discussions. This doesn't mean you'll be left out in the cold, but you must be here and tuned in for every class period. These sessions are vital to becoming more constructive critical readers, writers and thinkers. **In addition to traditional oral discussions, there will occasionally be in-class quizzes, quickwrites, group activities, and other forms of active learning that will also factor into your participation grade.** Furthermore, I pre-select six random dates from the course calendar to keep track of who speaks in class to get a sense of the overall flow of discussion, so always come to class ready to discuss at least one point from the readings.

You are entitled to 3 class absences, no questions asked. Please do not email me about them.

Starting with your fourth absence, however, each unexcused absence will lower your participation grade by one full grade (i.e. 4 absences and your highest participation grade is a "B," 5 absences and your highest participation grade is a "C," etc.). If you are late, it is your responsibility to see me after class or you will be marked absent. More than 3 late arrivals may impact your grade. Any absence for official BU purposes must be arranged with me at least one week prior to the event. You are responsible for any missed lectures and course materials – please make arrangements with a classmate concerning notes missed. *Under normal circumstances, course credit will not be given if you have more than six absences.*

- **SOUND PROVOCATIONS (10%):** (5 written entries on Blackboard, **Weeks 3-13**): You will respond to bi-weekly sound provocations delivered via the discussion area on Blackboard. You will have a week to perform the activity suggested by the provocation, and one week to write up a 300-500 word entry on the discussion board in response. Posts should also relate your listening

experiences to the week's theme, reflect on the readings for the class in some fashion, and include audio whenever possible (mp3, youtube, links to sound cloud or audio boo). Visual images are encouraged. **Posts are due before class on Thursdays and must bear the correct time-stamp for full credit.**

- **SOUNDWALK ASSIGNMENT #1 (20%): 3-5 Pages, DUE MARCH 4th** This deceptively simple paper is keyed to help you practice three important concepts: listening, writing about sound, and explaining your methodology. In the opening weeks of class, you will be asked to compose a soundwalk for Binghamton, NY. A soundwalk, according to R. Murray Schafer, is "an exploration of the soundscape of a given area using a score (map) as a guide" (213). Can Binghamton, NY be evoked through sound? If so, how? **Your goal is to design (and draw) a score that would really give the flavor of the town to someone who has never been here before and compose a 3-5 page description of the sounds one would encounter along this walk (and their significance).** Relevant information to include – the meanings of the sounds, what they signal, the histories they represent, the feelings they evoke, the time/place they represent, etc. Please begin your paper with a write-up of your methodology for the soundwalk – the rationale for the design of your walk, how and when you collected and organized your information, and the basis on which you included/excluded sounds. If you have access to recording technology, please turn in a sound file along with your paper. To ensure the success of Soundwalk #2, please perform your sound walk in areas easily accessible by either walking or public transportation and no later than 8:00 p.m. Please include relevant bus/walking routes on your carefully drawn map.
- **MIDTERM (20%): MARCH 11th:** Your midterm will be an in-class exam based on defining and applying the course's conceptual "keywords" drawn from our in-class discussions and our course reading. Examples include: "listening," "noise," "soundscape," "silence," etc. We will generate a list of the keywords in class and online.
- **SOUNDWALK ASSIGNMENT #2 (20%): 3-5 pages, DUE MARCH 28th** After the first set of soundwalks are completed, you will receive the map and instructions to a soundwalk devised by one of your classmates. You will then follow the instructions on the soundmap and write a paper about your listening experiences along the path. This paper will continue improving your skills of writing about sound and your metacognitive understanding of listening as a critical exercise, with the added layers of critical analysis and argumentation. Rather than trying to guess the "original" intent of the soundwalk's author, your paper should concentrate on your own listening experiences at each location and the meanings you devise. Your paper should have a central argument about the sounds experienced on the sound walk (what is the main conclusion you draw about Binghamton based on these sonic experiences? What did you learn about the relationship between sound and place based on this exercise?) and use your listening experiences as supporting evidence. Include a discussion of important sounds you feel were missing from this soundwalk and why. You will compare notes with the original sound walker in class on the day the paper is due. As a class, we will compare and contrast our findings, drawing conclusions about listening as a practice shaped by culture, gender, and other individual and social differences.
- **FINAL GROUP PROJECT (20%): POSTER PRESENTATION** For your final project, you will be

