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technologies of expression
section a autumn 2010
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sound reproduction studies

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UW2 228
t/th 12-1



Hello!

Welcome to Technologies of Expression: Sound Reproduction Studies!

Since the 1850s, sound reproduction technologies—like the ear phonograph (1874) pictured on the right—have changed over time, with some becoming obsolete as others became cutting edge. In one sense, this course is an opportunity for you to trace that **history** by studying a spectrum of technologies and their sounds: everything from the phonograph and magnetic tape to the turntable and the computer.



Yet in another sense, the course is a chance to explore how those technologies are **culturally embedded**. For example, how have artists and writers integrated sound reproduction technologies into their work, and to what effects on other media, such as print? Through advertisements and film, how were certain technologies marketed, to whom, and for what purposes? How are sound reproduction technologies tied to questions of race, gender, class, and sexuality?

When, where, and for whom does a sound seem pleasant, a recording appear high fidelity, or an environment become noisy? Or more specifically: why *was* a human eardrum part of this phonograph, and what does it say about the use of human bodies for scientific progress and technological development?

No doubt, these questions—open-ended though they are—will keep us curious throughout the quarter. And during our conversations, we will also tap into **some theories of listening and seeing**. Here, we will unpack how listening and seeing are often situated in opposition to each other, as well as how they are attached to particular value systems. We will also determine how to critically respond to such traditions by conducting in-class listening and discussion sessions focused on various storage media (e.g., vinyl records, phonograph cylinders, cassette tapes, film, and the MP3) and the differences between them. True, we can't hear like they did back then. But at least they left their stuff behind.

The ultimate aim of the course, then, is for you to walk away with competencies in how to approach **sound reproduction as a historical, aesthetic, and political object of inquiry**. So in case you are wondering: This is not a class about music. Or radio broadcasting. Sure, we will likely chat about songs, musical instruments, recording studios, live performances, and Lady Gaga. In a class about sound, how could we not? Nevertheless, the emphasis of the course rests in the inscription, circulation, and representation of sound over time.

To put those competencies into practice, each of you will create, gather, and analyze several audio recordings over the course of the quarter and **remix** them for your final project. I hope this project will be simultaneously fun, informative, and—at times—a challenge. More on the project and its stages below.

The Learning Outcomes

By the quarter's end, you should not only become familiar with some key moments in the history of sound reproduction, but also iteratively compile an audio e-portfolio and produce a remix (**between ten and**

fifteen minutes in duration) of that e-portfolio's content. Through that e-portfolio, remix, and all of the work in between, you should:

- Use audio (both your own recordings and those by others) as a persuasive form of **evidence**, which effectively appeals to the target audience(s) of your choice.
- Articulate, through specific **examples**, how a certain sound reproduction technology (e.g., the turntable, the phonograph, or the personal computer) has influenced—and been influenced by—the culture(s) in which it is (or was) embedded.
- Routinely circulate portions of your e-portfolio for **feedback** from me and your peers, while also helping others in the class enhance their own e-portfolios.
- Explain—in your own words—the media **strategies** and theory functioning in your e-portfolio, including why audio and listening are central to them.
- Synopsise your work for educated, non-experts, who may be unfamiliar with sound reproduction studies and/or the material of your project, by writing a **250-word abstract** for your e-portfolio and remix.

These five learning outcomes for the course resonate with the four core learning outcomes for undergraduates in Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences (IAS):

- Critical thinking,
- Collaboration and shared leadership,
- Interdisciplinary research, and
- Writing and presentation.

For more details on the IAS learning objectives, please see <http://www.uwb.edu/ias/iasdegreeportfolio/learningobjectives>. I am happy to further discuss the objectives with you.

Also note that the IAS learning objectives are developed and documented through the IAS degree portfolio process, a process that begins with the program core course and concludes with the portfolio capstone course. For that reason, it is recommended that you retain all work from this course (with comments from me and your peers) for that final portfolio. No worries: throughout the course I will remind you to document, save, and “version” your work. That way, it should be easy to translate or transfer it into your IAS portfolio. Sound good?

