

INF2112H - Audio Cultures

Fall 2025

Wednesday, 2pm-5pm

BL 417

Instructor

Professor: Gustavo Ferreira

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Office Hours: Thursday-Friday by appointment



"Tone it down." 2025. Memesguitar, April 5.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DIEk9Q3R0PR/>.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Land

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Course Description

Audio Cultures introduces students to critical studies of sound mediation and representation, including audio technologies, music performance and recording, and audio circulation, interpretation, and preservation. Specific course topics may include radio, podcasting, oral knowledge traditions and practices, new technologies and musical creativity, politics of noise and urban environments, voice commands and interfaces, AI voices and machine listening, and other aspects of mediated sound within information cultures. Students will learn how to interpret sound as potential and actual information and consider its ethical and political dimensions. They will also discuss how oral, audio, and musical practices relate to art, memory, and heritage. Finally, they will reflect on the institutions where oral cultures are collected, kept, displayed, archived, performed, or developed and which provide access to knowledge. Course materials will draw from a range of audio cultures, past and present, including marginalized audio cultures within and beyond North America.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Students who have successfully completed this course will be able to:

CLO 1: Evaluate theoretical, methodological, aesthetic, and historical approaches to the study of sound and music, with emphasis on technologies of sound mediation, representation, processing, and reproduction.

CLO 2: Apply concepts learned in the course to the analysis of practical contexts in which people experience and work with musical and audio information.

CLO 3: Combine, adapt, and develop techniques of sound recording and audio editing and mixing to preserve, express, and communicate information.

CLO 4: Evaluate interconnected cultural, political, technical, and ethical issues of recording, processing, and circulating of audio materials.

Relationship between MI Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

MI Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)	CLO 1 contributes to these PLOs	CLO 2 contributes to these PLOs	CLO 3 contributes to these PLOs	CLO 4 contributes to these PLOs
PLO 1	X			
PLO 2		X		X
PLO 5	X	X	X	
PLO 6				X

Assessments

The course assessments are designed to be learning experiences in their own right. They highlight the entanglement of theory and practice, specifically using reading, dialogue, planning, writing, and reflection as fundamental components of the course deliverables. Students will be assessed based on the evidence they produce of intellectually engaging with these assignments and reaching our CLOs.

Assignment Overview		
Name or Category	Due Date	% of final grade
Course Catalogue	8 Oct, 8 Dec	20
Soundwalk	1 Oct (walk) 2 Oct (submission)	15
Audio Production	14 Oct, 11 Nov, 25 Nov	45
Future of Audio Cultures (FAC) Reflection and Pitch	8 Dec	20

Assignment Descriptions

More details and rubrics will be available on Quercus. Students are not guaranteed to receive feedback on assessed material before the drop deadline. Check the “Late submission policy” for more details.

Course Catalogue (CC)

Goal: assess students' achievement of outlining the contents of the course, *critically* evaluating concepts, approaches, debates and methodologies studied in the course, and applying them in varied audio practices. (CLOs 1 and 2)

Throughout the term, students will maintain a handwritten journal and collect physical materials that document their learning journey in INF2112. These will be compiled into a physical binder that tells the story of what they learned, how they engaged with course concepts, and how their thinking evolved. The binder will include peer annotations, labelled artifacts with provenance, and responses to in-class writing prompts, organized in a coherent narrative.

Check-in: Students will submit a portion of their Catalogue after finishing Unit 1.

The catalogue will be evaluated based on Content Mastery; Reflective Thinking; Material Integration; and Presentation, Narrative & Formalities.

Note on costs: A binder, 400 sheets and a pen can be purchased for less than C\$10.

Soundwalk

Goal: Assess the application and evaluation of concepts and methods in listening, acoustemology, soundscape, and soundwalking. (CLOs 1 and 2)

In Week 5, we will go out on a soundwalk together (provided we have appropriate weather). You will document your experience through field notes and audio clips. After the walk and discussions, you will write and submit a reflection in the form of a short audio recording (maximum 5 minutes).

The soundwalk will be evaluated based on the following criteria: Concept Application, Contextual Clarity, Communication & Formalities.

If you need accommodations for this activity, please contact me as soon as possible, and I will provide an alternative.

