

**COMS 361: Selected Topics Communication Studies 1 –**  
Radio and Audio Media Theories  
W-215 Arts Building

**General information**

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Winter 2023

Course pre-requisite: COMS 200, COMS 210, or COMS 230 or permission of the instructor.

Tuesdays and Thursdays - 8:35 am-09:55 am

Number of credits: 3

**Instructor information (repeat as necessary for multiple instructors and/or adapt for TAs, too)**

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Gustavo Ferreira, PhD. (he/him)

gustavo.ferreira@mcgill.ca

Office location / office hours: Arts W-233 / Thursdays 10:30 am-12:30 pm – in-person or zoom (link on myCourses) – or by appointment

Communication plan: All course updates and official information will be posted on myCourses, you should check it for updates at least twice a week on the day before class. To book appointments, we will use a Calendly link available on myCourses. You can direct other private inquiries by email, and I will try to respond within 1 business day.

Teaching Assistant: Kirsten Hawson

kirsten.hawson@mail.mcgill.ca

Office hours: Thursdays 10:30 am-12:30 pm by appointment

**Course overview**

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Communication Studies: Study of a special field in media theory.

Is Radio old news? In this course, we will dispute this notion by framing radio as a part of the audio media ecology. We will explore radio as a medium and language and how "new" streaming, podcasting and audio social media share characteristics and practices employed by traditional terrestrial radio. You will learn how to engage with media discourses about listening practices and the aesthetics of audio media. Through analysis of recent scholarship, we will debate methods of investigation on the politics, economics and cultural implications of audio media and theories of communication through sound mediation. We will be particularly interested in how these media are explored and appropriated in global South contexts, decentering the global North experience, especially in Latin American societies, where radio was instrumental in their "modernization" push during the 20th century.

**Learning outcomes**

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The goal of this course is to discuss and exercise audio media research, analysis, and production. By the end of this course, you will be able to

- **Conceptualize** audio media and its languages in terms of their relationships with other media, development context, production, and consumption practices.

- **Explain** and **employ** inquiry methods for radio and audio media studies.
- **Critically analyze** audio media products, formats and practices and **describe** their political, economic, and cultural contexts.
- **Use** an expanded repertoire of podcasts, playlists, and content to **plan, write, exercise production** of critical audio media content.

### Instructional methods

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- Lectures (synchronous and in person)
- Group projects (basic use of audio tools such as microphones, audio editing apps/software)
- Group discussions (synchronous in person and asynchronous online)

### Expectations for student participation

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Participation means you read the assigned texts, listened, or watched other assigned materials and attended every class with at least one prepared question, thought and example about the week's topic.

You should also be able to respond to myCourses discussions prompts when necessary.

We expect you to show up to class. As the COVID-19 Pandemic is still very much happening, we understand circumstances may change and make it difficult, or impossible, to attend safely in-person. If this is the case, please talk to me.

This is also true for our planned evaluation and instructional methods. In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

### Class Conduct

When interacting with others, you should always be attentive to their well-being, use polite and non-aggressive language, justify your positions, and give sources of information.

When expressing opinions, always reflect on how your thoughts align with different realities and perspectives. In this course we value solidarity as a learning practice: Try to think and take your positions from a solidary position. Acknowledge how your context is affected and affects others. We are allowed to disagree, and we should understand that more than one thing can be true.

### Class recordings

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Whenever possible, lectures will be recorded and posted to myCourses, while group assignments, presentations and discussions will not. Even in these circumstances, your voice or image may appear in the recordings. If you are concerned about privacy or other uses of the recording, please discuss with me.

## Required course materials

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All required readings will be available online through McGill services: myCourses, Course Readings and Library or open access links.

Other materials such as videos and podcasts will be linked or referenced on myCourses. Full information on materials can be found on the schedule below.

## Optional course materials

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Recommended Readings and other materials are listed alongside required materials on the schedule below.

## Course content

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The course is organized in three parts. In part one, we will study current media theories relating them to classic studies of radio broadcasting. In part two, we expand these relationships looking at politics and aesthetics of audio media. Finally, in part three, we further discuss contemporary audio media contexts, exploring automation, podcasting, and music recommendation.

