

Sound Studies and Sonic Arts

Winter Term 2022-23

Module Basic Theory

Course Title Open Circuits. Media-theoretical Perspectives on Sound | Seminar

Course Times and Location Tuesdays | 16:15 - 17:45/19:45 (see schedule!) | LIE 314

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Office Hours and Location upon request, LIE 311

Course Description

In this introductory course, we aim to develop theoretical perspectives on the material dimensions of sound and sonic media technologies. With an interdisciplinary approach, we will explore how sound is considered in the fields of media theory and the arts. The selected readings focus on materialist perspectives, the role of technological objects in artistic creation, and the idea of sonic mediality as an arrangement of technologies and practices that structure perception. We will address a spectrum of topics ranging from the history of audio recording, the relationships between noise and silence, wanted and unwanted sound, transmission, and feedback. Medium-specific arts practices reflecting the aesthetic conditions of transmission and/or storage will be a special focus of the seminar.

From a broad historical perspective, we will also investigate some of the various relationships of sound and image explored in the media arts ranging from experimentation optical sound experiments in film, solar sound, oscillographic imagery and video synthesis to more recent digital sonification and visualization techniques.

This course offers students a chance to familiarize themselves with a set of discursive and artistic perspectives on sonic materiality and audiovisual relationships.

Exam

See exam schedule.

Schedule

08 Nov | 16:15 - 17:45 - Introduction

15 Nov | 16:15 - 17:45 - Tympanic Technologies

- Sterne, Jonathan. Chapter 'Machines To Hear From Them' 31–51
- Lenoir, Timothy. "Helmholtz and the Materialities of Communication." *OSIRIS* 9 (1994): 185-207.
<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/TimLenoir/HelmholtzMaterialities.pdf>
Monoskop: Entry "Ernst Chladni" https://monoskop.org/Ernst_Chladni

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- Pantalony, David. *Altered Sensations. Rudolph Koenig's Acoustical Workshop in Nineteenth-Century Paris*. London/ New York: Springer, 2009, 37-50.

22 Nov | 16:15 - 17:45 - Registering the Real

- Kittler, Friedrich. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Translated, with an Introduction by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz, Stanford: Stanford University Press (1999). Chapter "Gramophone" 21–51.
- Kim-Cohen, Seth: *In the Blink of an Ear. Toward a Non-Chochlear Sonic Art*, New York: Continuum 2009, Chapter 4, 91-119

29 Nov | 16:15 - 17:45 - Acousmatic Listening and Sound Objects

- Kane, Brian. Chapter "The Acousmatic Situation", in: *Ibid. Sound Unseen. Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York (2014), 15-41.
- Chion, Michel. "Three Listening Modes" in: *Audio-Vision. Sound on Screen*, New York: Columbia Univ. Press 1994, 25-34.

06 Dec | 16:15 - 17:45 - Soundscapes and Field Recording

- Schafer, R. Murray. 1994. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester, Vt.: Destiny Book.
- Wright, Mark Peter. 2017: "The Noisy-Nonsel: Towards a Monstrous Practice of More-Than-Human Listening," *Evental Aesthetics*, Vol. 6 No. 1 *Sound Art and Environment*, pp. 24-42.
- Voegelin, Salomé. "Collateral Damage," *The Wire*, No. 364 (2014) p. 16.

13 Dec | 16:15 - 17:45 - The Craft of Research

Introduction to scholarly practice.

03 Jan | 16:15 - 19:45 - Optical Sound

We will look at different optical sound technologies and their histories.

Screening + Discussion of historical optical sound films: Oskar Fischinger, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Norman McLaren, Lis Rhodes, Guy Sherwin

- Connor, Steven. "Photophonics." Talk at Audiovisuality Conference, University of Aarhus, 27 May 2011, <http://www.stevenconnor.com/photophonics/>
- Levin, Thomas. "'Tones from out of Nowhere': Rudolph Pfenninger and the Archaeology of Synthetic Sound." *Grey Room* 12 (Summer 2003): 32-79. www.centerforvisualmusic.org/LevinPfen.pdf

Further Reading:

- Smirnov, Andrey. *Sound in Z. Experiments in Sound and Electronic Music in Early 20th Century Russia*, Cologne: Walter König, 2013. 175-236.
- Zinman, Gregory. "Eradicating the Psychic Space Between Eye and Ear: Synthetic Film Sound's Challenge to the Index", *Animation Journal* 20 (2012): 51-85.
- Rhodes, Lis. "Light Music." In *The Tanks Programme Notes*, 7-9, London: Tate Publishing, October 2012.
- Sherwin, Guy. *Optical Sound Films 1971 2007*, London: Lux, 2007. Booklet accompanying DVD.

