ANT 324L: Sounds of the City
Fall 2017    MW 10-11:30    SAC 4.120

Marina Peterson
marina.peterson@austin.utexas.edu
Office hours: M 1-2 and by appointment (SAC 5.148)

Course description
The city resounds with traffic and laughter, birds and airplanes, the nightclub and its revelers, the stillness of wind rustling leaves. In this course we will listen to the city through sensory investigations that attend to the physicality of perception and sound – to that which is audible and beyond. Austin will serve as our site of sonic investigation for an urban “acoustemology” (Feld) that explores the significance of sound for urban social life. Topics to be addressed include musical cultures, protest sound, noise ordinances and gentrification, architectural acoustics, and energy, environment and infrastructure. Sonic methodologies will focus on ethnographic approaches to sound and listening, soundwalks, basic field recording techniques, and the study of sonic archives. Along with class listening fieldtrips, students will conduct their own sonic ethnographies over the course of the semester.

Course requirements

Participation and attendance [30%]
There are three equally weighted components of your participation and attendance grade:

Class participation
This course will be run in a seminar format, with class sessions consisting primarily of discussion of readings, listening material, and sonic investigations. As such, it depends on the participation of all. Be versant with the assigned readings and other material, and be prepared to engage in productive discussion. When class sessions note LISTEN, FIELDTRIP, or PRESENTATIONS, these are in class activities.

We will maintain an ethos of respect in all interactions. The class will be a welcoming and safe place for all people regardless of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.

Reading questions
Each student will prepare 1 good discussion question on days focusing on readings. Your question should be intended to prompt discussion of an issue raised by the text/s (or listening material), and not about facts or opinions. The question should demonstrate a thorough consideration of the material. Post to Canvas by 9 a.m.

Attendance
Attendance is crucial. If you must miss class please let me know in advance, or as soon as possible. It is especially important that you attend all fieldtrips and presentation days. Absences will be considered excused for religious holidays, illness, or extenuating circumstances due to an emergency. More than 1 unexcused absence will affect your grade.
Over the course of the semester you will complete 5 listening assignments. These will be presented and discussed in class. You may wish to focus these toward your final “urban sonic ethnography” project.

Field recording: 3-5’ field recording of environmental sounds, made with a recording device of your choice (you can borrow a portable audio recorder from me). It can be edited (a compilation of recordings) or unedited (a single recording).
   DUE: Sept. 20

Noise measurement journal: use a dB measurement app for a phone, or keep written notes about relative volume (i.e. note when people talk about something as being noisy). You should have 5 entries, with date, time, and location.
   DUE: Oct. 16

Ethnographic listening journal: fieldnotes of listening to the city, and attending to how people listen, 6 entries total
   DUE: Oct. 30: class presentation of 3 entries
          Dec. 11: turn in full journal (6 entries)

Interview: conduct an interview with someone asking about experiences of sound and listening in the city
   DUE: Nov. 15

Sonic archive: an interpretation or analysis of archival material with respect to sound
   DUE: Dec. 4

Final project [40%]

Urban sonic ethnography

Your final project will be a sonic ethnography of a subject of your choice, in/of Austin. Listening is a way of paying attention and being present, both by people in the world and in conducting research. Start by listening, and listening to how people listen. Listening is a practice that people do already as a way of knowing about things – it is something in which we are all expert, but which is usually not acknowledged. Your sonic ethnography might include descriptions of social and environmental sounds, ways in which people orient themselves via the aural, how expertise is enacted through listening, or how attachments of kinship and friendship cohere around an attunement to sounds. Listening assignments can be used toward your project.