- Part 1: Audio media framings
  - Digitization, Media ecology, Remediation, (Inter)Mediality
- Part 2: Histories, Politics and Analysis
  - Identity, Politics, Information and Community
  - Radio, Audio, Language and Aesthetics
- Part 3: Digitalization, continuities, and disruptions
  - Podcasting, Platformization
  - Music Streaming and Music Radio

### Class Schedule (readings, materials and assignments) \*

Week 1	Intro: Audio Media and Digitization
10 Jan	<p>Course Outline (<i>This thing!</i>)</p> <p>Hilmes, M (2022) But is it Radio? New forms and voices in the audio private sphere. In: Lindgren, M and Loviglio, J (eds) <i>The Routledge Companion to Radio and Podcast Studies</i>. London: Routledge, pp. 9-18.</p> <p><i>Recommended extra:</i></p> <p>Abumrad, J and Krulwich, R (2011) <i>Slow</i>. Radiolab. <b>[podcast]</b>. 08 Oct 2008. Available at: <a href="https://radiolab.org/episodes/165190-slow">https://radiolab.org/episodes/165190-slow</a> (Accessed 13 Dec 2022). (20min)</p> <p>Tacchi, J (2000) The need for radio theory in the digital age. <i>International Journal of Cultural Studies</i>, 3(2), 289-298.</p>

<h1 style="margin: 0;">12</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">Jan</p>	<p>Piñeiro-Otero, T and Pedrero-Esteban, L-M (2022) Audio communication in the face of the renaissance of digital audio. <i>El Profesional de la información</i>, 31(5), e310507.</p> <p><i>Recommended extra:</i> Lacey, K (2018) Up in the air? The matter of radio studies. <i>Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast &amp; Audio Media</i>, 16(2), 109-126.</p>
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Week 2	(Inter)Mediality
<h1 style="margin: 0;">17</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">Jan</p>	<p>Rikitiaskaia, M and Balbi, G (2020) Radio studies beyond broadcasting: Towards an intermedia and inter-technological radio history. <i>Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast &amp; Audio Media</i>, 18(2), 159-173.</p> <p><i>Recommended extra:</i> Kischinhevsky, M and De Marchi, L (2016) Expanded radio. Rearrangements in Brazilian audio media markets. <i>Radio, Sound &amp; Society Journal</i>, 1(1), 75-89.</p>
<p><b>Assignment #1: Weekly Questions:</b> post your question or thought to myCourses</p>	
<h1 style="margin: 0;">19</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">Jan</p>	<p>Sterne, J (2012) <i>MP3: the meaning of a format</i>. Durham: Duke University Press. From Mediality to Formats. pp. 7-31</p> <p><i>Recommended extra:</i> Straw, W (2015) Mediality and the Music Chart. <i>SubStance</i>, 44, No. 3, ISSUE 138: Intermedialities (2015), 128-138.</p>

Week 3	Remediation
<h1 style="margin: 0;">24</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">Jan</p>	<p>Freire, AM (2008) Remediating radio: Audio streaming, music recommendation and the discourse of radioness. <i>Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast &amp; Audio Media</i>, 5(2-3), 97-112.</p> <p>Kischinhevsky, M et al. (2020) WhatsApp audios and the remediation of radio: Disinformation in Brazilian 2018 presidential election. <i>Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast &amp; Audio Media</i>, 18(2), 139-158.</p>
<p><b>Assignment #1: Weekly Questions:</b> post your question or thought to myCourses</p>	
<h1 style="margin: 0;">26</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">Jan</p>	<p>Aegidius, AL (2022) How radio is remediated in streaming: the case of radio in Spotify. In: Lindgren, M and Loviglio, J (eds) <i>The Routledge Companion to Radio and Podcast Studies</i>. London: Routledge, pp. 438-447.</p>

Week 4	Transmediation and Platforms
<p>31</p> <p>Jan</p>	<p>Edmond, M (2015) All platforms considered: Contemporary radio and transmedia engagement. <i>New Media &amp; Society</i>, 17(9), 1566-1582.</p> <p><i>Recommended extra:</i></p> <p>Scolari, CA (2013) Media evolution: Emergence, dominance, survival and extinction in the media ecology. <i>International Journal of Communication</i>, 724.</p> <p><b>Assignment #1: Weekly Questions:</b> post your question or thought to myCourses</p> <p><b>Assignment #2: Audio Media Analysis:</b> submit your first Audio Media Analysis</p>
<p>2</p> <p>Feb</p>	<p>Continued Discussion.</p> <p>Closing of the first part.</p> <p><b>Assignment #2: Audio Media Analysis Overview</b></p>

