

# **SOUND, ECOLOGY, AND POLITICS**

Michaelmas Term 2022

## **Course Description**

This course introduces “sound” as a political and analytic category. To do so, it explores how music pieces and human and nonhuman voices, yet also silences and nonconscious vibrations shape political life. Specifically, we will

- (1) Learn about the various roles of sounds in politics and about the ways that sound actively involves the sensing human body and more-than-human environments in political events;
- (2) Use sound to rethink central concepts in political thought (such as nationhood, voice, identity, and warfare), thus treating politics as an aesthetic and ecological experience;
- (3) Ask how a sonic framework help us to imagine new forms of democratic expression and sustainable living-together.

The course combines readings in political theory, cultural studies, and sound and media studies. It requires no prior knowledge in those fields.

## **Instructor**

Dr. Franziska Strack

[Email]

*Office Hours:* [Day, Time, Location]

I will also be available to speak after each class. If neither option works for you, please send me an e-mail and we will decide on another time to meet.

## **Organization**

*Seminars:* Friday, 3–5 PM, [Location]

*Accommodation:* If you require additional accommodation, please contact me.

## **Assessment**

***Preparation and Active Participation (10%):*** You are asked to prepare the mandatory readings prior to each session and actively partake in the discussions. Active participation includes critically analyzing texts, making comparisons between them, and engaging with your classmates’ comments in a respectful manner.

***Responses (30%):*** Each week, you will pick a quote which, in your opinion, captures a core aspect of one of the texts. You then formulate a short response (in form of a question, discussion, critique, ...) that explains I) why the aspect caught your attention, and II) why you think it is important to talk about it in the context of our course. The response should not be longer than one page and be sent to me before noon on the day of the session.

***Final Essay (60%):*** At the end of the term, you will write an essay of about 3,0000 words about a topic of your own choosing that relates to the course topic. Please meet with me if you would like to develop a topic together. The essay is due on [Date] December 2022.

## SESSIONS

### **Session 1) Sonic Ecology**

#### Mandatory Readings

- Chion, Michel. 2016. "The Ear." *Sound: An Acoulogical Treatise*, Duke University Press, pp. 16–28.
- Kapchan, Deborah. 2017. "The Splash of Icarus: Theorizing Sound Writing/Writing Sound Theory." *Theorizing Sound Writing*, ed. Kapchan, Wesleyan University Press, pp. 1–22.
- Schafer, R. Murray. 1977. "Introduction" and "Chapter 14." *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, Destiny Books, pp. 3–12, 205–13.
- Ochoa Gautier, Ana Maria. 2014. *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*, Duke University Press, pp. 1–9, 21–29.

#### Further Readings

- Sterne, Jonathan, ed. 2012. *The Sound Studies Reader*, Routledge.
- Gandy, Matthew & Nilsen, B. J., eds. 2014. *The Acoustic City*, JOVIS Publishers.
- Thompson, Marie. 2017. "Whiteness and the Ontological Turn in Sound Studies." *Parallax* 23(3), pp. 266–82.

### **Session 2) How the World Sounds**

#### Mandatory Readings

- Serres, Michel. 1997. "La Belle Noiseuse." *Genesis*, University of Michigan Press, pp. 9–26.
- Picard, Max. 1952. "The Nature of Silence" (pp. 1–4), "Silence as the Origin of Speech" (pp. 8–15), "Things and Silence" (pp. 66–70), and "Nature and Silence" (pp. 119–38). *The World of Silence*, Henry Regnery.
- Adams, John Luther. 2009. "In Search of an Ecology of Music" (pp. 1–10) and "An Ecosystem of Sound and Light" (pp. 110–16). *The Place Where You Go to Listen: In Search of an Ecology of Music*, Wesleyan University Press.
- Chisholm, Dianne. 2016. "Shaping an Ear for Climate Change: The Silarjuapomorphizing Music of Alaskan Composer John Luther Adams." *Environmental Humanities* 8(2), pp. 172–95.

#### Further Readings

- Cage, John. 2011. *Silence*, Wesleyan University Press.
- Voegelin, Salomé. 2010. *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*, Continuum.
- Fisher, John. A. 1998. "What the Hills are Alive With: In Defense of the Sounds of Nature." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 56(2), pp. 167–79.

### **Session 3) Birds, Insects, and the Anthropocene**

#### Mandatory Readings

- Carson, Rachel. 1964. "And No Birds Sing." *Silent Spring*, Fawcett Publications.
- Whitehouse, Andrew. 2015. "Listening to Birds in the Anthropocene: The Anxious Semiotics of Sound in a Human-Dominated World." *Environmental Humanities* 6, pp. 53–71.

- Grosz, Elisabeth. 2008. *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*, Columbia University Press, pp. 29–40.
- Smith, Jacob. 2015. “Birdland Melodies.” *Eco-Sonic Media*, University of California Press, pp. 42–79.
- Ganchrow, Raviv. 2021. “Earth-Bound Sound: Oscillations of Hearing, Ocean, and Air.” *Theory & Event* 24(1), pp. 67–116.