working in groups of four to **design** a community-based sound project that will help A) mediate relationships between Binghamton University students and year-round residents of the city and B) help all Binghamton residents listen differently to the space and the people around them. You will not actually carry out the project, rather you will identify a problem, research sound studies methodologies and community project designs, and propose a sound-based project through which students and community members can participate that will work toward a solution to the problem you have identified. You will present your findings in the form of a poster that will be publicly displayed during an “Open House” on the day of our final exam. Members of the Binghamton community, both on- and off-campus, will be invited to view your projects, talk with you about them, and rate them on our course rubric. You will also peer-evaluate each other’s projects.

Ideally, one or more of these projects will be selected for future “How We Listen” classes to carry out in concert with Binghamton community groups Binghamton University’s Center for Civic Engagement (CCE). Rubrics for the assignment and directions for the posters will be handed out in class well in advance of the deadline.

Grading Policy:

I grade on a standard scale, not on a curve. Grades will be assigned as follows:

98-100%	A+	73-77%	C
93-97%	A	70-72%	C-
90-92%	A-	68-69%	D+
88-89%	B+	63-67%	D
83-87%	B	60-62%	D-
80-82%	B-	Below 59%	F
78-79%	C+		

Course Protocols:

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is the submission of any material under your own name that you did not create by yourself. **In short, do not do it.** I will not tolerate any lapses in academic integrity. General principles of academic integrity include: the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that original, individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. This includes failing to cite paraphrases from research materials and neglecting to quote and cite the use of another’s words. **Any student who plagiarizes, steals, copies or purchases a paper will not only fail the course, but will also be subject to a review by the university for further reprimand.** If you have any questions, please see the Binghamton University Student Academic Honesty Code. To cite sources and format quotations correctly, reference an *MLA Handbook* (or an equivalent). Please stop by during office hours if you have any questions about plagiarism or citing sources.

LATE WORK AND MAKE UP EXAMS: All late work will be docked one letter grade for each day it is late. No work that is more than 4 days late will be accepted unless you receive approval from the professor at least one day *prior* to the paper’s original due date. Barring exceptional

circumstances, all make-up exams must be *arranged far in advance* and must be taken before the scheduled exam date. Please consider course deadlines when making any travel arrangements.

PAPER FORMATTING: All work must be typewritten in a professional, double-spaced, 12-point font (preferably Times New Roman or a close equivalent; please do not use Courier New) with no larger/smaller than one-inch margins all the way around the document. Your citations must follow the MLA format unless you receive approval from the professor to use another style sheet. Please spend time editing and synthesizing your work, to ensure that your paper is within established page count. If you have a brief amount of overage – *no more* than 200 words – please continue to use regular margins and spacing. Even though your papers will be submitted to turnitin.com, the university's plagiarism protection service (through Blackboard), ALL formal written assignments must be submitted in hard copy, unless otherwise specified by the professor. *One last time, no electronic submissions will be accepted for a grade unless invited by me.*

As this is a "W" course, I expect that you take time and care with your writing. At bare minimum, I want the second draft of your paper – one you have read aloud at least once, one that at least one other classmate or trusted friend has read and commented on, and one that has been *revised* (for both grammar and content) and not merely spellchecked. In short, I can easily recognize intensive critical work attempted the night before a due date by its poor quality. For further assistance in advance of your deadlines, appointments with the campus writing center can be made online at: <http://www2.binghamton.edu/writing/writing-center/index.html>.

CELL/SMART PHONES, LAPTOPS, IPADS ETC: Laptops may be used for notes and research, but not emailing, IM'ing, shopping, youtube, gaming, blogging, checking your Facebook, or whatever it is you do on the Internet when not in class. If your Internet usage is distracting me or others, you will first be asked to stop and then to leave. Please turn your phones and other gear to *SILENT* during class (OFF for exams) unless it is an emergency (see me when you arrive).

