

Sound and violence, sound as violence

Aufbauseminar Sommersemester 2018
BA Medien- und Kulturwissenschaft
Heinrich-Heine Universität Düsseldorf

Wann: Donnerstags von 12:30 bis 14 Uhr
Wo: Raum 2332.00.52

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Hinweis: diese Veranstaltung findet in Englischer Sprache statt! Aufgaben dürfen aber auf Deutsch geschrieben bzw. präsentiert werden.

In this course we will investigate together different articulations of sound and violence, from historical to speculative perspectives. Starting from assessing the effects of sound in the body, to diverse definitions and discussions on forms of violence, we will together develop and engage with a body of knowledge — both in reading and listening — that articulates how sound can be either a direct vector of or an excuse for different forms of oppression. The readings encompass but are not limited to the use of sound as direct inflicted violence, but also inquires the use of rhythm, noise, pitch, and timbre in colonial/modern accounts of violence, historical and contemporary forms of sonic surveillance, and the possible articulations of sonic violence in representations of the future.

By the end of the semester you should:

- understand the effects of sound in the body both in physical as well as in affective terms;
- grasp the cultural implications of sound and its relation to political violences;
- be able to articulate the ethics of sound-as-power and their intersection with race, gender, class, and ability;
- have a basic understanding of a decolonizing analytical lenses for sound studies;
- apply this knowledge into future analysis and criticisms of the political power of sound and listening in society.

Syllabus

This course is designed to take 13 (thirteen) meetings, from April 12 to July 19. We meet every Thursday from 12:30 to 14 at room 2332.00.52. The following is a rough plan of subjects I would like to tackle together with you over the semester; these are subject to (minor) changes, according to your own pace and interests.

Every Thursday afternoon starting right after our first meeting on April 12, I will post on the Semesterapparat a short list of recommended readings and listening for the upcoming week. You are required to engage with that material over the week, and send in two questions pertaining them and their relationship with the theme of the upcoming class. Please send them in by **no later than Wednesday 15:00** to my e-mail* (see above). I will read them through and select a few; they will be the basis of our weekly meetings, in which we will be discussing the readings through sound material.

**Please use the subject line "SV2018" and your last name on the e-mail, so that I can easily sort it on my inbox.*

Week 1, April 12 2018

Class Introductions

Brief discussion on pedagogical and analytical methods for this class, and an example of the possible articulations of sound and/as violence we will tackle throughout the semester.

- Weheliye, A.G., 2005. Thinking Sound/Sound Thinking. in: Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity. Duke Univ Pr, Durham.

Week 2, April 19 2018

The affective physicality of sound

What can be understood by "listening" and what is the effect of vibrations in one's body?

- A short documentary on artist Christine Sun Kim
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqJAOSZm9zI>
- Kassabian, A., 2013. Introduction. in: Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity, 1st ed. University of California Press.
- Oliveros, P., 2005. Introduction. in: Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice. iUniverse, New York, NY.
- Sterne, J., 2015. hearing, in: Novak, D., Sakakeeny, M. (Eds.), Keywords in Sound. Duke Univ Pr, Durham; London, pp. 65–77.

In-class discussion

- Volcler, J., 2013. "Ears Don't Have Lids" – Technical Aspects of Hearing. In: Extremely Loud: Sound as a Weapon, New. ed. The New Press, pp.7–20.

Week 3, April 26 2018

Sound and power, part 1

What defines "sound," and what defines "noise"? How sound articulates power through its vibrational affects.

- Thompson, M., 2017. What Noise Has Been. in: Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism, Paperback. ed. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, New York. pp.17–40
- Sounding Out! Podcast Episode #9: Listening to São Paulo, Brazil
<https://soundstudiesblog.com/2012/10/15/7858/>
- Kusiak, J., 2014. Acoustic Gentrification: the silence of Warsaw's sonic warfare, in: Gandy, M., Nilsen, B. (Eds.), The Acoustic City. JOVIS Verlag, pp. 206–211.
- Ballard, J.G. The Sound Sweep (1960)
- Pan Daijing – Practice of Hygiene (from the album "Lack", 2017)
<https://pan-daijing.bandcamp.com/track/practice-of-hygiene>

In-class discussion:

- Bijsterveld, K., 2006. Listening to machines: industrial noise, hearing loss and the cultural meaning of sound. *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 31, 323–337.
- Brazilian Military Police on the use of Sound Bombs to Disrupt Funk Parties (Fluxo/Pancadão)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0I-2NI7xhaQ>
- "The Enraged Musician" by William Hogarth (1741)
<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hogarth-the-enraged-musician-t01800>
- "The Power of Music", by William Sidney Mount (1847)
<http://www.clevelandart.org/art/1991.110>

Week 4, May 3 2018

Sound and power, part 2

The power of sound in creating community, as well as in triggering listening anxieties towards violence.

