

# Sound Studies (Fall 2015)

A cultural studies course

**English 466 @ UVic**

Mondays and Thursdays

1 – 2:20 PM

Dr. Jentery Sayers



This course is an interdisciplinary approach to culture by way of sound.

Attending to the political as well as the aesthetic dimensions of sound, we will survey a history of audio technologies (e.g., turntables, tape, radio, and MP3s) together with the cultures in which they are embedded (e.g., remix, high fidelity, protest, and ethnography). We will address questions such as: Do we own our voices? When and why do we think sound is immediate or immersive? Why is sound often associated with emotion? Under what assumptions are sounds gendered, sexualized, or racialized? Is sound ephemeral? Is it material? Do ideologies shape how we hear the world around us? Why do people hack audio technologies or remix sounds? When is sound “authentic”? How do sonic and visual cultures intersect? How do we think about audio and images simultaneously while considering their differences? How do popular cultures privilege visuals?

Throughout the semester, we will listen extensively to historical audio, study sound artists, read publications in sound studies, and examine films and advertisements. You will also practice composing in three audio genres: the radio documentary, the voice-over, and field recording. By the semester's end, you will be expected to produce academic arguments anchored in cultural studies methodologies and also reflect on sound as a way to critically approach culture. I will assume you have no experience working with sound.

We will likely study the work of Theodor Adorno, Laurie Anderson, Jacques Attali, Alexander Graham Bell, William S. Burroughs, John Cage, Michel Chion, Mark Cousins, Bing Crosby, DJ Shadow, DJ /rupture, DJ Spooky, Thomas Edison, Ralph Ellison, Brian Eno, Girl Talk, Lisa Gitelman, Grandmaster Flash, Brion Gysin, Stuart Hall, Holly Herndon, King Tubby, Kool Herc, Le Tigre, Lead Belly, John Lomax, Marshall McLuhan, Merzbow, Jack Mullin, John Oswald, Les Paul, Tara Rodgers, Tricia Rose, R. Murray Schafer, Pierre Schaeffer, Jonathan Sterne, and Alexander Weheliye.

Questions about the course? Email Jentery Sayers at [jentery@uvic.ca](mailto:jentery@uvic.ca).