Week 5	Identity, Politics, Information, Community
<p>7</p> <p>Feb</p>	<p>Cramer, G (2012) How to do things with waves: United States Radio and Latin America in the Times of the Good Neighbor. In: Bronfman, A and Wood, AG (eds) <i>Media, sound, and culture in Latin America and the Caribbean</i>. University of Pittsburgh Press, pp. 37-54.</p> <p><i>Recommended extras:</i></p> <p>Goodman, D (2022) Radio and democratic citizenship. In: Lindgren, M and Loviglio, J (eds) <i>The Routledge Companion to Radio and Podcast Studies</i>. London: Routledge, pp. 71-80.</p> <p>Hilmes, M (2012) Radio and the imagined community. In: Sterne, J (ed) <i>The sound studies reader</i>. London: Routledge, pp. 351-362.</p> <p><b>Assignment #1: Weekly Questions:</b> post your question or thought to myCourses</p>
<p>9</p> <p>Feb</p>	<p>Madrid, AL (2012) Music, Media Spectacle, and the idea of democracy. In: Bronfman, A and Wood, AG (eds) <i>Media, sound, and culture in Latin America and the Caribbean</i>. University of Pittsburgh Press, pp. 71-84.</p> <p><i>Recommended extra:</i></p> <p>Stiernstedt, F (2021) The voices we trust: Public trust in news and information about COVID-19 on Swedish Radio. <i>Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast &amp; Audio Media</i>, 19(2), 233-251.</p>

Week 6	More: Identity, Politics, Information, Community
14 Feb	Fanon, F (2012) This is the voice of Algeria. In: Sterne, J (ed) <i>The sound studies reader</i> . London: Routledge, pp. 329-335.
	Tietaah, GKM, Amoakohene, MI and Smith, MS (2019) Continuity in change: A history of radio for national development. <i>Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast &amp; Audio Media</i> , 17(2), 217-234.
	<b>Assignment #1: Weekly Questions:</b> post your question or thought to myCourses
16 Feb	Ehrick, C (2012) Radio Transvestism and the Gendered Soundscape in Buenos Aires, 1930-1940. In: Bronfman, A and Wood, AG (eds) <i>Media, sound, and culture in Latin America and the Caribbean</i> . University of Pittsburgh Pre, pp. 18-34.

Week 7	Radio Language and Aesthetics
21 Feb	Arnheim, R (1936) <i>Radio: An art of sound</i> . London: Faber and Faber. Chapter 7 - In praise of Blindness: Emancipation from the body. pp. 133-203
	<b>Assignment #1: Weekly Questions:</b> post your question or thought to myCourses <b>Assignment #2: Audio Media Analysis:</b> submit your second Audio Media Analysis
23 Feb	Continued Discussion Overview of the first episode of Group Projects