A NOTE ON EMAIL: Although I encourage the use of e-mail for communication, it should not take the place of office hours. Please feel free to stop by during office hours (or use e-mail to make an appointment) for any issues, major or minor, that you are having about the course. Personal health, grading, or other such matters should always be discussed in person. Throughout the semester, I will e-mail you with important information pertinent to our course such as due date and/or assignment clarifications; please check your binghamton.edu address regularly. If you e-mail me, make sure to put ENG 380W in the subject line and please do not expect to use email like chat. I hold regular daytime email hours for classroom related correspondence; I will respond to e-mail within 48 hours, but I do not check e-mail after 7 p.m or on weekends. Email etiquette is very important to me. Please remember we write to each other in a professional setting. Therefore, use formal salutations/signatures as well as appropriate word choice and tone.

PROFESSOR'S DISPOSITION: While I may seem "chill" in class – I enjoy making my students feel comfortable so that we may have intense and fruitful class discussions – don't mistake my kindness for weakness. Please be advised this is a rigorous course and I have high expectations. Do not wait until the midterm to become aware of this important fact.

READING SCHEDULE

Note: This seminar is intended to provide an overview of readings influential to critical debates in the interdisciplinary field of sound studies. Time will not permit us to discuss all of the assigned readings in equal depth. Our focus will be determined by student interest. Also, the syllabus may be adjusted as the course progresses to accommodate logistical needs. I reserve the right to add or modify assignments throughout the semester, as necessary.

Course readings should be completed **before the date** on which they are assigned so that you will be able to participate in the discussion and more easily follow the lectures. **Please print out all electronic readings; organize them appropriately and bring them to class with you in order to facilitate discussion.**

Date	Class
<p>Week One 28 January</p> <p>30 January</p>	<p>Introductions, Beginnings, and Listening Exercises Welcome and introductions; course syllabus, theme, and goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Year of Silence” – Kevin Brockmeier (2007)
<p>Week Two 4 February: **Email Assignment Due</p> <p>6 February: ** Add/Drop deadline 4/7</p>	<p>The Soundscape: Hearing Silence and Listening to Noise Listening as a Critical, Cultural, Social, and Historical Act</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Listening” – Roland Barthes (1985) • “How We Listen” – Leon Botstein and Josh Kun (2007) <p><i>Introduce Sound Provocation Assignment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Sound Diaries: A Method For Listening to Place” – Michelle Duffy and Gordon Waite (2011)
<p>Week Three 11 February: **Receive Sound Provocation</p> <p>13 February:</p>	<p><i>Introduce Soundwalk Assignment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Introduction” from <i>The Soundscape</i> – R. Murray Schafer (1979) • “Sound is Not a Simulation: Methodologies for Examining the Experience of Soundscapes” – Linda O’Keeffe • “Listening to Kansas City” and “Springtime in KC: Soundwalk #2” • <i>Sounding Out!</i> – Liana Silva (2010) • PODCAST: Listening to The Tuned City of Brussels, Day 3: “Ephemeral Atmospheres” <p><i>Introduce Final Project</i> --selections from <i>Building Communities From the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Deejaying her Listening: Learning through Life Stories of Human Rights Violations” – Emmanuelle Sonntag and Bronwen Low • “Óyeme Voz: U.S. Latin@ & Immigrant Communities Re-Sound Citizenship and Belonging” – Nancy Morales