Audio Production (3 pieces)

Goal: assess the application of audio mediation theories and creative use of audio in preservation, expression and communication of information (CLOs 2 and 3).

This is the main project of the course, spanning the whole semester. Students will produce three original audio works (e.g., podcast episodes, sound art, music, guided tours) that together form a cohesive project. Production notes and a short theoretical reflection must accompany each piece. The evaluation criteria will be Conceptual Integration; Creativity; Overall Quality; and Documentation & Formalities. Each production is worth 15%, with increasing weight on overall quality and conceptual integration. Students are expected to demonstrate growth in attention to detail in their execution and accumulate theoretical engagement across the three submissions.

Note on costs: Materials, services and equipment for these productions can vary widely depending on what you would like to produce. It is up to you to define a budget that fits the necessary production quality and what you can afford. The professor is available to discuss your plans during office hours.

FAC Reflection and Pitch

Goal: Assess student achievement in evaluating audio mediation and its theories learned throughout the course and in applying them towards issues of culture, politics and society (CLOs 3 and 4).

Students will write a short manifesto (2000–2250 words) reflecting on their experience with audio cultures and proposing a future direction, critique, or intervention. The manifesto must address a **specific current issue or controversy** in audio culture—such as sound regulation, platform governance, accessibility, archiving, or Machine Listening or AI voice technologies—and demonstrate critical and theoretical engagement with course themes. The manifesto will be evaluated based on Critical Engagement; Vision/Pitch; Course Integration; and Communication & Formalities.

Brief Course Schedule

All dates in this schedule are tentative and subject to change. The detailed course schedule is at the end of the syllabus.

Overview	
Topic	Date
I – Sound and Listening	
Week 1 - Listening In	Wed, 3 Sep
Week 2 - Knowing things with and from sound pt.1	Wed, 10 Sep
Week 3 - Knowing things with and from sound pt.2	Wed, 17 Sep
Week 4 - Listening to Soundscapes	Wed, 24 Sep
Week 5 - Soundwalking	Wed, 1 Oct
II – Audio Media	
Week 6 - Recording Sound	Wed, 8 Oct
Week 7 - Broadcasting, Podcasting, Streaming	Wed, 15 Oct
Week 8 - Creating Audio, Sounding Art	Wed, 22 Oct
Reading Week	27 to 31 October
III – Audio Senses	
Week 9 - Sensing Audio	Wed, 5 Nov
Week 10 - Speaking and Listening Selves	Wed, 12 Nov
Week 11 - Speaking and Listening Machines	Wed, 19 Nov
Week 12 - Sounding Out	Wed, 26 Nov

Contact, Assumptions and Conduct

For contact about the course's structure and assessments, students can do so directly during office hours, by email or indirectly through a student representative. To book office hours, we will use an MS Bookings link on Quercus. You can direct other private inquiries by email to me or the TA, and we will try to respond within two business days.

All course updates and official information will be discussed *in class*. Quercus will be updated based on what happens in class. Emergency announcements from Quercus will also be sent to your email.

Basic assumptions

1. You will be in class. Presence, dialogue, and interaction are integral to knowledge production.
2. More than one thing can be true. It depends on the circumstances and details.
3. This is a graduate course. You can search and collect data, find peer-reviewed, appropriate further readings, and have a very good grasp of how academic texts work.
4. While using digital technology is part of our daily lives, this does not mean you know how to use every interface or media language.
5. You have the independence and initiative to seek guidance for your work within (Instructors and classmates) and outside of the course (Library resources, Student Advising, Writing Support, etc.). **This includes office hours.**
6. You may not be familiar with fundamental concepts from various disciplines. This is an interdisciplinary field and an interdisciplinary course. This is expected.
7. You can and should make mistakes. The classroom is the place to do it. The consequence for mistakes is more dialogue and collective learning.
8. You want to break with “common sense” and use your perspective to problematize situations and theories, thereby changing your own and others’ perspectives. This does not mean to be a “contrarian” or “devil’s advocate.”
9. You are willing to experiment with non-digital tools and technologies. Use notebooks, pens, pencils, collages, and other materials.
10. You have and are further developing critical thinking skills: you want to imagine and find out how things ought to be, not just how they currently are.
11. We are working together, not against each other.

