

## **ANT 324L: Sounds of the City**

Spring 2018

TTh 12:30-2

SAC 4.118

Marina Peterson

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OH: M 1-3 and by appt. (SAC 5.148)

### **Course description**

The city resounds with traffic and laughter, birds and airplanes, the nightclub and its revelers, the stillness of wind rustling leaves. In this course we will listen to the city through sensory investigations that attend to the physicality of perception and sound – to that which is audible and beyond. Listening is a way of paying attention and being present, both by people in the world and in conducting research. We will start by listening, and listening to how people listen. Listening is a practice that people do already as a way of knowing about things – it is something in which we are all expert, but which is usually not acknowledged. Austin will serve as our site of sonic investigation for an urban “acoustemology” (Feld) that explores the significance of sound for urban social life. Sonic methodologies will focus on ethnographic approaches to sound and listening, soundwalks, basic field recording techniques, and the analysis of sonic archives.

### **Course requirements**

#### *Participation and attendance [10%]*

This course will be run in a seminar format, with class sessions consisting primarily of discussion of readings, listening material, and sonic investigations. As such, it depends on the participation of all. Be versant with the assigned readings and other material, and be prepared to engage in productive discussion. Bring the readings to class as you will need to be able to refer to them. We will maintain an ethos of respect in all interactions. The class will be a welcoming and safe place for all people regardless of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.

Attendance is crucial. If you must miss class please let me know in advance, or as soon as possible. It is especially important that you attend all fieldtrips. Absences will be considered excused for religious holidays, illness, or extenuating circumstances due to an emergency. More than **1** unexcused absence will affect your grade.

#### *Field listening trips [30%]*

There are 5 field listening trips during the course of the semester. Following each fieldtrip you will write up your field notes (instructions will be provided in class) and post a 1-2 page reflection on Canvas. The reflection is a space to expand on your listening experience, the process of writing sound, challenges or questions that the investigation raised, and resonances with course readings. They are due Friday at noon, the day following the field trip.

1. Listening: Soundwalk #1 (due 1/19)
2. Listening to how people listen: Soundwalk #2 (due 1/26)
3. Listening to the city: Noise Measurement (due 3/2)
4. Listening to energy: Electromagnetic Detectors & Contact Mics (due 4/13)
5. Listening to the past: Santa Rita No. 1 (due 4/27)

### *Exams [30%]*

There are 3 take-home open book exams consisting of essay questions addressing each course module. Questions may address readings, listening material, and field trips. You will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of terms and their significance for sonic ethnography. These will be cumulative through the semester, meaning that questions will expect you to engage with previous modules as well as the one just completed. These will be taken on Canvas. You will have a 3-day window in which to complete the exam. They are due Friday at noon at the end of each module (2/16, 3/30, 5/4).

### *Sonic Ethnography [30%]*

The final project is a Sonic Ethnography group project. You will work in groups of up to 5 students to conduct a sonic ethnography of Austin. It will be presented as a blog post, with text, sound, and, if desired, images. Details regarding research components, presentation format, and evaluation will be provided in class during Week 4. They will be presented and discussed in class during the last week of the semester.

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Grade scale used for this course:

Grade	Cutoff
A	94%
A-	90%
B+	87%
B	84%
B-	80%
C+	77%
C	74%
C-	70%
D	65%
F	<65%

### **Academic Integrity**

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: "As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity." Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT. If you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT's Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address:

[http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint\\_student.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php)

## Readings

The following books have been ordered at The Co-op:

Gandy, Matthew and BJ Nilsen, eds. 2014. *The Acoustic City*. Berlin: Jovis Verlag GmbH.  
Novak, David and Matt Sakakeeny, eds. 2015. *Keywords in Sound*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Other assigned readings are available as PDFs or links on Canvas

You will also need to install the following free software on your computer:

Audacity (<http://www.audacityteam.org/download/>)

If you have a smart phone, please install the following free apps:

A decibel meter

some options are: Decibel X, Decibel Sound Meter, dB meter free)

A recording app of your choice

these offer higher quality audio than Voice Memos

some options are: Zoom Handy Recorder, Recorder Plus, Voice Record Pro

## Course schedule

# I. METHODS IN SONIC ETHNOGRAPHY

## WEEK 1 (1/16-18)

### 1.1 Introductions

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### 1.2

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FIELDTRIP: Listening: Soundwalk #1

## WEEK 2 (1/23-25)

### 2.1 Sonic Ethnography

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#### *Keywords in Sound*

"Acoustemology," by Steven Feld

"Body," by Deborah Kapchan

"Listening," by Tom Rice

Brenneis, Donald with Steve Feld. 2004. "Doing Anthropology in Sound." *American Ethnologist* 31(4):461-474.