<p>Week Four 18 February:</p> <p>20 February: **Sound Provocation Due</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Word and the Sound: Listening to the Sonic Colour-line in Frederick Douglass’s 1845 <i>Narrative</i>” – Jennifer Stoever-Ackerman (2011) • “To Sir, With Ratchety Love: Listening to the (Dis)Respectability Politics of Rachel Jeantel” – Regina Bradley (2013) • “Queer Listening to Queer Vocal Timbres” – Yvon Bonenfant (2011) • “Queer Timbres, Queered Elegy: Diamanda Galás’s <i>The Plague Mass and the First Wave of the AIDS Crisis</i>” – Airek Beauchamp (2013)
<p>Week Five 25 February **Receive Sound Provocation</p> <p>27 February:</p>	<p>Film Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-Class Film: <i>The Conversation</i> (Paramount, 1974, Francis Ford Coppola) • In-Class Film: <i>The Conversation</i> (Paramount, 1974, Francis Ford Coppola)
<p>Week Six 4 March *Soundwalk #1Due</p> <p>6 March **Sound Provocation Due</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selections from “Second Conversation,” an interview of Walter Murch by Michael Ondaatje from <i>The Conversations</i> (2002) • “Play it Again (and Again), Sam: The Tape Recorder in Film.” Part two on Walter Murch – Jennifer Stoever-Ackerman (2011) • <i>Midterm Review: Sounding Out!</i> Podcast, Episode #7, “Celebrate World Listening Day With the World Listening Project” – Eric Leonardson (2012)
<p>Week Seven 11 March: **Receive Sound Provocation</p> <p>13 March:</p>	<p>Midterm</p> <p>Science and Technology Studies: The Noise of “New” Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Analog Days</i> – Trevor Pinch and Frank Truocco (2004) Chapters 1-3
<p>Week Eight 18 March:</p> <p>20 March: **Sound Provocation Due</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Analog Days</i> – Trevor Pinch and Frank Truocco (2004) Chapters 4-6 • <i>Analog Days</i> – Trevor Pinch and Frank Truocco (2004) Chapters 7-10 plus <i>Analog Days</i> playlist (Blackboard)

<p>Week Nine 26 March: **Receive Sound Provocation</p> <p>28 March: *Soundwalk #2 due</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Analog Days</i> – Trevor Pinch and Frank Truocco (2004) Chapters 11-14 • <i>In Class discussion of Soundwalk Assignment #2</i>
<p>Week Ten 1 April:</p> <p>3 April: **Sound Provocation Due</p>	<p><i>GUEST SPEAKER: CHRISTIE ZWAHLEN, CENTER FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Service Learning in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices" and "Principles of Good Practice in Service-Learning" Barbara Jacoby and Associates (1996) <p>Urban Studies and Noise: NYC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Noise and Modern Culture, 1900-1933" – Emily Thompson from <i>The Soundscape of Modernity</i> (2004)
<p>Week Eleven 8 April: **Receive Sound Provocation</p> <p>10 April:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The 'War on Noise': Sound and Space in La Guardia's New York" – Lilian Radovac (2012) • "Splicing the Sonic Color-line: Tony Schwartz Remixes Postwar <i>Nueva York</i>" – Jennifer Stoeber-Ackerman (2010) • <i>Nueva York</i> (1955) – Tony Schwartz (on Blackboard)
<p>Week Twelve 15 April</p> <p>17 April</p>	<p><i>No Class Meeting – Spring Break</i></p> <p><i>No Class Meeting – Spring Break</i></p>
<p>Week Thirteen: 22 April:</p> <p>24 April: **Sound Provocation Due</p>	<p>Popular Music [Hip Hop] <i>In Class Film: Wild Style</i> (1983) – Writer and Director Charlie Ahern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planet Rock" from <i>Can't Stop, Won't Stop</i> – Jeff Chang (2005) (Chapters 5-9) • "Music Meant to Make You Move: Considering the Aural Kinesthetic," <i>Sounding Out!</i> – Imani K. Johnson (2012)
<p>Week Fourteen 29 April</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Soul-Sonic Forces: Technology, Orality, and Black Cultural Practice in Rap Music" – Tricia Rose from <i>Black Noise</i> (1994) • "On Donuts, Sandwiches and Beattapes: Listening for J Dilla Six Years On,"

1 May:	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Sounding Out!</i> – David Primus Luta Dodson (2011)</p> <p>Case Study and Debate: Marcus Garvey Park (News Packet)</p>
Week Fifteen 6 May 8 May:	<p>Evaluations & Endings <i>In Class Worktime – Final Group Project</i></p> <p><i>In Class Worktime – Final Group Project</i></p>