University of Waterloo
Department of Drama and Speech Communication
DAC 203 / ENGL 304: Designing with Digital Sound
Winter 2020
Wednesdays, 2:30 p.m. to 5:20 p.m. in ECH 1205

Instructor: Dr. Henry Adam Svec
Office: ML 205
Email: hsvec@uwaterloo.ca
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

*Please allow for a 48-hour turnaround on any email inquiries you send to your instructor, who does not reply to emails outside of regular business hours Monday-Friday or on weekends.

Course Description:
This course will run as a workshop on the theory and practice of sound recording. We will take an interdisciplinary approach to the subject by considering such concepts as space, voice, community, narrative, materiality, and more—and by considering a wide range of genres and forms, including audio art, radio drama and documentary, podcasting, popular music, and film. We will explore issues and debates in the field of sound studies through the discussion of regular readings; we will also hone our skills in class through projects and assignments. After completing this course, you will be able to conceive, research, and produce your own sound projects; and you will be better able to situate them within the longer traditions and histories within which you are working.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:
A. Students will develop skills in the analysis of sound, through close listening activities and assignments, and through the close reading of key texts in the field of sound studies.
B. Students will acquire competencies in the crafts of sound recording, mixing, and editing.
C. Students will learn to hone their artistic voices through the conception and construction of sound works in a range of possible genres.
D. Students will develop an understanding of the function of genre and media in the creation and reception of sound works.
D. Students will develop their understanding of the relationship between sound and visual media, including film and digital games.
E. Students will build their communication skills through a variety of assignments and activities, including in-class discussion, in-class activities, written assignments, and creative audio production assignments.

Required Texts/Technology:
There are no required textbooks for this course (all readings will be made available through Learn). However, it is strongly recommended that you purchase the following equipment:

1) A Pair of Headphones. Headphones that surround the entire ear are very much preferred. I like the Audio Technica ATH-A700X. A cheaper model is the Audio Technica ATH-T400 Closed-Back Dynamic Monitor Headphones, but there are many other options out there as well. You must bring your headphones to every class meeting.

2) Recording Equipment (microphone and/or recording device). I recommend that you have your own mic and/or recording device. If you are using your phone as a recorder, I recommend that you buy an external mic designed for that purpose, e.g. Zoom iQ7 ($100), Rode VideoMic Me ($75), Shure MV88 ($150). Please bring your equipment to our class meetings, if possible—starting in Week 3.

3) Audacity. We will also be working primarily with the editing software Audacity, which is a free program, if you’d like to add it to your own machine at home or your laptop.
**Course Requirements and Assessment:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project 1: Sound Journal</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 2: Space Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project 3: Voice Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement/Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total points:</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Project Descriptions**

1. **Sound Journal**
   
   This assignment is meant to open your ears, to help you develop an ability to listen mindfully and attentively to the world around you. I’ll expect at least seven paragraph-long entries reflecting on your sonic experiences. You might describe a sound in as much detail as you possibly can, breaking it down into its component parts so as to get inside of it. You might compare the soundscape of one location at different points in the day—how does its rhythm, loudness, texture change throughout the day? You might reflect on how a particular sound or environment makes you feel. You might consider the history of a sonic environment and speculate on how it has changed over time. This is meant to be a creative assignment, which means that I’m not expecting any particular approach or writing style. Still, a rubric on Learn will give you a sense of how I will be grading this work. Your submission should be between 750-1000 words.

2. **Space Project**
   
   Produce a sound work (2-3 minutes) that focuses on the question of space in the recording. You are required to integrate at least one instance of digitally processed spatial transformation and one instance that features an interesting or significant unaltered space. The latter might be a recording made in a small, echoing bathroom or in a parking lot, for example. You must include a written statement (500-750 words) reflecting on your experiences with different spatial structures, both “real” and digital. Submit both files—as sound file and as Word document (or as Word document, including a link to the sound file)—through Learn.

3. **Voice Project**
   
   Create a piece (2-3 minutes) using voice(s) as a fundamental element of composition. Drawing on the readings and works to which we will have listened in class, your creation should refer to or interrogate at least one of the modes of vocal expression and recording discussed in class. For example, you might let the voice remain unaltered in order to focus on narrative, or you might heavily manipulate it in order to explore its textural properties. Include a statement (500-750 words) that addresses your engagement with voice and that “speaks” to the theoretical concerns discussed in class.

4. **Final Project**
   
   Carte blanche! Produce a sound work (4-6 minutes) that integrates the technical and theoretical concerns covered in class. Create something that capitalizes on or contributes to your practice—create a soundtrack for a film you have or haven’t made, a narrative soundscape for an installation, a demo for your band, a radio play, etc. Accompanying this will be a statement (1000 words) detailing your intentions and thinking about your work. Your statement must relate your work to at least two texts discussed in class.

   **NOTE:** For projects 2-4, the sound component will be weighted at 75% and the written component at 25% of the final grade.

5. **Participation/Engagement**
   
   This is a workshop and seminar-style course, and so both participation and engagement are crucial. In-class activities might include group discussions, individual or group assignments or informal presentations, or individual writing or audio production exercises. In-class work could also involve writing or other activities at the start of class, so be sure to come prepared and having done the assigned readings. Excellent work in the Participation/Engagement category will involve coming to class on time, having read the assigned readings, and
being ready to engage in the learning environment with energy and enthusiasm. (However, also keep in mind that participation doesn’t mean dominating every conversation, but also listening to your peers.)

