

## 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=vNwYtlllyt3Q>
- 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](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](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):*







- Pablo Vittar – Então Vai (2018)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVDyowAzBrU>
- The Carters – Apes\*\*t (2018)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbMqWXnpXcA>

### Week 12, July 12 2018

#### *Seminar Review*

Open class in which we will go a bit deeper in a theme or themes you wish to know more from (meaning it is to be decided with you in advance).

### Week 13, July 19 2018

#### *Audio papers, methodologies, paths forward*

Short presentations from assignment themes for discussion on formats, methodologies, etc.

### Grading

Assiduity on questions and delivering the podcast assignments for this class is what secures your *Beteiligungsnachweis*. Students that would like to have a *Modulabschlussprüfung* can skip the second podcast and instead develop the other assignment.

### Class policies

This is a class in which we will potentially discuss sensitive political topics, and the consequences of certain forms of violence for the configuration of the (sonic) world we all live in. Therefore we want to create an environment in class that allows students to exchange ideas and discuss positions, all the while making sure that a respectful relationship is constructed amongst you, as well as with myself. Long story short: **racist, sexist, xenophobic, transphobic comments will not be tolerated.**

Certain topics and discussions might be triggering for some students; if so, please read the syllabus carefully and do let me know in advance — I will do my best to accommodate that in a respectful manner.

Students are responsible for handing in questions and assignments in due time. If you cannot come to class please let me know in advance per e-mail; same goes if you cannot deliver an assignment on time, and require a different due date — I will try to accommodate that depending on the urgency of your absence. Needless to say, academic integrity is expected from you in relation to plagiarism and originality, tone, and content of your participation both in-class and in assignments.

In case I am late to class, I will try to communicate that to you in due time. If that is not possible, please allow for up to thirty minutes before leaving and use this time to catch up with readings and questions. If it turns out that I may miss the class completely, I will notify you in advance.