Prerequisites

There are **no prerequisites** for this course. I assume no previous familiarity with digital audio, sound reproduction studies, new media, or cultural studies of the senses. I also welcome students from a broad range of backgrounds, with a variety of educational and professional investments. At any point during the course, please feel free to ask about, or make recommendations for, how the course may be best configured with your educational and professional trajectories. The project-based approach of the course is intended to be amenable to such configurations.

That said, to do well in the course, you should be able to **blend the production of digital audio with theories and histories of media and technologies**. In other words, the course material (not to mention my teaching style) generally resists the notion that technical questions and practices are somehow distinct from intellectual ones. For more on the course materials (including the software or platforms we will be using), see below.

Required Course Materials

For this course, you will need:

- Paper, pen, or a mobile technology for in-class writing assignments and note-taking,
- An active UWB e-mail account,
- A pair of headphones,
- Access to the Internet and a computer (with a sound card/speakers), and
- Access to a digital voice recorder, microphone or the like.

For the **voice recorder or microphone**, here are some possibilities:

- UWB Information Technologies loans students digital recorders and microphones. For more, see <http://www.uwb.edu/it/services/equipment-checkout>.
- Sites such as Gabcast allow you to record .mp3 files for free using your phone or VoIP client.
- Smart phones are often able to record and e-mail .wav or .mp3 files using dictation apps by companies such as Dragon.
- iPod extras can turn your iPod into a digital voice recorder.
- Many laptops already have built-in microphones.
- Computer microphones are rather inexpensive these days. Consider looking at Fry's.

During class, I will review these options, emphasizing what they accommodate and restrict. I will also facilitate workshops on:

- **Audacity**, an editor for recording and mixing digital audio, and
- **WordPress**, a content management system and blogging platform.

The use of these will come at no expense to you; however, you will be expected to become competent in them. If you are already familiar with or competent in them, then I will ask you to help others learn to use them. I may also ask you to co-facilitate workshops with me.

All media (text, audio, images, and video) that you compose or use for your project will be uploaded to our class WordPress site (passcode-protected for your privacy) and stored in a SQL database without any cost to you. After the course, you should be able to access the site, retrieve your work, and (re)use it in, say, your IAS portfolio.

Finally, there is no text book for the course. All media for reading, listening, and watching will be circulated via the class WordPress site, usually in the form of a "**case study**." For details on what comes when, see below.

Assignments

What follows are only brief descriptions. Detailed prompts for each assignment will follow. Please note: this course emphasizes audio recording, authoring and editing over production and post-production—audio as alternative form of writing or inscription, if you will. While I find that production and post-production are no doubt crucial to the process, we simply do not have time to account for them in this survey. That said, the quality of your audio does not need to be high definition.

Audiography: you will introduce yourself to the class by recording snippets of eight to ten sounds (e.g., voices, ambient sounds / noises, and music) you **hear on a regular basis** and compiling a playlist of them. I will provide feedback on this assignment.

Re: Audiography: you will respond to several audiographies composed by your peers by remixing them, providing verbal feedback on what your impressions are, and **highlighting what you learned** both about your peers and about sound. Your peers will be the sole source of feedback on this assignment.

"Found" Sound: much in the fashion of **today's mash-ups**, you will compile a minimum of eight sounds related to a specific event in the history of sound reproduction and to a particular sound reproduction technology. You will not include your voice or any narration. I will provide feedback on this assignment.

Re: "Found" Sound: you will respond to the "found" sounds composed by one of your peers by adding **your own narration** and commentary to it. In so doing, you will articulate what you believe your peer wanted audiences to believe and learn through the composition. Your peers will be the sole source of feedback on this assignment.

Audio Documentary: based on several examples heard in the class, you will make your own, short (three- to five-minute) audio documentary about an issue in the **history of sound reproduction**, focusing on a particular sound reproduction technology. You will be able to choose your own issue and technology and determine how you wish to represent them. I will provide feedback on this assignment.