You are expected to attend every class meeting and to be both punctual and professional. Absences, tardiness, distracting behavior, or the use of phone or computer during class time for anything other than taking notes or working will strongly, and negatively, affect your participation grade (see course policies, below). You may miss one class without penalty; after that, you will be penalized 1% of your final grade for each additional absence.

Policies and Expectations:
1) **BE ON TIME.** If you come in late, you will disturb both your fellow students and me. Late students will be marked absent for that day.

2) **ANNOUNCEMENTS** are made at the beginning of class. It is your responsibility, not mine, to be up to date. (This is another good reason to be on time.)

3) **ALL PHONES OFF AND PUT AWAY, PLEASE.** Critical thinking is hard enough without constant distraction. Please be respectful of the learning environment.

4) **LAPTOPS FOR NOTES ONLY, PLEASE.** If you require a laptop, I recommend that you use Internet connectivity–controlling apps such as Freedom or Self Control during our class time.

5) **TALK TO ME OR THE GROUP AS A WHOLE, NOT YOUR NEIGHBOR.** Noise is distracting, to me, and to the people around you.

6) **LEAVE WHEN CLASS IS OVER, NOT BEFORE, AND STAY FOR THE DURATION OF CLASS.** Don’t worry: we will take a break at some point.

7) **BE CLEAR ON THE SCHEDULE.** It’s on the syllabus.

8) **HAND IN AND PRESENT WORK ON TIME.** Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day. Assignments submitted later than 7 days after the due date will not be accepted.

9) **SHOW RESPECT TO YOUR CLASSMATES.** We can and should disagree with one another as we discuss and debate the course content, but it is imperative that we do so civilly and respectfully.

10) **BE HERE.** Except in cases of emergency, please remain in our classroom for the duration of our class time. We will be taking breaks; use them to get a drink of water or visit the restroom.

**NOTE:** The following schedule, and required readings list, is subject to change. Please watch our Learn page for updates and announcements.

**Course Schedule:**

**Week 1—Introductions**

January 8: Introductions to the course and to each other.

**Week 2—Sound and Listening**

January 15: READ Schafer, “Introduction” (pp. 3-12 of *The Soundscape*)

READ Chion, “The Three Listening Modes”

READ Goodman, “The Ontology of Vibrational Force”

HEAR 99% Invisible, “The Sound of Sports”
Week 3—Transduction

January 22: READ Ogborne, “Sound as Signal”
READ Rothenbuhler & Peters, “Defining Phonography”
READ Meintjes, “The Recording Studio as Fetish”

BRING Recording Equipment to class

DUE: Sound Journals due on Friday, January 24, by 4:00 p.m.

Week 4—Space

January 29: READ Blesser and Salter, “Introduction to Aural Architecture”
READ Doyle, “‘How Near, How Far?’: Inner Voices, Weird Space and the Ghostly West”
READ Ogborne, “Spectrum and Filters”

Week 5—Genre

February 5: READ Bawarshi, “The Genre Function”
READ Sterne et al, “The Politics of Podcasting”
READ Rodgers, “Towards a Feminist Historiography of Electronic Music”

Week 6—Noise

February 12: READ Attali, “Introduction” (pages 3-20 of Noise)
READ Akiyama, “Silent Alarm”
HEAR Nihilist Spasm Band, No Record

DUE: Space Projects due on Friday, February 14, by 4:00 p.m.

READING WEEK

February 19: NO CLASS

Week 7—The Voice

February 26: READ Barthes, “The Grain of the Voice”
READ Weheliye, “Desiring Machines in Black Popular Music”
READ Alten, “Voiceovers and Narration”

Week 8—Storytelling

March 4: READ McPhee, “Structure”
READ Updike, “Better Writing Through Radio, Parts 1-2”
HEAR Serial (episodes 1-2)

Week 9—Sound and Film

March 11: READ Murch, “Stretching Sound to Help the Mind See”
READ Altman, “Four and a Half Film Fallacies”

DUE: Voice Projects due by Friday, March 13, by 4:00 p.m.
Week 10—Sound, Interactivity, and Mobility

READ Svec, “Becoming Machinic Virtuosos”
READ Hosokawa, “The Walkman Effect”

Week 11—Glitches and Samples

March 25: READ Kelly, *Cracked Media* (pages 1-18)
READ Katz, *Capturing Sound* (pages 137-157)

Week 12—Finding Audience

April 1: READ Locke, “To Find New Listeners, Podcasts Need to Move Beyond Sound”
READ McGrory, “Photo Focused”
READ Boyer, “How We Work”

DUE: Final Projects due by Friday, April 3rd, by 4:00 p.m.

Course, Faculty, and University Policies:

Territorial Acknowledgment
The department of Communication Arts acknowledges that we live and work on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometers on each side of the Grand River.

Academic Integrity
In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage (https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/) and the Arts Academic Integrity webpage for more information.

Discipline
A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline. For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/guidelines/guidelines-assessment-penalties).

Grievance
A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4 (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-70). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.
**Appeals**

A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71, Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72, Student Appeals (https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-72).

**Note for Students with Disabilities**

The AccessAbility Services office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (NH 1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.