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10 Jan | 16:15 - 17:45 - Remediation and Feedback

- Lucier, Alvin. "Origins of a Form: Acoustical Exploration, Science and Incessancy." *Leonardo Music Journal* 8, Ghosts and Monsters: Technology and Personality in Contemporary Music (1998): 5-11.
- Thoben, Jan and Bernhard Rietbrock. "Introduction: Sound's Better Half. Alvin Lucier's 'I am sitting in a room'," in: Thoben, Rietbrock (Eds.) *Alvin Lucier. I am sitting in a room. Archival Recordings 1969-2019*, Berlin: Sound on Paper Editions, 5-18.
- Eck, Kathy van. *Between Air and Electricity. Microphones and Loudspeakers as Musical Instruments*. New York: Bloomsbury 2017, Chapters: Acoustic feedback: An electromechanical oscillator, 55-59 and Acoustic Feedback: From mistake to music, 83-94.

17 Jan | 16:15 - 17:45 – Media Parasites and Medium Specificity

- Kelly, Caleb. *Cracked Media: The Sound of Malfunction*, Cambridge: MIT Press (2009). Chapter: "Introduction" 1-41
- Thoben, Jan. "For the Record. Thoughts on Medium Specificity in the Sonic Arts", *eContact!* 20.3, 2020 Shortwave Radio, CD Players, the Inner Ear and Waltzing Goldfish - MEDIUM-SPECIFIC PRACTICES IN SOUND https://econtact.ca/20_3/thoben_specificity.html
- Thompson, Marie. *Beyond Unwanted Sound. Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2017, Chapter 2.

24 Jan | 16:15 - 19:45 – Oscillography and Audiovisual Synthesis

We will look at different tools to synthesize video from sound.

- Thoben, Jan: "Video | Sound and Synthesis," in Dieter Daniels and Jan Thoben: *Video Theories*. A Transdisciplinary Reader, New York: Bloomsbury, 2022.
- Spielmann, Yvonne. "Video, an Audiovisual Medium." In *See this Sound: Audiovisuology: A Reader*, edited by Dieter Daniels and Sandra Naumann, 314-325, Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2015.
- Viola, Bill. "The Sound of One Line Scanning." In *Sound by Artists*, edited by D. Lander and M. Lexier, published by Art Metropole and Walter Phillips Gallery, 1990.
http://www.iemed.org/publicacions/quaderns/12/The_Sound_of_One_Line_Scanning_Bill_Viola.pdf

31 Jan | 16:15 - 17:45 Sonification

t.b.a.

07 Feb | Wrap up, discussion of concepts and ideas for your papers

Supporting Media

Adorno, Theodor W. *The Curves of the Needle*. Translated by Thomas Y. Levin. October, no. 55 (winter 1990): 49–55.

Adorno, Theodor W. *The Form of the Phonograph Record*. Translated by Thomas Y. Levin. October, no. 55 (winter 1990): 57–62.

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- Bolter**, Jay David, and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999. Subchapter “Technological Determinism”, 75–78.
- Campbell**, Ian. “Sounds Flush with the Real: Mixed Semiotic Strategies in Post-Cagean Musical Experimentalism.” In *Machinic Assemblages of Desire: Deleuze and Artistic Research 3*, edited by Paulo de Assis and Paolo Giudici, 107–14. Leuven University Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1595mb9>.
- Cox**, Christoph. “Beyond Representation and Signification: Toward a Sonic Materialism.” *Journal of Visual Culture* 10, no. 2 (August 2011): 145–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412911402880>.
- Kahn**, Douglas, and Gregory Whitehead, eds. *Wireless Imagination: Sound, Radio, and the Avant-Garde*. 1. MIT Press paperback print. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994. Chapter: “Introduction: Histories of Sound Once Removed”, 1–29.
- Levin**, Thomas Y. “For the Record: Adorno on Music in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility.” *October* 55 (1990): 23–47. <https://doi.org/10.2307/778934>.
- Peters**, John Durham. “Helmholtz, Edison, and Sound History.” In *Helmholtz, Edison, and Sound History*, 177–98. Duke University Press, 2004. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822385691-008>.
- Smith**, Jacob. *Eco-Sonic Media*. First edition. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015.

Online Repository

<https://cloud.udk-berlin.de/f/33416343>