

Audio Culture Studies (Fall 2012)

A Cultural Studies Course

English 466 @ UVic

Mondays & Thursdays

1 – 2:30 PM

Dr. Jentery Sayers



This course is an inquiry into cultural studies by way of audio culture. We will survey a history of audio technologies (e.g., phonographs, magnetic tape recorders, and laptops) as well as the cultures in which they have been embedded (e.g., remix, high fidelity, and dictation cultures). Questions will likely include: How has sound been associated with authenticity or immediacy, and to what effects? How does audio recording inform the construction of gender, class, race, and sexuality? How do we talk meaningfully about the materiality of sound, which seems so fleeting and ephemeral? What kinds of cultural assumptions shape how people hear and see? How do audio and visual cultures intersect? And why and how have people "hacked," modified, or re-purposed audio technologies?

Throughout the semester, students will listen extensively to historical audio, read audio culture criticism, examine visual expressions of audio (e.g., advertisements), and (using the free audio editor, Audacity) compose through a variety of sound-based genres (e.g., audio documentaries, voice-overs, and remixes). By the semester's end, they will be expected to write academic arguments anchored in cultural studies methodologies and reflect on cultural studies and media production as ways to critically approach technocultures.

Artists, writers, and historical figures will likely include: Theodor Adorno, Laurie Anderson, Jacques Attali, Alexander Graham Bell, William S. Burroughs, John Cage, Michel Chion, Bing Crosby, DJ Shadow, DJ /rupture, DJ Spooky, Thomas Edison, Ralph Ellison, Brian Eno, Girl Talk, Grandmaster Flash, Lisa Gitelman, Brion Gysin, Stuart Hall, King Tubby, Kool Herc, Le Tigre, Lead Belly, John Oswald, Marshall McLuhan, Merzbow, Jack Mullin, Les Paul, Tara Rodgers, Tricia Rose, R. Murray Schafer, Pierre Schaeffer, Jonathan Sterne, and Alexander Weheliye.

Questions about the course? Email Jentery Sayers at jentery@uvic.ca.