Your Choice!: You will imagine one other audio composition that you think should be in your e-portfolio and then you will compose it. While I will give you a prompt with some constraints for this assignment, a majority of the decisions will be yours. I will provide feedback on this assignment.

The Remix: the remix will function as the final in the course. Between ten and fifteen minutes in duration, it will compile snippets from **all of your audio work** in the course and include your own reflections on what you learned, how, and to what effects on the future of your learning (either in IAS or elsewhere). You will also be asked to stress how, if given more time, you would revise or expand the work. The remix will be accompanied by an abstract.

Grading and Evaluation

Final grades (on a 4.0 scale) will be determined using the following percentages and criteria:

In-Class Participation (10% of the grade)

Participation in this course is about a network of ideas—sharing thoughts and talking with, supporting, and listening to others. Class time will often be spent in large group conversations and workshops.

Collaborative learning and collaborative teaching add interest, excitement, and investment to the classroom experience. Each helps students brainstorm for their projects, unpack concepts, learn from others, and develop proficiency in how to constructively critique other people's work. That said, all of these aspects of in-class participation will be included in your participation grade, which I will determine.

Academic Remix (35% of the grade)

The remix will be the **final assessment** of your audio e-portfolio. I will give you explicit instructions on how to proceed with it as the quarter develops. We will also have an in-class workshop on how to make the remix. Together with the abstract, it should meet the five learning outcomes articulated above.

Project Development (35% of the grade)

You will be asked to contribute (through text, audio, images, and video) to the course site generally once each week, always in response to a particular prompt or to a peer's entry. Evaluation of the blog entries will include: timeliness, thoughtfulness of questions posed, relevance of the entry to the course material, persuasiveness and complexity of the inquiry, and constructiveness of commentary on peers' posts (especially their audio work). **Twice** before the end of the quarter, **you will receive an interim project development grade**, which should give you a sense of how your work is progressing and where you are in the class.

Cluster Assessment (20% of the grade)

At two points in the quarter, you will have the opportunity to assess your work (on a 4.0 scale) and your participation based on outcomes you will write with your peers (in your collaborative "cluster"). These two grades will be averaged together to comprise twenty percent of your final grade. If your assessment is persuasive, then I will accept it at face value. If I do not find it persuasive, then I will request a meeting with you.

Schedule

The schedule below consists of "chats," "lectures," "workshops," "case studies," "blog comments," and "audio entries."

Chats are simply class discussions. We will talk about something as a large group.

Lectures are just that. I will spend a notable amount of time (thirty minutes to an hour) talking about some aspect of sound reproduction studies.

Workshops are focused, small group meetings with a specific goal or aim in mind. Some of these will include the technologies we are working with in class. Often, you will be asked to submit something (as a group) when the workshops are finished.

Case studies (eight total) are the primary means through which we will discuss sound reproduction theory, history, and practice in this class. They are composed by me and published on the course site approximately one week prior to when we will cover them. You should read, watch, or listen to them carefully before we discuss. I will also ask you to comment on them.

Blog comments are also just that: comments on blog entries. During class, we will review what the protocols are for these. They are a means of keeping our conversations going outside of the classroom.

Audio entries include any of the audio assignments referenced above.