Week 8	Winter Reading Break
28 Feb	<b>NO CLASS</b>
2 Mar	

Week 9	Audio Language, Aesthetics and Listening
<p>7</p> <p>Mar</p>	<p>Barber, JF (2020) The War of the Worlds Broadcast: Fake News or Engaging Storytelling. <i>Radio's Second Century: Past, Present, and Future Perspectives</i>, pp. 96-118.</p> <p><i>Recommended extra:</i></p> <p>Abumrad, J and Krulwich, R (2018) <i>War of the Worlds</i>. Radiolab. [podcast]. 30 Oct 2018. Available at: <a href="https://radiolab.org/episodes/war-worlds">https://radiolab.org/episodes/war-worlds</a> (Accessed 13 Dec 2022). (59min)</p> <p>Battles, KH, Joy Elizabeth (2022) The enduring significance of The War of the Worlds as broadcast event. In: Lindgren, M and Loviglio, J (eds) <i>The Routledge Companion to Radio and Podcast Studies</i>. London: Routledge, pp. 217-225.</p> <p><b>Assignment #1: Weekly Questions:</b> post your question or thought to myCourses</p>
<p>9</p> <p>Mar</p>	<p>Wincott, A, Martin, J and Richards, I (2021) Telling stories in soundspace: Placement, embodiment and authority in immersive audio journalism. <i>Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast &amp; Audio Media</i>, 19(2), 253-270.</p> <p><i>Recommended extra:</i></p> <p>Murray, S (2009) Servicing 'self-scheduling consumers' public broadcasters and audio podcasting. <i>Global media and Communication</i>, 5(2), 197-219.</p>
Week 10	More: Audio Language, Aesthetics and Listening
<p>14</p> <p>Mar</p>	<p>Inthorn, S (2020) Listening while doing things: Radio, gender and older women. <i>Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast &amp; Audio Media</i>, 18(2), 211-226.</p> <p>Lindgren, M (2021) Intimacy and Emotions in Podcast Journalism: A Study of Award-Winning Australian and British Podcasts. <i>Journalism Practice</i>, 1-16.</p> <p><i>Recommended extra:</i></p> <p>Hindus, D et al. (1996) Thunderwire: A field study of an audio-only media space. Proceedings of the 1996 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work, 238-247.</p> <p><b>Assignment #1: Weekly Questions:</b> post your question or thought to myCourses <b>Assignment #3: Audio Media Group Project:</b> submit your first Episode</p>
<p>16</p> <p>Mar</p>	<p>Continued Discussion Overview of the first episode of the Group Project Closing of the second part.</p>

Week 11	Podcasting
<p>21</p> <p>Mar</p>	<p>Berry, R (2016) Podcasting: Considering the evolution of the medium and its association with the word 'radio'. <i>Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast &amp; Audio Media</i>, 14(1), 7-22.</p> <p>Bonini, T (2022) Podcasting as a hybrid cultural form between old and new media. In: Lindgren, M and Loviglio, J (eds) <i>The Routledge Companion to Radio and Podcast Studies</i>. London: Routledge, pp. 19-29.</p> <p><b>Assignment #1: Weekly Questions:</b> post your question or thought to myCourses</p>
<p>23</p> <p>Mar</p>	<p>Galán-Arribas, R, Herrero-Gutiérrez, F-J and Frutos-Esteban, F-J (2022) Podcasting: The Radio of Generation Z in Spain. <i>Social Sciences</i>, 11(6), 252.</p> <p><i>Recommended extra:</i></p> <p>Jorgensen, B and Lindgren, M (2022) Pause and reflect': practice-as-research methods in radio and podcast studies. In: Lindgren, M and Loviglio, J (eds) <i>The Routledge Companion to Radio and Podcast Studies</i>. London: Routledge, pp. 50-58.</p>

Week 12	Music, Streaming, Radio
<p>28</p> <p>Mar</p>	<p>Gallego, JI (2022) New synergies between the podcast and music industries: Spotify plays the rhythm. <i>Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast &amp; Audio Media</i>, 20(1), 105-121.</p> <p><i>Recommended extra:</i></p> <p>Chan-Olmsted, S, Wang, R and Hwang, K-H (2020) Substitutability and complementarity of broadcast radio and music streaming services: The millennial perspective. <i>Mobile Media &amp; Communication</i>, 8(2), 209-228.</p> <p><b>Assignment #1: Weekly Questions:</b> post your question or thought to myCourses</p> <p><b>Assignment #3: Audio Media Group Project:</b> submit your second Episode</p>
<p>30</p> <p>Mar</p>	<p>Razlogova, E (2020) Provincializing Spotify: Radio, algorithms and conviviality. <i>Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast &amp; Audio Media</i>, 18(1), 29-42.</p>



Week 13	Music, Streaming, Radio
<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">4</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Apr</p>	<p><b>Guest Speaker:</b>            Prof. Victor Pires, Visiting Professor at McGill, Professor of Communication at Universidade Federal de Alagoas (UFAL), Brazil.  <b><i>"LISTENING IS EVERYTHING": connected listening paths in the articulations between playlists, pre-saves, and musical recommendations on Spotify.</i></b></p> <p>Cwynar, C (2017) NPR Music: Remediation, curation, and National Public Radio in the digital convergence era. <i>Media, Culture &amp; Society</i>, 39(5), 680-696.</p> <p><i>Recommended extra:</i>            Glantz, M (2016) Internet Radio Adopts a Human Touch: A Study of 12 Streaming Music Services. <i>Journal of Radio &amp; Audio Media</i>, 23(1), 36-49.</p>
	<p><b>Assignment #1: Weekly Questions:</b> post your question or thought to myCourses</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">6</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Apr</p>	<p>Berry, R (2020) Radio, music, podcasts - BBC Sounds: Public service radio and podcasts in a platform world. <i>Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast &amp; Audio Media</i>, 18(1), 63-78.</p>