### 2.2

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FIELDTRIP: Listening to how people listen: Soundwalk #2

## WEEK 3 (1/30-2/1)

### 3.1 Soundscape ...

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"The Music of the Environment," by R. Murray Schafer

"I Have Never Seen a Sound," by R. Murray Schafer

"From Ethnomusicology to Echo-Muse-Ecology: Reading R. Murray Schafer in the Papua New Guinea Rainforest," by Steven Feld

### 3.2 ... and its critics

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#### *Keywords in Sound*

"Space," by Andrew J. Eisenberg

Ingold, Tim. 2011. "Four Objections to the Concept of Soundscape." In *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge, and Description*. London: Routledge.

"Ethical Questions About Working with Soundscapes," by Andra McCartney

LISTEN: "A Village Soundscape"

## WEEK 4 (2/6-8)

### 4.1 Urban Soundscapes

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#### *The Acoustic City*

Section 1: Urban Soundscapes

"The Art of Noises," by Luigi Russolo

Smith, Mark M. 2012. The Garden in the Machine: Listening to Early American Industrialization. In *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*, edited by Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld, 39-57. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## GROUP PROJECT DISCUSSION

### 4.2 Phonography

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*Keywords in Sound*

"Phonography," by Patrick Feaster

*The Acoustic City*

"Silent City: Listening to Birds in Urban Nature," by Joeri Bruyninckx

"Recording the City: Berlin, London, Naples," by BJ Nilsen

## FIELD RECORDING WORKSHOP

### WEEK 5 (2/13-15)

#### 5.1 Sound Maps

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*The Acoustic City*

"Acoustic Mapping: Notes From the Interface," by Gascia Ouzounian

Droumeva, Milena. 2017. Soundmapping as critical cartography: Engaging publics in listening to the environment. *Communication and the Public* 2(4): 335-351.

LISTEN: Sound maps

#### 5.2

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## AUDIO EDITING WORKSHOP

DUE (2/16): TAKE-HOME EXAM #1

## II. LISTENING TO AUSTIN

### WEEK 6 (2/20-22)

#### 6.1 Urban Noise

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*Keywords in Sound*

"Noise," by David Novak

*The Acoustic City*

"Acoustic Gentrification: The Silence of Warsaw's Sonic Warfare," by Joanna Kusiak

Thompson, Emily. 2002. Noise and Modern Culture, 1900-1933. In *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933*, 115-168. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

## 6.2

### Austin's Noise

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#### *Keywords in Sound*

"Music," by Matt Sakakeeny

O'Meara, Caroline Polk and Eliot M. Tretter. 2013. Sounding Austin: Live Music, Race, and the Selling of a City. In *Musical Performance and the Changing City: Post-industrial Contexts in Europe and the United States*, edited by Fabian Holt and Carsten Wergin, 52-76. New York: Routledge.

*City of Austin Noise Ordinance*

Articles on Austin as the Live Music Capital of the World and conflicts over noise (links on Canvas)

LISTEN: Ed Ward, Austin Music in the '80s

## WEEK 7 (2/27-3/1)

### 7.1

#### Measuring Noise

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Schafer, R. Murray, *The New Soundscape*

IV: A New Definition of Noise

V: Sound Sewage: A Collage

Bijsterveld, Karin. 2008. Instruments of Torture: Traffic Noise as Uncivilized Behavior. In *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture, and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century*, 92-136. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. [read pp. 92-110]

### 7.2

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FIELD TRIP: Listening to the city: Noise measurement

## WEEK 8 (3/6-3/8)

### 8.1

#### Gentrification and Resistance

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Blackland Community Development Corporation

"Fighting for Affordable Housing in Austin: A Conversation with Mandy De Mayo," Director of HousingWorks