Date	Conversations / Workshops	What's Due?
Th 9/30	Welcome and Introductions Chat: "What's Sound Repro Studies? Why Should I Care?"	Nothing!
Tu 10/5	Workshop: "Audacity and WordPress" (in UW2 121!) Workshop: "Authoring with Audio, Collecting Audio"	Review Audacity Find a Recorder
Th 10/7	Chat/Lecture: "A Brief History of Sound Reproduction" Introduction to Web-Based Digital Collections	Blog Comment ("Found" Tech)
Tu 10/12	Workshop: WordPress (in UW2 121!) Establish Research and Support Clusters	Blog Comment (Question from 10/7)
Th 10/14	Workshop: "Schafer's Soundscapes" Chat: Share Audiographies	Audio Entry #1 (Audiography)
Tu 10/19	Chat about the Audiovisual Litany Workshop: "Hearing, Listening, or Attending?"	Read Sterne (PDF)
Th 10/21	Chat/Lecture: "Critical Theory, Technologies, & Media" Workshop: "What Does 'Material' Mean?"	Audio Entry #2 (Re: Audiography)
Tu 10/26	Case Study 1: "Kool Herc & Vinyl Records" Workshop: "Turntablism, Remix, or Mash-up?"	Review Case #1 w/ Blog Comment
Th 10/28	Case Study 2: "Voice-Over Narration, Chion & Film" Workshop: "Re-Narrating <i>Grizzly Man</i> "	Review Case #2 w/ Blog Comment
Tu 11/2	Class and Cluster Evaluation Day	Audio Entry #3 ("Found" Sound)
Th 11/4	Case Study 3: "The Phonograph & Whose Ear?" Workshop: "Preserving the Dead"	Review Case #3 w/ Blog Comment

Date	Conversations / Workshops	What's Due?
Th 11/9	Case Study 4: "Actionable Offenses & Offensive Ads" Workshop: "Early Audio, Gender & High Fidelity"	Review Case #4 Audio Entry #4 (Re: "Found" Sound)
Tu 11/11	No class!	
Tu 11/16	Case Study 5: "William S. Burroughs, Tape & the Book" Workshop: "In Two Places at Once"	Review Case #5 w/ Blog Comment
Th 11/18	Case Study 6: "Napster & the MP3" Workshop: "Whose File Is It? Where Is It Stored?"	Review Case #6 w/ Blog Comment
Tu 11/23	Share Audio Documentaries	Audio Entry #5 (Audio Documentary)
Th 11/25	No class!	
Tu 11/30	Case Study 7: "Pink Noise & Electronic Music" Workshop: "Public Secrets and Other Interviews"	Review Case #7 w/ Blog Comment
Th 12/2	Workshop: "Producing a Persuasive Remix" Workshop: "Writing Abstracts for Media Projects"	Nothing!
Tu 12/7	Case Study 8: "The Lomax Field Recordings" Workshop: "The Race Politics of Collection & Curation"	Review Case #8 Audio Entry #6 (Your Choice!)
Th 12/9	Class and Cluster Evaluation Chat: Course Review	Nothing!
Tu 12/14	No class (Exams Week)	Nothing!
Th 12/16	No class (Exams Week)	Final Remix Due

Attendance

I do not take attendance. Of course, attending class meetings will greatly enhance your chances of submitting a persuasive e-portfolio, learning about the material, collaborating with others, and sharing your ideas in an open, face-to-face learning climate.

Classroom Conduct and Participation

Since conversations are essential to the quality of this class, I expect that we shall work together to create an atmosphere of respect. College level discourse does not shy away from sensitive issues, including questions of race, gender, class, sexuality, politics, and religion, and neither will we. There are going to be differences in opinions, beliefs, and interpretations when we question texts and cultural issues.

Students need not agree with the arguments in the course material or with what their peers or I have to say—in fact, it is important to think critically and question the course material. Still, you must do so intelligently and with respect. Respect for difference is instrumental to creating a classroom in which a variety of ideas can be exchanged and points of view can be explored.

What is crucial to this course is that you are comfortable expressing yourself and your ideas. If, for whatever reason, you are not, then you should notify me immediately in class or visit me in my office

hours. I understand that some people are more comfortable speaking in class than others. That said, participation in office hours will also augment your participation grade. If you are not comfortable bringing your concerns directly to me or are not satisfied with my response to your inquiry, then I encourage you to contact IAS.

Please note: **I do not ban laptops or mobile devices in the classroom.** However, you should expect me to integrate your use of them into our discussions, workshops, and collaborations.

Late Policy

Although I suggest you follow the schedule, you may submit your work to your e-portfolio at any point in the quarter. If you submit your work after the due date, then: (1) I will not provide any feedback, (2) your chance of not having a peer respond to it is dramatically increased, and (3) it will negatively influence your project development grade. Think Sisyphus here.