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 consider how your thoughts align with various realities and perspectives.

We value **solidarity as a learning practice**: think and take your positions from a solidary position. You can do this by acknowledging how your context both affects and is affected by others, and how everyone, including instructors and classmates, shares common goals and interests. Your actions should be focused on these common goals. Be open to help and be helped.

Charitable, Critical and Hate-Readings

The choice of topics and readings is based on what I judge to be the most effective to achieve our CLOs, regardless of their controversy or widely recognized or lesser-known problematic elements. Required readings are not merely supplementary content, but a significant part of the topic. **You must read them!**

Here's a good guide on academic reading by Paul Edwards:
<http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf>

Your reading should always be **charitable**: assume (author and instructor) honesty, and seek their best (if flawed) argument, not its worst, to argue against.

In cases where there are controversies about authors, content, or their use of particular terms, we should always consider their context, limitations, and contributions while also questioning their effectiveness in achieving our goals. However, we should not ignore or dismiss the text without engaging with it constructively. This is a **critical** reading process. Even when assuming honesty, keep imagining alternatives to what they say.

You are allowed one "**hate-reading**" during the semester (in writing or discussion), in case you just can't stand the author or their arguments. But you should direct your rage wisely. Once you use it, it's gone.

Formatting, Citation and Reference Styles

Whenever you submit a text-based document, it must be formatted according to basic academic writing elements. You should use a serif font (such as Times New Roman), size 12pt, double-space and 2.54 cm (1 inch) margins in a letter-sized page.

The university offers MS Word for writing. There are open-source options, such as LibreOffice and LaTeX, or note-taking markdown apps like Obsidian and Bear, which can export PDFs with these basic formatting elements.

For citations and reference styles, I *strongly* recommend using the *Chicago-style author-date* format. You can find more information and writing references in the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#). This style does not suppress the full author's name, helping with identification. However, you can choose from widely used styles such as APA, MLA.

I recommend using Zotero to manage, track, and generate your sources, citations, and reference lists.

Late Submission Policy

Two types of activities generate assessment in this course: In-class and out-of-class.

In-class activities

These are the ones made in the presence of the instructors and classmates during official class time. They cannot be compensated, except when accommodations are granted by Accessibility Services *in advance*. ***If you missed it, it's gone.***

Out-of-class activities

These are writings, reports, recordings, productions and any other type of activities that generate a deliverable done out of official class time, not necessarily in the presence of the instructors, and to be submitted on Quercus or delivered in-person. These have hard deadlines, which will then be graded and returned with feedback from the deadline up to 3 weeks afterwards.

After the deadline, ***you can submit your assignment at any point in the semester until one week after the end of classes without penalty.*** However, **late submissions will only be graded and returned to you** when final grades are finalized and submitted to e-marks **at the end of the term (deadline for grade submissions)**. This means that if you do not submit assignments by the deadline, you might not have feedback before the last official day to drop the course.

I strongly advise you to follow the assignment due dates. They are set to reflect our grade submission deadlines and to provide a reasonable time for assessment and feedback. To ensure you receive feedback in a timely manner and your projects progress properly, please submit your assignments on time. If you miss the deadline by a few hours or one full day, you *may* still receive feedback as if you submitted on time, *but this is not guaranteed.* This is dependent on whether we have initiated marking or not.

Within the instructor's purview, no additional extensions or penalties will be accepted *for any reason.*

I encourage you to read about *Accessibility Services*, following the link in the Faculty Policies section below, to explore other accommodations for your assignments if needed.

Generative AI Policy

I ***strongly*** advise against using Generative AI in general. The use of such tools for *in-class assignments is prohibited.* Students *may choose* to use generative artificial intelligence tools as they work through the *out-of-class assignments* in this course; this use must be documented in an appendix for each assignment. The documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work.

Course instructors reserve the right to ask students to explain their process for creating their assignment.

If you have not used GenAI in your assignment, you must add the statement as the last line of the document, after references:

“Generative AI Statement: I (we) did not use any Generative AI tool (such as MS Copilot, ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini) in the planning, creation or finalization of this assignment.”

Detailed Course Schedule

All dates are tentative and may change.