There are two components of the final project:

Project proposal [10%]
Include subject of investigation, analytical concern, research components, and format of final project.
   DUE: Oct. 25

Final [30%]
Format: Can be audio, multimedia, or written, or combination thereof. If using media solely, analysis should be embedded in the project. A media project with embedded analysis should be 8-10’, or 6-8’ with 2 page written analysis/argument. A written ethnography should be 10-15 pp. You must engage with relevant readings from the course.
   DUE: Dec. 11 in class presentation
          Dec. 18 final version due
All assignments must be turned in on time. Late assignments may result in a grade reduction at the discretion of the professor.

Grade scale used for this course:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Cutoff</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94%</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
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**Academic Integrity**

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code: “As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.” Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT. If you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT’s Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php)

**Readings**

The following books have been ordered at The Co-op:


Other assigned readings are available as PDFs or links on Canvas.
Course schedule

August 30  
**Introductions**

FIELDTRIP:  
**Soundwalk**

I. METHODS IN SONIC ETHNOGRAPHY

September 6  
**Sonic Ethnography**

*Keywords in Sound*

“Acoustemology,” by Steven Feld
“Listening,” by Tom Rice
“Resonance,” by Veit Erlmann


LISTEN:  
**Ultra-red. Practice Sessions**  
http://www.welcometolace.org/pages/view/ultra-red/

September 11  
**Soundscape …**

*Hearing History*

“Soundscapes and Earwitnesses,” by R. Murray Schafer

“I Have Never Seen a Sound,” by R. Murray Schafer

“From Ethnomusicology to Echo-Muse-Ecology: Reading R. Murray Schafer in the Papua New Guinea Rainforest,” by Steven Feld  
http://www.acousticecology.org/writings/echomuseecology.html

*The Acoustic City*

Section 1: Urban Soundscapes
Section 2: Acoustic Flanerie

LISTEN:  
“A Village Soundscape”  
National Park Service, “Natural Sounds”  
https://www.nps.gov/subjects/sound/index.htm

September 13  
**… and its critics**


September 18  
**Phonography**

*Keywords in Sound*

“Phonography,” by Patrick Feaster

*The Acoustic City*

Section 4: Acoustic Ecologies
Audio CD [listen to tracks of your choice]

Tony Schwartz, “Listening to the City”
http://www.folkways.si.edu/magazine-fall-winter-2012-listening-city/sounds/music/article/smithsonian

FIELDTRIP:  
Field recording

September 20  
**Sound Maps**

*Sound Cities*

London Sound Survey
Listening to the City
L.A. Listens
The Roaring Twenties
[links on Canvas]

PRESENTATIONS:  
3-5’ field recordings

September 25  
**Hearing History**

*Hearing History*

“The soundscapes of early modern England,” by Bruce R. Smith

“English theories of hearing in the seventeenth century,” by Penelope Gouk

“Identity, bells, and the nineteenth-century French village,” by Alain Corbin

“Acoustics and Social Order in Early America,” by Richard Cullen Rath

“Listening to Southern Slavery,” by Shane White and Graham White
[read 2 or 3 of your choice]

*Keywords in Sound*

“Echo,” by Mark M. Smith


LISTEN:  
Shawnee, Ohio, by Brian Harnetty
II. LISTENING TO AUSTIN (AND OTHER CITIES)

September 27  
**Austin: The Live Music Capital of the World, a History**

GUEST LECTURE: Ed Ward, rock historian

October 2  
**Listening to Austin**


*The Acoustic City*
Section 3: Sound Cultures [read 3 chapters of your choice]

October 4  
**Austin Noise**

*The Acoustic City*
Section 5: The Politics of Noise (all)

*City of Austin Noise Ordinance*
*LifeAustin Noise Report*  
[links on Canvas]

October 9  
**São Paulo Noise**

GUEST LECTURE: Leonardo Cardoso, Asst. Prof., Performance Studies, Texas A&M


October 11  
**Urban Noise**

*Hearing History*
“On Noise,” by Hillel Schwartz
“American Noise, 1900-1930,” by Raymond W. Smilor

*Keywords in Sound*
“Noise,” by David Novak

Recommended

October 16  
**Measuring Noise**

Schafer, R. Murray, *The New Soundscape*
IV: A New Definition of Noise
V: Sound Sewage: A Collage

PRESENTATIONS: Noise measurement journal
October 18  
**Noise, Law, and Race**

https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/noise-church-flesh-coltrane-church-pulse/#!

