

Sound Studies and Sonic Arts

Summer Term 2024

Phase Focus

Module Theory, Listening

Course Title Non-Utilitarian Listening | Seminar

Course Times and Location Wednesdays | 10:00 am - 14:00 pm | LIE 313

Instructors [Dr. Pedro Oliveira](#)

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Office Hours and Location upon request, LIE 312

Possible Credit Points [Listening 4CP \(G\)](#), [Theory 2CP \(G/NG\)](#), [Theory 4CP \(G\)](#), [Free Focus 2CP/4CP \(NG\)](#)

Course Description

This is a Seminar on practices for re-thinking and re-figuring the world, taking a non-extractive approach to reading and listening towards assembling different trajectories for what sonic practices can be. „Non-Utilitarian Listening,“ as a theory seminar, provides an exercise on investigating knowledge, that is, how scientific practices have systematized and validated extraction as the only possible mode of organizing and reading the world. It traces a partial genealogy of non-utilitarian practices stemming from feminist, anticolonial, and indigenous thinking. We will discuss how concepts come into being and get mobilized, and more importantly, how to uproot them from their utilitarian undertones (i.e. knowledge does not always equal usefulness).

As a proposition, however, „Non-Utilitarian Listening“ rehearses thinking with listening as a way of making worlds, that is, as a practice that does not extract what is given but instead one that gives. It brushes against what Ailton Krenak (and many other indigenous thinkers) would call the „mercantilization of life“: the idea that the world is something external to ourselves, and thus can be properly organized in a system of understanding that is fixed, nameable, classifiable, and therefore capable of having its resources extracted, packaged, and commodified. For every meeting one (or more) students will be asked to introduce the readings to the class. This is NOT meant to be a presentation, but instead a contextualization from our own, situated understanding of the texts, their gaps, questions, and propositions. The aim is to ignite a productive, open-ended discussion rather to demonstrate a full understanding beforehand. We will create a space for "productive unknowing," where the limits what we know and what we may not know shall be constantly re-negotiated, collectively.

This is a Seminar on the (im)possibility of listening to be thought from merely a sonic standpoint. It understands listening as an implicated practice of sense-making that, in many ways, outlines what it is that we think and feel to be „human“, and our assumed and entrained relationship of exteriority with nature and everything else. It is aimed at anyone interested in anticolonial, queer, black, and indigenous thinking beyond the "canon" of Sound Studies, as well as students interested in working and experimenting with the limits of theory and its intersections (and conflicts) with artistic practice.

Requirements for Attending

This Seminar is limited to a maximum of 15 Students.

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Schedule

Introducing, 17.4

Ailton **Krenak**: Life is not Useful

Sara **Ahmed**: Queer Use

Visiting, 08.5

Jota **Mombaça**: For an Ontological Strike

Eve **Tuck** and K. Wayne **Yang**: Decolonization is not a Metaphor

Dreaming, 22.5

Gloria **Anzaldúa**: Flights of the Imagination

Davi **Kopenawa** and Bruce **Albert**: The Flowers of Dream

Witnessing, 29.5

Ailton **Krenak** and Nastassja **Martin**: The Elements Are Speaking

Denise **Ferreira da Silva**: On Difference without Separability

Haunting, 5.6

Édouard **Glissant**: The Black Beach

Adania **Shibli**: The Sea is Mohammad al-Khatib's

Echoing, 19.6

Louis **Chude-Sokei**: Dr. Satan's Echo Chamber: Reggae, Technology and the Diaspora Process

Alexis Pauline **Gumbs**: Excerpts from „Dub“

Becoming, 3.7

Katherine **McKittrick**: Consciousness (Feeling, feeling like this)

Gloria **Anzaldúa**: Geographies of Selves

Exam / Credit Points

2CP (graded: Theory, not graded: Theory, Free Focus):

Attendance, preparation and meaningful engagement in in-class discussion;

Introducing at least one of the readings and/or curating one of the listening/watching discussions in sessions 4 to 7;

If you do not do the 4CP but need a graded 2CP: all of the above + short methodological statement (poetic-theoretical or theory-based – details TBD individually).

Consecutive assignment leading to 4CP (optional, graded: Theory): Audio paper (ca. 20 minutes) + Extended Abstract (2000 words); or Term Paper (5000 to 8000 words), due to Nov 1st

OR

Consecutive assignment leading to 4 CP (optional, graded: Listening): Performance or Performance-lecture, ca, 20 minutes + documentation (1500 to 3000 words) due to Oct.1st

Other arrangements also possible and TBD individually.

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Supporting Media

- Ahmed**, Sara. *What's the Use?: On the Uses of Use*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.
- Anzaldúa**, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Fourth Edition, Aunt Lute Books, 2012.
- Anzaldúa**, Gloria.. *Light in the Dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Edited by Analouise Louise Keating, Duke Univ Pr, 2015.
- Chude-Sokei**, Louis Onuorah. *The Sound of Culture: Diaspora and Black Technopoetics*. Wesleyan University Press, 2016.
- Ferreira da Silva**, Denise. *Unpayable Debt*. Sternberg Press, 2022.
- Glissant**, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*. Translated by Betsy Wing, Univ of Michigan Pr, 1997.
- Gumbs**, Alexis Pauline. *Dub: Finding Ceremony*. Duke University Press, 2020.
- Khosravi**, Shahram, editor. *Waiting-a Project in Conversation*. Transcript, 2021.
- Kopenawa**, Davi, and Bruce Albert. *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*. the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Krenak**, Ailton. *Life Is Not Useful*. Translated by Jamille Pinheiro-Dias and Alex Brostoff, English edition, Polity Press, 2023.
- McKittrick**, Katherine. *Dear Science and Other Stories*. Duke University Press, 2021.
- Ngcobo**, Gabi, Nomaduma Rosa Masilela, Serubiri Moses, Thiago de Paula Souza, Yvette Mutumba, Kunst-Werke Berlin, Kulturstiftung des Bundes, et al., eds. *We don't need another hero*. Berlin: Distanz, 2018.
- Tuck**, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, Sept. 2012, <https://decolonization.org/index.php/des/article/download/18630>

Online Repository

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