Each week has specific learning goals that correspond to our CLOs. Additionally, all topics include the following learning goals:

- Identify and rephrase each author's central claim or thesis.
- Summarize their arguments.
- Provide accurate definitions of the key terms the authors use.

Week 1 - Listening In – 3 Sep

We begin by providing an overview of sound studies, including concepts of sound and audio.

Learning Goals:

Explain the rationale of the course, its routines, what the expectations are and how to meet them (from the instructors' and students' perspectives). Explain the basic differentiation between sound and audio made for the course.

Required Texts

Sterne, Jonathan. 2012. “Sonic Imaginations.” In *The Sound Studies Reader*, edited by Jonathan Sterne, 1–17. London: Routledge.

Lecture

Tutorial

Course Structure

In-class Writing: Time-Capsule - Sound and Audio

Week 2 - Knowing things with and from sound pt. 1. – 10 Sep

The professor will be away. This week, we study the possibility of knowledge through sound.

Learning Goals:

Evaluate sound and listening as a source and practice of knowledge creation. Explain the concept of Aurality and Acoustemology. Situate knowledges created with and from sound within historical and cultural contexts.

Required Texts

Feld, Steven. 2015. "Acoustemology." In *Keywords in Sound*, edited by Matt Sakakeeny and David Novak, 12–21. Duke University Press. <https://muse-jhu-edu.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/book/69222>.

Ochoa Gautier, Ana María Ochoa. 2014. "On Howls and Pitches." In *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*, 31–75. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822376262>.

(Continued from last week) Sterne, Jonathan. 2012. "Sonic Imaginations." In *The Sound Studies Reader*, edited by Jonathan Sterne, 1–17. London: Routledge.

Remote Lecture Time

Thomas Riedelsheimer, dir. 2004. Touch the Sound. Documentary. Standart. YouTube, 1:39:33. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h61mwG9uQuU>.

Remote Tutorial

Acoustemology, Aurality and Touching Sound

After watching the movie, you will complete an exercise, respond to a few reflective prompts, and post your response and peer assessment in a discussion board on Quercus. Details will be available as an assignment.

Week 3 - Knowing things with and from sound pt. 2 – 17 Sep

We continue to investigate perception, knowledge and sound.

Learning Goals:

Evaluate sound and listening as a source and practice of knowledge creation. Explain the connections and contradictions between Sound Studies and Disability Studies. Explain the basic assumptions of the Schaferian notion of sound and listening.

Required Texts

Friedner, Michele, and Stefan Helmreich. 2012. "Sound Studies Meets Deaf Studies." *The Senses and Society* 7 (1): 72–86. <https://doi.org/10.2752/174589312X13173255802120>.

Schafer, R. Murray. 1994. "Introduction," "Listening," and "The Acoustic Community" In *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, 3-12; 205–25. Soundscape. Rochester, Vt: Destiny Books.

Recommended Texts

Chaves, Rui, and Thaís A. Aragão. 2021. "Localising Acoustic Ecology: A Critique towards a Relational Collaborative Paradigm." *Organised Sound* 26 (2): 190–200. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1355771821000236>.

Lecture***Your Sound Diaries******Sound Ecology, Listening(s) and Acoustemology*****Tutorial*****That Sound Game***

Week 4 - Listening to Soundscapes – 24 Sep

Another theoretical touchstone of sound studies. We overview the notion of Soundscapes and discuss its development and critique, particularly from an indigenous perspective.

Learning Goals

Explain the construct of Soundscape and the colonizing issues of its most used source (Schafer). Experiment with various methodologies for listening to and studying the soundscape.

Required Texts

Samuels, David W., Louise Meintjes, Ana Maria Ochoa, and Thomas Porcello. 2010. "Soundscapes: Toward a Sounded Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (Volume 39, 2010): 329–45. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-022510-132230>.

Robinson, Dylan. 2020. "Hungry Listening." In *Hungry Listening Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*, 37–73. University of Minnesota Press.

Recommended Texts

Sterne, Jonathan. 2013. "Soundscape, Landscape, Escape." *Soundscapes of the Urban Past*, December 31, 181–94. <https://doi.org/10.14361/transcript.9783839421796.181>.

Robinson, Dylan. 2020. "Introduction." In *Hungry Listening Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*, 1–26. University of Minnesota Press.