GUEST SPEAKER: Thor Harris, Blackland Community Development Corporation

### 8.2

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#### *Keywords in Sound*

"Silence," by Ana María Ochoa Gautier

*10 Preliminary Theses on Militant Sound Art Investigation*, by Ultra-red

LISTEN: Ultra-red. *Practice Sessions*

**SPRING BREAK**

## WEEK 9 (3/20-22)

### 9.1

### Volumetric Urbanism

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*The Acoustic City*

“Machines over the garden: flight paths and the suburban pastoral,” by Michael Flitner

Graham, Stephen and Lucy Hewitt. 2012. Getting off the ground: On the politics of urban verticality. *Progress in Human Geography* 37(1): 72-92.

Air Pressure blog

### 9.2

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LISTEN: *Air Pressure*, by Angus Carlyle and Rupert Cox  
*Voices of the Sky*, Cook Records, 1957

## Week 10 (3/27-29)

### 10.1

### Edge Spaces

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*Keywords in Sound*

“Silence,” by Ana María Ochoa Gautier

Brown, Christopher. 2017. “A Natural History of Empty Lots.” *Texas Architect*.

Solà-Morales, Ignasi de. 2014. “Terrain Vague.” In *Terrain Vague: Interstices at the Edge of the Pale*, edited by Manuela Mariani and Patrick Barron, 24 – 30. New York: Routledge.

### 10.2

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GROUP PROJECT WORK

DUE (3/30): TAKE HOME EXAM #2

## III. LISTENING TO ENERGY

## WEEK 11 (4/3-5)

### 11.1

### Sound of & as Energy

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*Keywords in Sound*

“Deafness,” by Mara Mills

“Radio,” by Daniel Fisher

“Transduction,” by Stefan Helmreich

Kahn, Douglas. 2013. The Aelectrosonic and Energetic Environments. In *Earth Sound, Earth Signal*, 53-68. Berkeley: University of California Press.

### 11.2

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LISTEN: *Electrical Walks*, by Kristina Kubisch  
*Sounds from Dangerous Places*, by Peter Cusack

**WEEK 12 (4/10-12)****12.1                      Listening to Energy**

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*The Acoustic City*

“Sonic Ecology: The Undetectable Sounds of the City,” by Kate E. Jones

“Bad Vibrations: Infrasound, Sonic Hauntings, and Imperceptible Politics,” by Kelly Ladd

Lefebvre, Henri. 2004. *Rhythmanalysis*. London: Continuum

“The Rhythmanalytical Project,” with Catherine Régulier (71-84)

“Attempt at the Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities,” with Catherine Régulier (85-100)

**12.2**

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FIELDTRIP: Listening to energy: Electromagnetic detectors and contact mics

**WEEK 13 (4/17-19)****13.1                      Mining Sonic Archives**

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*Keywords in Sound*

“Echo,” by Mark M. Smith

Harnetty, Brian. 2017. Earthquakes and frack-waste: Sounds of extraction-related disaster in Appalachian Ohio. *Cultural Studies* 31:2-3.

**13.2**

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LISTEN:            *Shawnee, Ohio*, by Brian Harnetty

**WEEK 14 (4/24-26)****14.1                      Listening to Oil**

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Prindle, David F. 1982. Oil and the Permanent University Fund: The Early Years. *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 86(2): 277-298.

Briscoe Center for American History, Energy & Natural Resources collections

Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection

Texas Archive of the Moving Image

Santa Rita No. 1 archival material

**14.2**

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FIELDTRIP:    Listening to the past: Santa Rita No. 1

**WEEK 15 (5/1-3)****15.1-2                      Final Presentations**

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SONIC ETHNOGRAPHY – GROUP PRESENTATIONS

DUE (5/4): TAKE-HOME EXAM #3



## Resources

### *Services for Students with Disabilities*

This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329- 3986 (video phone). <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/>

### *Resources for Learning & Life at UT Austin*

- The University of Texas has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning.
  - o Sanger Learning and Career Center: <http://lifelearning.utexas.edu/>
  - o Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>
  - o Counseling & Mental Health Center: <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>
  - o Career Exploration Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/careercenter/>
  - o Student Emergency Services: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

### *Important Safety Information*

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: [www.utexas.edu/emergency](http://www.utexas.edu/emergency)