#### Further Readings

- Tomlison, Gary. 2015. *A Million Years of Music: The Emergence of Human Modernity*. Zone Books.
- Whitehouse, Andrew. 2015. “Listening to Birds in the Anthropocene: The Anxious Semiotics of Sound in a Human-Dominated World,” *Environmental Humanities* 6, pp. 53–71.
- Krause, Bernie. 2012. *The Great Animal Orchestra*, Little, Brown and Company.
- Barker, Stuart. 2017. “The Lost Sounds of Nature: The Growing Scarcity of Natural Sounds in the United States.” *European Journal of American Culture* 36(1), pp. 57–72.
- Allen, Aaron S. & Dawe, Kevin, eds. 2016. *Current Directions in Ecomusicology: Music, Culture, Nature*, Routledge.

### **Session 4) Public Sounds**

#### Mandatory Readings

- Smith, Mark M. (2001), *Listening to Nineteenth Century America*, University of North Carolina Press, pp. 19–46.
- Bronfman, Alejandra. 2016. “Receivers.” *Isles of Noise: Sonic Media in the Caribbean*, University of North Carolina Press, pp. 37–65.
- Siamdoust, Nahid. 2017. *Soundtrack of the Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran*, Stanford University Press, pp. 1–19.

#### Further Readings

- Russolo, Luigi. 1986. *The Art of Noises*, Pendragon Press.
- Attali, Jacques. 2014. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, University of Minnesota Press.
- Matiin & Iles, Anthony, eds. 2009. *Noise & Capitalism*, Arteleku Press.

### **Session 5) Sounds Gone Bad**

#### Mandatory Readings

- Goodman, Steve. 2010. “Introduction” and “Chapters 2, 3, 7, 13, 28, 33.” *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*, MIT Press, pp. xiii–xx, 5–13, 15–25, 41–43, 69–73, 149–53, 183–88.
- Weitzel, Michelle D. 2018. “Audializing Migrant Bodies: Sound and Security at the Border.” *Security Dialogue* 49(6), pp. 1–17.
- Wong, Deborah. 2017. “Deadly Soundscapes: Scripts of Lethal Force and Lo-Fi Death.” *Theorizing Sound Writing*, ed. Kapchan, Wesleyan University Press, pp. 253–76.
- Power, Nina. 2014. “Soft Coercion, the City and the Recorded Female Voice.” *The Acoustic City*, ed. Matthew & Nilsen, JOVIS Publishers, pp. 23–26.

#### Further Reading

- Senghaas, Dieter. 2005. "Sounds of Peace: On Peace Fantasies and Peace Offerings in Classical Music." *Resounding International Relations: On Music, Culture, and Politics*, ed. Franklin, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 199–221.

## Session 6) Voice, Gender, Opera

### Mandatory Readings

- Carson, Anne. 1995. "The Gender of Sound." *Glass, Irony and God*, pp. 119–42.
- Cavarero, Adriana. 2005. "Introduction" and "The Fate of the Sirens." *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, Stanford University Press, pp. 1–16, 103–16.
- Kafka, Franz. *The Silence of the Sirens*.
- Eidsheim, Nina. 2015. "Music's Material Dependency: What Underwater Opera Can Tell Us about Odysseus's Ears." *Sensing Sound: Singing & Listening as Vibrational Practice*, Duke University Press, pp. 27–57.
- Steigerwald, Megan. "Operatic Ethnography and The Industry's Sweet Land." *Ahead of the Beat*, Institute for Music Leadership, Eastman School of Music, Rochester NY, 8 October 2019.

### Further Readings

- Clément, Catherine. 1988. *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, University of Minnesota Press.
- Poizat, Michel. 1992. *The Angel's Cry: Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Opera*, Cornell University Press.
- Grover-Friedlander, Michal. 2011. *Operatic Afterlives*, Zone Books.
- Grover-Friedlander, Michal. 2014. "Voice." *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, ed. Greenwald, Oxford University Press, pp. 318–33.

## Session 7) Sonic Futures

### Mandatory Readings

- Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Félix. 2014. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, pp. 310–37.
- Tiainen, Milla. 2017. "Singing Non-Human-Centric Relational Futures: The Algae Opera as an Assemblage." *Musical Encounters with Deleuze and Guattari*, ed. Moisala et al., Bloomsbury, pp. 87–106.
- Beier, Jessie L. & Wallin, Jason. 2017. "Sound Without Organs: Inhuman Refrains and the Speculative Potential of a Cosmos-Without-Us." *Sound Thinking*, ed. Herzogenrath, Bloomsbury, pp. 135–57.
- Mockus, Martha. 2008. "Amplification." *Sounding Out: Pauline Oliveros and Lesbian Musicality*, Routledge, pp. 17–36.

### Further Readings

- Herzogenrath, Bernd, ed. 2009. *Deleuze/Guattari & Ecology*, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Moisala, Pirkko. et al., eds. 2017. *Musical Encounters with Deleuze and Guattari*, Bloomsbury.
- Mazzei, Lisa A. 2013. "A Voice Without Organs: Interviewing in Posthumanist Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 26(6), pp. 732–40.
- Oliveros, Pauline. 1971. *Sonic Meditations*, Smith Publications.