COURSE DESCRIPTION
In 1984 the musicologist Shuhei Hosokawa decried the lack of attention that urban planners give to the acoustic dimension of cities, writing that the city remains ‘unheard’ when observed from a strictly visual perspective. In recent years scholarship on and creative practice in urban sound has proliferated across disciplines that include sound studies, urban sociology, sound art and urban design. This course will explore the acoustic dimension of cities through an examination of such wide-ranging phenomena as city symphonies, urban soundscapes, noise legislation, sound mapping, acoustic planning and urban sound art. Through this course we will gain a better understanding of how the acoustic city has been imagined, designed, planned, and theorized over the last century.

TEACHING
This course will be offered as six 90-minute lectures (Hilary Term 2018) and two 90-minute seminars (Trinity Term 2018). Students are expected to attend all lectures and seminars.

ASSESSMENT
Two essays of 3,500-4,000 words each, including notes but not bibliography. Both essays are to be submitted by 12 PM noon, Tuesday, 1st week of Trinity Term 2019. The word count should be stated on the front page of each essay. Please provide two copies of each essay.

Please note that Essay 1 will be on a set topic. Essay 2 will be on a topic of your choice.

In addition to the two essays you will be asked to give a short presentation (up to 10 min.) related to the topic for your Essay 2 in Trinity Term 2018. The format of the presentation is left to the student’s discretion. You are welcome, but not required, to use handouts, PowerPoint or other audiovisual aids as needed. This presentation will not be assessed but it will be required to enroll on the course.

COURSE STRUCTURE (Provisional)

Hilary Term 2018
Lecture 1: Soundscape of the Urban Past
Urban acoustic histories • Sensorial architecture and urbanism • Case Study: London • Broadside ballads • London cries • Acoustic economies • ‘London Sound Survey’ (Rawes) • Soundscape of the Urban Past (ed. Bijsterveld)

Lecture 2: The Emergence of the Modern Acoustic City 1900-1933
Representing the city in sound and music • City symphonies • Futurism and the acoustic city • The Soundscape of Modernity (Thompson) • ‘The Roaring Twenties’ (Thompson) • Nazi Soundscape (Birdsall)

Lecture 3: City of Din: Acoustic Cities in the Age of Noise
The Age of Noise in Britain (Mansell) • Anti-Noise League • Noise legislation • A Tirade against Noise (McKenzie) • The Problem of Noise (Bartlett) • ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’ (Simmel) • Sound Maps • Noise Maps • END Directive • Quiet Areas • SONYC (Sounds of New York City) • Acoustic surveillance
Lecture 4: Recomposing the City: Acoustic Design and Urban Sound Art
LISTEN (Neuhaus) • The Soundscape (Schafer) • Sonambiente • Tuned City • Bonn Hoeren • 'The Sonic Commons' (O&A) • 'Recomposing the City' (Ouzounian) • Times Square (Mend+Keith Obadike)

Lecture 5: ‘Making the Walls Quake’: New Urban Acoustic Architectures
Guest visit by St John’s Sound Artist-in-Residence Katarzyna Krakowiak (TBC) • Collaborations between Sound artists and architects • Poème électronique (Le Corbusier, Varèse, Xenakis) • Vex (Chance de Silva & Scanner) • BUG (Bain and Brandlhuber)

Lecture 6: Hearing Urban Futures: Planning the Acoustic City
Soundscape and urban regeneration • Acoustic Planning • ‘The Walkman Effect’ (Hosokawa) • Max Dixon, sound planning for London • Manual for Acoustic Planning (Anderson) • ‘Hearing Urban Regeneration’ (Waldock) • Soundscape and urban communities • Acoustic City (Gandy and Nilsen)

Trinity Term 2018
Seminar 1: Student Presentations
Seminar 2: Student Presentations

ESSAY TOPICS

Essay 1
Using ONE of the following projects as the basis of your discussion, examine the uses, potentials, limitations, concepts, technologies, aesthetics (and other issues, as pertinent) of urban sound maps:

• London Sound Survey (Ian Rawes)
• The Montréal Sound Map (Max Stein and Julian Stein)
• The Roaring Twenties (Emily Thompson)
• Listening Map of Bonn (Sam Auinger)
• X Marks the Spot (Matilde Meireles)
• Sounds of New York City (SONYC)

Your discussion should refer to academic literature on urban sound, for example stemming from sound studies and urban studies

Essay 2
An essay on a topic of your choice. You should be careful to avoid overlap with Essay 1. Your essay may develop analytical, historical, critical/theoretical perspectives, as appropriate. You are encouraged to discuss the topic with the instructor. This essay topic should form the basis of your presentation in Trinity Term 2018.

Example topics:
-A critical/analytical essay on an artist who works with sound in urban environments
-An essay on the history of noise legislation
-The history of acoustic design or acoustic planning
RECOMMENDED READING

Key readings are marked with an asterisk*.

Please note that this list may be updated periodically over the course of the academic year; new versions will be uploaded to WebLearn.


LaBelle, Brandon. Chapter 10: 'Tuning Space: Max Neuhaus and Site-Specific Sound' in Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art, pp. 154-166.


*Krakowiak, Katarzyna. ‘Selected Work’ (on WebLearn).


  • Chapter 1, ‘Introduction’, pp. 3-12.
  • Chapter 4, ‘From Town to City’, pp. 53-69;

*Seennett, Richard. ‘The Open City’. Online at [https://www.richardsennett.com](https://www.richardsennett.com)

Simmel, Georg. 1903. ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’


ONLINE RESOURCES


Bello, Juan Pablo et al. SONYC (Sounds of New York City). https://wp.nyu.edu/sonyc/

Meireles, Matilde. *X Marks the Spot*. http://xmsbelfast.com/about


ST JOHN’S COLLEGE SOUND ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE

Katarzyna Krakowiak: Sound Artist-in-Residence 2018
Academic Director: Professor Jason Stanyek

Katarzyna Krakowiak is an internationally exhibiting artist who works at the intersection of sound and architecture, creating large-scale installations involving existing city buildings or structures.

As St John’s College Sound Artist-in-Residence in 2018 Krakowiak will present a number of public events during her term-long residency at Oxford. You are highly encouraged to attend these events.

In advance of Krakowiak’s visit, please read ‘Katarzyna Krakowiak, Selected Work’ (on WebLearn).

URBAN RHYTHMS

The Oxford-based research network Urban Rhythms will convene events in 2018-19. You are highly encouraged to attend these events!

This network builds on recent scholarly interest from across the humanities and social sciences to form an interdisciplinary hub at Oxford for the study of auditory culture within the modern urban environment (post-1850). We are interested in investigating ways in which sound and music can enhance our understanding of urban design and experience—both historically and in the present—and how sound and music can contribute to a theorisation and history of the modern city. The network’s timely aim, then, is to draw together people working on sonic and spatial studies in various disciplines under the banner of ‘urban humanities’—an important new scholarly field. You can read more about this research network here: http://torch.ox.ac.uk/urban