Incompletes

University rules state that “an incomplete is given only when the student has been in attendance and has done satisfactory work until within two weeks at the end of the quarter and has furnished proof satisfactory to the instructor that the work cannot be completed because of illness or other circumstances beyond the student’s control.” Please also note that IAS strongly discourages incompletes.

Academic Integrity

Please see <http://www.uwb.edu/student-services/academic-conduct> for crucial information regarding academic integrity. The library also has an extremely useful website, with resources at <http://libguides.uwb.edu/ai>. You are responsible for knowing what constitutes a violation of the University of Washington Student Code, and you will be held responsible for any such violations whether or not they were intentional.

Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else’s ideas or writing as your own. In this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people’s thoughts, writing, and audio—as long as they are cited.

Many students do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes plagiarism. It includes:

- A student failing to cite the source of an idea,
- A student failing to cite sources of paraphrased material,
- A student failing to cite courses of specific language and/or passages, and
- A student submitting someone else’s work as her or his own.

If you have doubts about whether to cite or acknowledge another person’s writing, then you should just let me know. Better safe than sorry. And think about it—Google, websites galore, and the fact that I was an undergraduate, too, make it really, really easy for me to spot plagiarized work. For more information on plagiarism, visit <http://www.uwb.edu/learningtech/plagiarism>.

Disability Support Services

Support for students with disabilities is a campus priority. If you believe that you have a disability and would like academic accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) at (425) 352-5307, (425) 352-5303 (TDD), (425) 352.5455 (fax), or dss@uwb.edu. The URL of their website is: <http://www.uwb.edu/student-services/dss>.

I will work with DSS to provide students with disabilities what they require. I will also take suggestions specific to this class to meet student needs. The course syllabus and policies are available in large print, as are other class materials. The course site should adhere to accessibility standards. When it does not, please contact me and let me know. I will revise it accordingly.

Inclement Weather

Please check if the campus may be closed due to weather. Information on suspension of operations will be made public and available through the media. You can learn of campus operations status from the

website or by calling the Campus Information Hotline: (425) 352-3333. You may also sign up with an alert system that will contact you via email or text message if classes are canceled. For more information on the alert process, please see: <http://www.uwb.edu/alert>. Class activities will be rescheduled as needed.

Student Support Services

Library: <http://library.uwb.edu/> or (425) 352-5340

Writing Center: www.uwb.edu/WritingCenter/ or (425) 352-5253

Quantitative Skills Center: <http://www.uwb.edu/qsc> or (425) 352-3170

Student Success and Career Services: <http://www.uwb.edu/student-services/success-services> or (425) 352-3776

Student Counseling Services: <http://www.uwb.edu/student-services/counseling> or (425) 352-3183

Contacting Me

Email: JSayers@uwb.edu (I generally respond within 24 hours.)

Office: UW2 228

Autumn Quarter Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 12-1 p.m. (If I decide to hold office hours somewhere else on the UWB campus, then I'll make an in-class announcement, with a reminder by email.)

Phone: (425) 352-3460

Mailbox: 358511 (in the IAS Graduate Office in UW2 340)

Be in touch! I'm looking forward to the quarter!

[The balance of this page was intentionally left blank. Skip to the next page, eh? Thanks!]

Technology and Media Questionnaire (It's painless, I swear.)

Your name:

Your email address:

Your major / emphasis:

Why are you taking this class? (Be honest.)

Do you **own** a computer?

If yes, then is it a laptop or a desktop (or other)?

If yes, then is it a Mac or a PC (or other)?

Have you ever used WordPress? If yes, then for what?

Have you ever used Audacity? If yes, then for what?

Have you ever recorded, edited, or produced audio? If yes, then explain.

How do you **plan** to record audio for this class? (I won't hold you to this answer.)

Do you have a hobby or professional practice that involves audio recording, editing, or production? If yes, then explain.

Generally speaking, how (if at all) do you **most often** listen to audio (e.g., iPod, iTunes, TV, record player, CDs, Pandora, a particular radio station)?

Have you ever programmed a VCR?

[End transmission.]