- Birdsall, C., 2012. Mobilising Sound for the Nation at War. in: *Nazi Soundscapes: Sound, Technology and Urban Space in Germany, 1933-1945*, 01 ed. Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam. pp.103–139
- Fanon, F., 2012. This is the Voice of Algeria, in: Sterne, J. (Ed.), *The Sound Studies Reader*. Routledge, New York, pp. 329–335.
- The Amplification of Muted Voices: Notes on a Recitation of the Adhan
<https://soundstudiesblog.com/2016/03/07/the-amplification-of-muted-voices-notes-on-a-recitation-of-the-adhan/>
- Chino Amobi – Airport Music for Black Folk (2016)
<https://nonworldwide.bandcamp.com/album/chino-amobi-airport-music-for-black-folk>

In-class discussion:

- Brian Eno – Ambient 1: Music for Airports (1978)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNwYtllt3Q>
- Swedish Siren Sounds: Hesa Fredrik
<https://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2054&artikel=6384589>
- An Interview with Chino Amobi
<http://www.okayafrica.com/non-chino-amobi-interview/>
- Muslimische Gemeinde darf nicht mehr per Lautsprecher zum Freitagsgebet rufen (FOCUS, Februar 2018)
https://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/paar-aus-oer-erkenschwick-hatte-geklagt-muslimische-gemeinde-darf-nicht-mehr-per-lautsprecher-zum-freitagsgebet-rufen_id_8402367.html
- Authoritarian hold music: How Donald Trump's banal playlist cultivates danger at his rallies
https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/authoritarian-hold-music-how-donald-trumps-banal-playlist-cultivates-danger-at-his-rallies/2016/03/16/723159ac-eab1-11e5-bc08-3e03a5b41910_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.50bcb4fd6628

Assignment: produce a maximum 2-minute long audio piece critically reflecting on your own "musical autobiography," and connecting it with themes we have discussed in class (affect, subjectivity, power, community, etc.).

This assignment is loosely inspired by Wendy Hsu's similar prompt.

Week 5, May 17 2018

Sonic Weapons, from fact to fiction to speculation

The use of soundwaves as weapons, its myths and half-truths, popular depictions of sonic weaponry.

- Performance on "Acoustic Weapons" by Juan-Gil López and Chiu Longing
<https://archive.org/details/alg052>
- Fatima Al-Qadiri – Brute (2016)
<https://fatimaalqadiri.bandcamp.com/album/fatima-al-qadiri-brute-hdbcd031>
- Sonic Spirituality: Louise Erdrich on Postcommodity's Ceremonial Transformation of LRAD
<https://walkerart.org/magazine/lrad-louise-erdrich-postcommodity-at-documenta-14-nodapl>

In-class discussion:

- The Aztec Death Whistle
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjzqAInNlsI>
- Operation Wandering Soul
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THMAchwBwgs>
- Mosquito Device
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PjLRJxPLyU>
- Why the ocean is getting louder
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrpkZkwTvu0>

Week 6, May 24 2018

Sound and racial violence

The instrumentalization of sound and listening in the construction of racism, and its direct and indirect use in sustaining the fictions of racial difference.

Choose one of these two:

- Weheliye, A.G., 2005. I Am I Be. In: *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity*. Duke Univ Pr, Durham. pp. 46–72
- Ep.5 "Ears Racing", an interview with Jennifer Stoeber. In: *Phantom Pod: A Podcast on the Sonic Arts and Humanities* (2018)
<http://phantompod.org/2018/05/10/ep-5-ears-racing-jennifer-stoeber/>
- Why do Cartoon Villains Speak in Foreign Accents? (2018)
<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2018/01/why-do-cartoon-villains-speak-in-foreign-accents/549527/>
- Common – Black America Again (2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMNyCNdgayE>
- Moor Mother feat. Black Quantum Futurism – Time Distortion (2015)
<https://blackquantumfuturism.bandcamp.com/track/time-distortion>

Book recommendation (fiction):

- Thompson, M., 2017. Acoustic ecology, aesthetic moralism, and the politics of silence. In: Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect and Aesthetic Moralism, Paperback. ed. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, New York. pp.87–126
- Hagood, M., 2011. Quiet Comfort: Noise, Otherness, and the Mobile Production of Personal Space. American Quarterly 63, 573–589. <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2011.0036>
- Octavia Butler – Speech Sounds (1983)
- Jacob Kirkegaard – Four Rooms (2008)
<https://touch333.bandcamp.com/album/4-rooms>

Week 9, June 21 2018

Carceral Soundscapes

Sound and listening within the prison-industrial complex, the violence towards incarcerated Deaf and hard-of-hearing people, and other forms of sonic control and surveillance in incarceration.

- Nović, S. 2017. The Right to Remain Silent. The New Inquiry.
<https://thenewinquiry.com/the-right-to-remain-silent/>
- Kirkpatrick, B. 2013. Regulating the Carceral Soundscape: Media Policy in Prison. Sounding Out!
<https://soundstudiesblog.com/2013/06/03/regulating-the-carceral-soundscape-media-policy-in-prison/>
- Davis, A.Y., 2003. Introduction: Prison Reform or Prison Abolitionism? In: Are Prisons Obsolete? Seven Stories Press, New York.
- Artist Anne Zeitz explaining her installation "Retention" (2014)
<https://soundstudiesblog.com/2014/10/30/sounding-out-podcast-36-anne-zeitzs-retention/>
- Scanner, Mass Observation part 1 (1994)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gC4fJSm9vM>

For those who only need a Beteiligungsnaehweis: produce a podcast on sound and violence, sound as violence, due August 10, 2018. You will divide yourselves in groups of maximum three people to do this, and produce a minimum 5 maximum 15-minute long podcast discussing one or more examples that were not presented in class (nor in the Semesterapparat). This has to be more in-depth than the “musical autobiography” assignment and employ concepts and ideas we discussed throughout the semester. However, you are free to articulate those with non-academic languages (storytelling, fiction, personal accounts, and so on).

Possible “broad themes” are to be taken from the themes of each class (featured here in the Syllabus), as suggestions for you to begin from. You will be also required to submit a bibliography/list of references as a separate document.

For those requiring a Modulabschlussprüfung: instead of the podcast, you will produce, also in groups of maximum three, either (due August 17, 2018):

- a minimum 15-minute long Audio Paper – NOT a podcast;*
- a minimum 10-minute short film;
- a 10-minute audio paper + a 1500-words position essay.