Lecture***Purposeful and Extractive Listeners*****Tutorial*****Audio Analysis: Listening Through Different Ears***

Week 5 – Soundwalking – 1 Oct

To conclude the fundamental part of the course, we will discuss the artistic and research methodologies of the soundwalk and go on a soundwalk together.

Learning Goals

Apply listening strategies to and explain the practice of soundwalking. Reflect on the spatial, political and cultural dimensions of the soundscape and of soundwalking as a research and creative practice.

Required Texts

Messina, Paola Cossermelli. "Soundwalkin on the Edges: Land, Safety, and Priviledge in São Paulo." *Soundwalking: Through Time, Space, and Technologies*, edited by Jacek Smolicki, Focal Press, 2023, pp. 134–47, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003193135>.

Voegelin, Salomé. "Soundwalking the Museum A Sonic Journey through the Visual Display." *The Multisensory Museum: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Touch, Sound, Smell, Memory, and Space*, edited by Nina Sobol Levent and Alvaro Pascual-Leone, Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

Recommended

Smolicki, Jacek, ed. 2023. *Soundwalking: Through Time, Space, and Technologies*. London: Focal Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003193135>.

Lecture

Soundwalk

We will go out on a soundwalk. Please come dressed appropriately for the weather. Also, bring a notepad and pencil/pen, and a phone or another audio recording device.

Tutorial

Reflections on the Soundwalk

Open the time capsule

Week 6 - Recording Sound – Oct 8

Guest Speaker: Prof. José Cláudio Castanheira (UFF - Brazil). Scheduled readings and activities *will probably change*.

We now move on to questions of audio. This week, we discuss theories of sound recording regarding technology, information, and representation. We will specifically discuss the colonizing aspects of technology in sound and music creation.

Learning Goals

Analyze the relationship between sound, its representations and the technologies used to produce and reproduce audio. Speculate on social, aesthetic, epistemological and political consequences of audio mediation.

Required Texts

Castanheira, José Cláudio Siqueira, and Melina Santos Silva. 2025. "Technologies, Precariousness and Coloniality." In *Situated Listening*, 126–42. Focal Press.

Meintjes, Louise. 2003. "The Record Studio as a Fetish." In *Sound of Africa!: Making Music Zulu in a South African Studio*, 72–108. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822384632>.

Recommended Texts

Stanyek, Jason, and Benjamin Piekut. 2010. "Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane." *TDR/The Drama Review* 54 (1 (205)): 14–38. <https://doi.org/10.1162/dram.2010.54.1.14>.

Westerkamp, Hildegard. 2021. "The Microphone Ear. Field Recording the Soundscape." *Filigrane. Musique, Sons, Esthétique, Société*, no. 26 (December): 26. <https://doi.org/10.4000/12i8v>.

Lecture

Technologies, Sound and Coloniality

Tutorial

Recording and Mixing Activity

Week 7 - Broadcasting, Podcasting, Streaming – 15 Oct

A discussion of audio media as a concept encompassing radio, podcasting and other platformed digital audio media such as music streaming services. In this class, students will present and discuss their first audio production.

Learning Goals

Conceptualize audio media. Describe the mediating actors, contexts and artifacts of audio. Speculate and reflect on the ethical and cultural roles these mediators take in Audio Culture. Describe the most common genres and audio elements that are used in podcasting.

Required Texts

Baade, Christina. 2024. “‘A Golden Age of Audio’: Smart Speakers, Domestic Listening, and the Question of Radioness.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Radio and Podcasting*, edited by Michele Hilmes and Andrew J. Bottomley, 0. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197551127.013.3>.

Macklem, Michelle. 2024. “Noisy Feeds: Reciprocal Listening, Decolonial Struggle, and Play in Podcasting.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Radio and Podcasting*, edited by Michele Hilmes and Andrew J. Bottomley, 0. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197551127.013.14>.

Razlogova, Elena. 2024. “Freeform Radio and the History of Music Streaming.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Radio and Podcasting*, edited by Michele Hilmes and Andrew J. Bottomley, 0. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197551127.013.1>.