**Recommended**

“Spaces of Sounds: The Peoples of the African Diaspora and Protest in the United States”

October 23  
**Sonic Protest**

*The Acoustic City*


Recommended

Ultra-red. *10 Preliminary Theses on Militant Sound Art Investigation*.

October 25  
**Presentations: Urban sonic ethnography proposals**

III. SENSING URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE

October 30  
**Resonant City**

*Hearing History*

“Shaping the sound of modernity,” by Emily Thompson

*Keywords in Sound*

“Space,” by Andrew Eisenberg


PRESENTATIONS: Ethnographic listening journal

November 1  
**Listening to Museums**

*Museum Sound Maps*
http://www.johnkannenberg.com

FIELDTRIP: Blanton Art Museum
November 6  
Aerial Attunements
  
*The Acoustic City*

“Machines over the garden: flight paths and the suburban pastoral,” by Michael Flitner


LISTEN:  *Air Pressure*, by Angus Carlyle and Rupert Cox
*Voices of the Sky*, Cook Records, 1957

November 8  
Listening to Infrastructure

FIELDTRIP:  Infrastructural site

November 13  
Hearing Beyond the Ear

*Keywords in Sound*

“Deafness,” by Mara Mills


VI: Three Thresholds of the Audible and One of the Bearable

November 15  
Sensing Sound

*Keywords in Sound*

“Body,” by Deborah Kapchan

LISTEN:  Christine Sun Kim
http://christinesunkim.com
Evelyn Glennie
https://www.evelyn.co.uk/
https://www.ted.com/talks/evelyn_glennie_shows_how_to_listen
Daniel Kish, on human echolocation
https://www.ted.com/talks/daniel_kish_how_i_use_sonar_to_navigate_the_world

PRESENTATIONS:  Interview

November 20  
Beyond Audible Sound

*The Acoustic City*

“Sonic Ecology: The Undetectable Sounds of the City,” by Kate E. Jones

“Bad Vibrations: Infrasound, Sonic Hauntings, and Imperceptible Politics,” by Kelly Ladd

*Keywords in Sound*

“Transduction,” by Stefan Helmreich

LISTEN:  *Sounds from Dangerous Places*, by Peter Cusack
http://sounds-from-dangerous-places.org/
November 22  No class – Thanksgiving holiday

November 27  Sound of/as Energy

LISTEN: Electrical Walks, by Kristina Kubisch
http://www.christinakubisch.de/en/works/electrical_walks

November 29  No class – Research day

December 4  Texas Energy Soundscapes
Briscoe Center for American History, Energy & Natural Resources collections
http://www.cah.utexas.edu/collections/energy_natural_resources.php

Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/texas.html

PRESENTATIONS: Sonic archive investigation

December 6  Listening to Oil
FIELDTRIP: Santa Rita No. 1

December 11  Final Presentations

…syllabus subject to change…
Resources

Services for Students with Disabilities
This class respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities. If there are circumstances that make our learning environment and activities difficult, if you have medical information that you need to share with me, or if you need specific arrangements in case the building needs to be evacuated, please let me know. Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/

Resources for Learning & Life at UT Austin
• The University of Texas has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning.
  o Sanger Learning and Career Center: http://lifelearning.utexas.edu/
  o Undergraduate Writing Center: http://uwc.utexas.edu/
  o Counseling & Mental Health Center: http://cmhc.utexas.edu/
  o Career Exploration Center: http://www.utexas.edu/student/careercenter/
  o Student Emergency Services: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/

Important Safety Information
The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, http://www.utexas.edu/safety/

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

• Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
• Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
• In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
• Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency