

Special Topics in Anthropology: The Human Experience of Sound
(ANTH 4150)

Department of Anthropology
York University
Winter 2023
Tuesdays 2:30-5:30pm

Professor: Jillian Fulton-Melanson

Email: fultonjs@yorku.ca

Office Hours:

Course Description

This course explores the merging of sound studies and anthropology, with a focus on how social actors understand their environments through sound. We will consider how anthropologists frame their work through sound, in an effort to further understand how anthropology may contribute to knowledge about sonic ecologies, and how anthropological methods allow for unique perspectives to emerge within sound studies scholarship. Thinking about sonic ecologies as field sites for ethnographic study, students will explore sound in relation to both urban and natural environments. As sound includes music, this course also engages with the disciplines of musicology and ethnomusicology in order to contextualize how sound and music have been positioned in sensory hierarchies. In this course, students will have the opportunity to engage and experiment with sound, and to get creative with writing about sound and/or use sound to express academic discourse. Musical training is not required to take this course.

Learning Objectives

In this course, you will develop an understanding for how sound studies scholars conduct research and analyze the sounds in the world around them. You will also develop research and analysis skills using sound, which you can apply to various disciplines in the arts, social sciences, and humanities. By the end of this course, you should be able to critique the sounds around you, engage in active listening, and describe elements of the transformations of our world through sound.

In this course, you will also continue to develop critical information literacy. Critical information literacy builds digital fluency, information literacies, critical thinking, and the ability to ask good questions, marshal evidence, and communicate effectively across varied media. You will continue to learn about how research is inquiry, scholarship is conversation, and how to search in strategic exploration.

Readings

Readings should be completed prior to the class assigned for that day. In order to succeed in this course, readings must be read. Do not skip readings and rely solely on class discussions to understand the material, because doing so will not allow you to develop a complex understanding of the issues involved.

There is no required text to purchase in this course. The readings are journal articles and book chapters, and will have links on the **Eclass page**.

Participation and Productive Discussion

This course requires attendance and participation. During class **you must participate** by engaging in activities and discussion.

This course covers a number of topics that are potentially controversial. In order to keep the discussion productive, everyone must follow these rules:

1. Feel free to say what is on your mind as long as it is respectful.
2. Personal opinions and experiences can be productive parts of anthropological discussions. Try to think about them (and even critique them!) by using the anthropological concepts you are learning in this course.
3. Focus on the content of the readings, films, listening material, and lectures. Use the evidence and research that we study in this course to rethink your previous opinions and guide your questions.
4. Respect the fact that the student population of York University is very diverse, in terms of ability, age, culture, ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexuality. Each person in the class might not agree with your perspective and it is important to respect where each other is coming from as well as embrace and relish in the rich discussion that such diversity brings.
5. Remember that we are all individuals. Our identity can influence how we see things, but no one person is a representative of their entire “community”.

Evaluation and Deadlines

Presentation	Present one reading	15%	TBD
Sound Walk	Participation and summary	10%	TBD
Final Project	Proposal + Bibliography	10%	January 24
	Peer Review Presentation and Feedback	15%	March 28
	Project / Essay	20%	April 3
Precis	3x 5%	15%	TBD
Participation		15%	
COURSE TOTAL		100	

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Effort will be made to accommodate students with disabilities. Here is York University Senate's policy on accommodation:

<https://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/policies/academic-accommodation-for-students-with-disabilities-policy/>

Students should register with Student Accessibility Services
(<https://accessibility.students.yorku.ca/>).

Please feel free to discuss your needs and their impact on your participation in the course with Dr. Fulton-Melanson. If you have an accommodations letter, please send it to Dr. Fulton-Melanson by the third week of class.

Instructions: Instructions for each assignment will be posted on Moodle well in advance of the due dates.

Submitting Assignments

Submitting Work on Time: All assignments must be uploaded to the **Eclass page** by 11:59p.m. on the due date. The late penalty is 10% per day including weekends. After seven days, late work will not be accepted at all. Assignments will not be accepted by email.

Late penalties are strict, out of fairness to your colleagues who submitted their work on time.

Extensions: Extensions are only granted for documented medical and serious personal issues, and for religious observances. There are no extensions for computer crashes or other technology failures – back up your work regularly, in multiple formats, to avoid problems.

Zero Tolerance for Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism is representing someone else's ideas, writing, or other intellectual property as your own. There is zero tolerance for plagiarism, and the penalties are serious even on a first offence. Any assignment which contains one or more instances of uncited or improperly cited material from other sources will receive a grade of zero, and will result in an Investigation of Potential Academic Misconduct as per Senate policy, and possible further sanctions. Even if you state someone else's idea in your own words (paraphrasing), you must always provide a citation that includes the number of the page you got the idea from. Feel free to ask any questions about plagiarism and how to avoid it. It is your responsibility to understand plagiarism.

Sharing work is an equally serious act of academic dishonesty. In cases in which two or more assignments include matching sentences or paragraphs, and/or sentences that include a blend of matching content and variations in wording, these assignments will be flagged by Turnitin, receive grades of zero, and result in Investigations of Potential Academic Misconduct as per Senate policy.

Requests for Additional Feedback and Regrades

Requests for additional feedback: Dr. Fulton-Melanson will provide a numeric grade and written feedback on all coursework.

If you have questions about your grade or would like additional feedback, you can contact Dr. Fulton-Melanson via email. Please be as specific as possible in outlining which points you need clarified.

Requests for additional feedback are due 7 days after you received the feedback.

All requests for regrades must follow the policies outlined below:

If you believe there has been an error made in the grading your work, you can request a regrade. The request should be one or two paragraphs long. It must identify the specific error(s) that you believe were made in grading your work. It must explain why your work merits a different grade by quoting the exact wording of the assignment instructions and of your submission.

***Please do not mention other issues such as the effects of the grade upon your course total or GPA, as these are not considered in regrading.

Your mark may increase, decrease, or remain the same as a result of reassessment. The reassessed grade is final.

Dr. Fulton-Melanson will inform you of the results by email.

Course Schedule

1. January 10: Welcome to the Human Experience of Sound

NO REQUIRED READINGS

Supplementary Material:

Radical Listening <https://www.strike.coop/radical-listening-a-manifesto>

Holman, Tomlinson. 2010. "Chapter 1: Objective Sound". In *Sound for Film and Television*. New York: Routledge.

2. January 17: Defining Sound, Music, and Noise

Schwartz, Hillel. 2004. "On Noise". In *Hearing History: A Reader*, edited by Mark M. Smith. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Labelle, Brandon. 2010. "Introduction". In *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*. New York: Continuum.

Cohen, Sara. 1995. "Sounding Out the City: Music and the Sensuous Production of Place". *Transactions: Institute of British Geographers (1965)* 20(4): 434-446.

3. January 24: Schafer's Soundscape

Schafer, R. Murray. 2012. "The Soundscape". In *The Sound Studies Reader*, edited by Jonathan Sterne. New York: Routledge.

4. January 31: Acoustemology / Techoustemology

Feld, Steven. 2012. "Vamp In, Head: Acoustemology in Accra". In *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra: Five Musical Years in Ghana*.

Bijsterveld, Karin, and José van Dijck. 2009. "Introduction". In *Sound Souvenirs: Audio Technologies, Memory and Cultural Practices*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Wenz, Clara. 2020. “‘Yom Yom Odeh’: Towards the Biography of a Hebrew Baidaphon Record.” *Yuval* 11.

5. February 7: Ethnographies of Listening

Robinson, Dylan. 2020. *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

6. February 14: The Question of Authenticity

Shannon, Jonathan H. 2003. “Sultans of Spin: Syrian Sacred Music on the World Stage.” *American anthropologist* 105(2): 266–277.

Kapchan, Deborah A. 2007. *Traveling Spirit Masters : Moroccan Gnawa Trance and Music in the Global Marketplace*. Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press.

7. February 21: READING WEEK

NO READINGS

8. February 28: Sounding Intersections I: Ethics

Skinner, Ryan Thomas. 2015. “A Pious Poetics of Place: Islam and the Interpellation of (Im)Moral Subjects in Malian Popular Culture.” In *Bamako Sounds: The Afropolitan Ethics of Malian Music*, 107–30. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Supplementary Reading:

Hirschkind, Charles. 2006. *The Ethical Soundscape: Cassette Sermons and Islamic Counterpublics*.

9. March 7: Sounding Intersections II: Gender

O'Brien, Alia Hamdon. "On Faithful Listening: On Sound, Survival, and Becoming in Muslim Toronto". PhD Dissertation. University of Toronto.

Fulton-Melanson, Jillian. 2022. "Post-tarab identities in diaspora: a sonic imaginary of Arab Canada". In *The Routledge Handbook of Middle Eastern Diasporas*, edited by Ramy M.K. Aly and Dalia Abdelhady. London: Routledge.

10. March 14: Sounding Intersections III: Race and Class

Stoever, Jennifer Lynn. 2016. *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening*. New York: NYU Press.

Saldanha, Arun. 2007. *Psychedelic White : Goa Trance and the Viscosity of Race*. Minneapolis, MN ;: University of Minnesota Press.

Ibraheem, Dalia. 2022. "The Homegrown Martian". *Anthropology News* website.
<https://www.anthropology-news.org/articles/the-homegrown-martian/>

11. March 21: Writing about/with Sound

Kapchan, Deborah. 2017. *Theorizing Sound Writing*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Bendix, Regina. 2000. "The Pleasures of the Ear: Toward an Ethnography of Listening". *Cultural Analysis* 1

Feld, Steven, and Donald Brenneis. 2004. "Doing Anthropology in Sound." *American ethnologist* 31(4): 461–474.

Erlmann, Veit. "But What of the Ethnographic Ear? Anthropology, Sound, and the Senses." In *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity*, 2004.

12. March 28: Peer Review Activity

NO READINGS

13. April 4: Listening to Final Projects

NO READINGS – FINAL PROJECTS DUE APRIL 3 @ 11:59pm