Recommended Texts

Berry, Richard. 2016. “Podcasting: Considering the Evolution of the Medium and Its Association with the Word ‘Radio.’” *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media* 14 (1): 7–22. https://doi.org/10.1386/rjao.14.1.7_1.

Bonini, Tiziano. 2022. “Podcasting as a Hybrid Cultural Form between Old and New Media.” In *The Routledge Companion to Radio and Podcast Studies*, edited by Mia Lindgren and Jason Loviglio, 19–29. London: Routledge.

Hilmes, Michele. 2022. “But Is It Radio? New Forms and Voices in the Audio Private Sphere.” In *The Routledge Companion to Radio and Podcast Studies*, edited by Mia Lindgren and Jason Loviglio, 9–18. London: Routledge.

Kischinhevsky, Marcelo, and Katia Fraga. 2024. “The Podcasting Circuit of Culture in Brazil.” *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media* 22 (Radio and Sound in the Platform Age: Special Issue from ECREA 2023): 205–18. https://doi.org/10.1386/rjao_00100_1.

Presentations

The first audio production

Lecture

Concepts of Audio Media

Week 8 - Creating Audio, Sounding Art – 22 Oct

An exploration of the aesthetics and experimentation of radio and sound for art, exhibition and communication

Learning Goals

Develop a conceptual framework that guides creative strategies for audio production, outlining the aesthetic and media considerations that must be taken into account when producing audio.

Required Texts

McHugh, Siobhán. 2024. "The Invisible Art of Audio Storytelling." In *The Oxford Handbook of Radio and Podcasting*, edited by Michele Hilmes and Andrew J. Bottomley, 0. Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197551127.013.16>.

Kim-Cohen, Seth. 2009. "A Dot on a Line." In *In the Blink of an Ear*, 211–55. New York: Continuum.

Cortez, Alcina. 2022. "Museums as Sites for Displaying Sound Materials: A Five-Use Framework." *Sound Studies* 8 (1): 43–72.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/20551940.2021.1975442>.

Recommended Texts

Russo, Alexander T. 2022. "Radio Formats - Sound Rules for Addressing the Narrowcast Audience Commodity." In *The Routledge Companion to Radio and Podcast Studies*, by Mia Lindgren and Jason Loviglio. London: Routledge.

St. John, Matt, Eric Hoyt, and Stephanie Sapienza. 2024. "Back to Sound School: Revisiting the Aesthetic Norms of 1950s and 1960s Educational Radio." In *The Oxford Handbook of Radio and Podcasting*, edited by Michele Hilmes and Andrew J. Bottomley, 0. Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197551127.013.20>.

Lecture

Cultures and Aesthetics of Audio

Tutorial

Audio Drama Exercise

READING WEEK – NO CLASSES – 29 Oct

Relax, maybe post a piece of music you love.

Week 9 - Sensing Audio – 5 Nov

Turning to a central question of the "senses", we will explore listening and audio mediation as modes of perception. Specifically, we are interested in the relationship between sound and disability, as well as how audio media is utilized in the context of disabilities.

Learning Goals

Explain fundamental aspects of audio description techniques. Experiment with audio description ideas. Explain the concept of reading by listening. Critically reflect on audiobook demand and production as it relates to varied practices of reading. Revisit the notions of Sound Studies and Disability Studies from Week 3.

Required Texts

Lundh, Anna. 2021. "‘I Can Read, I Just Can’t See’: A Disability Rights-Based Perspective on Reading by Listening." *Journal of Documentation* 78 (7): 176–91. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-10-2020-0169>.

Peaty, Gwyneth, Kathryn Locke, Kai-Ti Kao, Katie Ellis, and Hersinta. 2025. "A Series of Lively Impressions: Quality Narration and the Rise of Audio Description." *Media International Australia* 194 (1): 102–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X231183286>.

Recommended Texts

Bircanin, Filip, Alexandre Nevsky, Himaya Perera, et al. 2025. "Sounds Accessible: Envisioning Accessible Audio-Media Futures with People with Aphasia." *Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (New York, NY, USA), CHI '25, April 25, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3714000>.

McDaniel, Byrd. 2024. "Accessible Listening - Podcasts as Audible Models." In *Spectacular Listening: Music and Disability in the Digital Age*, 113–38. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197620458.001.0001>.