Week 14	Course Wrap Up
<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">11</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Apr</p>	<p>Final Reflections and Remarks.</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">15</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Apr</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Submission of the Last Episode is due 8am this day.</b></p>

### Evaluation

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Name of assignment or exam	Due date	% of final grade
#1 Participation	weekly	10%
#2 Audio Media analysis (2)	31 Jan / 21 Feb	45%
#3 Audio Media Group Project (3 instances)	14 Mar / 28 Mar / 17 Apr	45%

## Description of assignments

### #1 Participation

Throughout the course, you will need to post weekly questions or comments drawn from the week's reading on myCourses and be ready to elaborate or discuss them in our Thursday discussion sections. We recommend you choose what you find the most interesting or pressing question from your notes about the reading and lectures. There will be no "quality" assessment of these, you are encouraged to add any question you think it is relevant for us to talk about. However: **Do not copy/paste from others.** We will cover as many questions as possible, and you are welcome to discuss on myCourses with classmates or with me if you feel yours was not sufficiently discussed.

### #2 Audio Media analysis (2 short essays)

In the first part of the course, you will individually research and analyse an audio media artifact (a show, a channel, a playlist, etc) questioning an aspect of this artifact as it relates to concepts we discuss in the course. These should be 5 to 6 pages in length, double space, using 12pt font. Your goal is to critically expand your repertoire of audio media and engage with possible formats, languages, production structures and relationships with other media. Grades will be based on the relevancy of the example to our discussions, and adequate use of concepts we studied in class.

We will randomly connect some of the examples in our Thursday sessions, previously selected by me or voluntarily presented in class, counting towards the participation assignment. This will be the only feedback on your analysis, we won't provide written feedback on these. You should explore and comment on your classmates' postings to achieve our goal of repertoire expansion and give and receive more feedback.

### #3 Audio Media Group Project (3 episodes)

The main project of the course is an audio media production. In groups of no more than 7, you will plan and produce 3 episodes of podcast/audio show of any type exploring our central ideas of audio media theories. The connection of these ideas to the show does not need to be in its content, it can also be in the way you explore possible distribution, community involvement, the shows' role and goals and its stylistic choices. Although this is not specifically a production course, dealing with different media genres and especially academic audio media is an important part of contemporary scholarship.

Each episode should be accompanied by detailed show notes with credits and references and a 2-page (double spaced, 12pt font size) theoretical "defence" articulating its relevancy for our discussion and how the ideas we discussed figure in the show in general or the episode.

There are no minimum or maximum time length limits. However, the show must have the appropriate length for its proposed goals and relevancy to our discussions, and needs to be produced with a real audience in mind, simulating a real release to the public.

Each episode will be worth 15% of the course's grade, with varying weights in the evaluation criteria. The idea is that you progress as each repeated production experience.

Criteria / Due Dates	1 <sup>st</sup> Ep. Due 14 Mar	2 <sup>nd</sup> Ep. Due 28 Mar	3 <sup>rd</sup> Ep. Due Apr 17
Depth, Coherence and Relevance of the show/episode to the concepts studied	13%	10%	8%
Creativity, Production Quality, Real Audience Orientation	2%	5%	7%

### Language of submission of assignments

“In accord with McGill University’s [Charter of Students’ Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.”  
(Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009)

« Conformément à [la Charte des droits de l’étudiant](#) de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté, sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue. » (Énoncé approuvé par le Sénat le 21 janvier 2009)

### Academic integrity

“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#)” (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003) (See [McGill’s guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

« L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon [le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et procédures disciplinaires](#) » (Énoncé approuvé par le Sénat le 29 janvier 2003) (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le [guide pour l’honnêteté académique de McGill](#).)