Lecture

Audio information and the senses

Tutorial

The Audio and Disabilities Exercise

Week 10 - Speaking and Listening Selves – 12 Nov

We go deeper into the senses to ask, "Who sounds?" and to explore how the answer to this question is usually associated with who listens. We will discuss the relationship between voice, subjectivity and identity. This week, students present their second audio production.

Learning Goals

Describe the common processes in which voice is associated with subjectivity. Explain how voice timbre and "grain" set standards of race and normality. Analyze the relationship auditory perception, orality and communication. Reflect on personal and cultural assumptions about voice and identity.

Required Texts

Eidsheim, Nina Sun. 2019. "The Acousmatic Question: Who Is This?" In *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music*, 1–37. Duke University Press. <https://directory.doabooks.org/handle/20.500.12854/27283>.

Tajadura-Jiménez, Ana, Merle T. Fairhurst, and Ophelia Deroy. 2022. "Sensing the Body through Sound." In *The Routledge Handbook of Bodily Awareness*. Routledge.

Recommended Texts

Dolar, Mladen. 2006. "The Linguistics of the Voice." In *A Voice and Nothing More*, 12–36. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. <https://direct-mit-edu.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/books/book/2087/chapter/56197/The-Linguistics-of-the-Voice>.

Sterne, Jonathan. 2021. "Meet the Dork-o-Phone." In *Diminished Faculties: A Political Phenomenology of Impairment*, 39–67. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478022329>.

Presentations

Second Audio Production

Lecture

The voice and the self

Week 11 - Speaking and Listening Machines – 19 Nov

We critique and reflect on the ethics, ideologies and techniques of machine listening. We will interact and intervene with AI Voice interfaces used with voice assistants.

Learning Goals

Describe the historically gendered association of voices and machines. Evaluate how theories of the voice and subjectivity can affect our understanding and development of machine voices. Analyze how AI voice interfaces construct and perform artificial subjectivities. Experiment with AI voice interfaces to propose interventions, resistances or alternative designs.

Required Texts

Hilu, Reem. 2016. "Girl Talk and Girl Tech: Computer Talking Dolls and the Sounds of Girls' Play." *The Velvet Light Trap* 78 (78): 4–21. <https://doi.org/10.7560/VLT7802>.

Sterne, Jonathan, and Mehak Sawhney. 2023. "The Acousmatic Question and the Will to Datafy: Otter.Ai, Low-Resource Languages, and the Politics of Machine Listening." *Kalfou* 9 (2). <https://doi.org/10.15367/kf.v9i2.617>.

Bentivegna, Francesco. 2025. "Artificially Voiced Intelligences: Voice and the Myth of AI." *AI & SOCIETY*, ahead of print, July 15. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-025-02383-x>.

Recommended Texts

Bendel, Oliver. 2019. "The Synthetization of Human Voices." *AI & SOCIETY* 34 (1): 83–89. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-017-0748-x>.

Blazsek, András. 2024. "Machine Listening as Sonification." *Organised Sound* 29 (3): 275–84. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1355771824000104>.

Ma, Anna, Elizabeth Patitsas, and Jonathan Sterne. 2023. "You Sound Depressed: A Case Study on Sonde Health's Diagnostic Use of Voice Analysis AI." *Proceedings of*

the 2023 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency (New York, NY, USA), FAccT '23, June 12, 639–50. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3593013.3594032>.

Lecture

Machine Listening and Machine Voicing

Tutorial

Speaking with Robots

Week 12 - Sounding Out

The course concludes with an open debate on the students' reflections on policies, guidelines, and normative principles that should be developed, re-evaluated, maintained, and/or adopted to foster audio cultures. They will present their last audio productions and preview their reflection paper, which is due 10 days after the last class.

Presentations

Last audio piece and draft reflection

Faculty policies, resources and more

Students must be familiar with all information related to grading policies, health and wellness, accessibility services and accommodations, academic integrity, student absence and declaring an absence in ACORN, and academic dates and deadlines. This information is common to all graduate courses syllabi and can be found here (<https://ischool.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Faculty-of-Information-Required-Common-Syllabus-Elements-Grad-2025-2026.pdf>).

Note

This syllabus is dedicated to the memory of Jonathan Sterne: professor, friend and mentor.

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