The texts of modernism—the “art that responds to the scenario of our chaos,” as Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane write—constantly simulate the noise of that chaos: the clatter of urban spaces, the rhythms of machinery, the static of broadcast media. In this seminar, we shall study the resonances of sound in British and European novels, poems, films, radio plays, and musical works from the early 20th century. Our reading and listening will be informed by the field of sound studies: theory, philosophy, and media history attentive to cultural practices of listening. We’ll explore a range of questions: How are acoustic spaces raced, gendered, classed? How is the nebulious thing we call “voice” mediated by modernist forms and modern technologies? How do hearing and listening shape the formation of subjectivity? How do British subjects, living at the center of an unstable Empire, “listen out” to the colonial periphery? How might modernist texts, in giving form to such experiences, critique the “ocularcentrism” of Western thought?

**Required Texts**, in addition to readings accessed via D2L or the PSU library.

- Samuel Beckett, *Collected Shorter Plays* (Grove; 978-0-802144386).

The following books are on two-hour reserve at the PSU Library (don’t worry; we’re not reading them all).

- Paul Poplawski (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Literary Modernism* ([available as eBook](https://www.library.gatech.edu)) w/PSU login
- Jonathan Sterne (ed.), *The Sound Studies Reader* (PDF also posted to D2L).
- Novak and Sakakeeny (ed.), *Keywords in Sound* ([available as eBook](https://www.library.gatech.edu)) w/PSU login
- Mansell and Anthony (ed.), *The Projection of Britain: A History of the GPO Film Unit*
- Keeling and Kun (ed.), *Sound Clash: Listening to American Studies*
- Pinch and Bijsterveld (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*

**Course Policies**

- For disability accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center and speak with me during the first week of class.

- **Be on time to class.** Also, do not use cell phones in class. (Laptops…eh, fine. Don’t abuse the privilege.) If possible, print out online readings, mark them up, and bring them to class. Reading on a screen tends to encourage passive skimming, which is not the habit we want.

- Feel free to visit office hours to discuss any matter related to the course. If you wish to meet at a different time, please email to make an appointment.

- Please treat emails as courteous professional correspondence (subject heading, polite greeting, sign-off, complete sentences, etc.). Also, please leave me two days (M-F, 9-5) to reply to your email.

- Any incident of academic misconduct, including plagiarism, will result in a grade of zero and will be referred to the Dean of Students and the student’s Program Director.

- If you need extra time on an assignment, please ask in advance (preferably at least 3-4 days). We may be able to work something out. If you ask the night before…no dice.
Coursework

- **Portfolio (50%)**: postings, responses, close readings, etc. written during the term and assembled in a final portfolio. Sometimes you’ll turn in these assignments in class, sometimes you’ll post them to D2L, sometimes you won’t turn them in at all but simply use them to prepare for class. You may organize the final portfolio in hard copy or digitally, as you prefer.

  Your portfolio grade includes participation. Read slowly; annotate the text; contribute questions and ideas; support your claims with textual specifics. Engage constructively with each reading. Debate and criticism are fine, but avoid “search and destroy” missions—pointless (and somewhat Oedipal) efforts to perform one’s intellectual prowess through empty nitpicking rather than careful thinking. From my friend Jason Farr (Marquette Univ.), I’ve stolen the three yes-es: Before saying “no” to a reading, you must say yes three times: yes to reading the whole thing, yes to reconstructing the argument on its own terms, and yes to taking that argument as far as it can go. Before criticizing an essay, show that you’ve understood its argument and done all you can to build on that argument.

  - **Keyword Essay**: The most sizable portfolio assignment will be a 1500-word essay exploring a keyword in the field of sound studies. Details TBA; the essay will be due 22 Feb. 2020.
  - **Discussion Initiators**: A student will open up each seminar by offering 2–3 focused and specific questions to help us engage with specific passages from the reading. “Do you agree with Schafer’s essay?” isn’t specific enough; better would be “How can Schafer’s concept of the ‘keynote sound’ help us interpret the scene in which Peter Walsh hears…” If applicable, you can help us to connect our theory readings with our literary texts.
  - **“Sweeper”**: In a seminar, names often get dropped and loose threads abandoned. After each class, one person will be tasked with “sweeping up” these references, locating their details, and posting a bibliography to the D2L forum within a week after the class.

- **Final Project (50%)**. You have three options for the final project: one a conventional academic essay, the others more creative. If you wish to pursue a creative option, please visit office hours no later than week 6 so that we can discuss your plans.

  - **Option One**: a conference paper of 2500–2700 words (+ endnotes and Works Cited), suitable for delivery at an academic conference. Use close textual analysis to intervene incisively into a scholarly field. The essay’s word limit is firm, but there is no limit on endnotes, which you should use to demonstrate the depth and breadth of your research.
  
  - **Option Two**: produce a “radio version” of a course text: a creative adaptation version of a stage play, poem, or passage from a novel. Some of our texts have aural media built into them, which your adaptations can repurpose in creative ways. An adaptation of The Waste Land, for example, could rethink the poem’s attitudes toward media, voice, genre, etc. by making use of urban street noise, opera, gramophones, etc. Include a critical appendix explaining how your adaptation builds on sound studies research to teach us something new about the text. **You may complete this project individually or in groups of 2–3.**
  
  - **Option Three**: Design a soundwalk. Imagine that a local educational, artistic, or activist group has hired you to curate a walk, guiding a public audience to move through an area of Portland in an acoustically attentive manner, informed by a theoretical or conceptual focus. Your project will include: (1) a detailed map or brochure to guide your patrons on their walk; (2) a ten-minute sound recording that helps us interpret the walk’s acoustic contours; and (3) an explanatory essay (1500 words + Works Cited). As starting points, consult the Museum of Walking website, which includes advice and examples, and the reading by Westerkamp assigned for 1/16. **You may complete this project individually or in groups of 2–3.**
Course Schedule

SSR = Sound Studies Reader; ELM = Encyclopedia of Literary Modernism; LIB=online via library.

Little More Than a Voice

Week One

Tues., Jan. 7

Thurs., Jan. 9. (Bring *Heart of Darkness* back with you.)
- Entry on “voice” from *Keywords in Sound* and Sterne, “Sonic Imaginations” (*SSR* 1-18)
- LIB: read either Napolin, “‘A Sinister Resonance’” or Kreilkamp, “A Voice Without a Body.”
- ELM entries: Conrad; colonialism
- Optional/recommended: Barthes, “The Grain of the Voice” (*SSR* 504-10)
- Portfolio assignment (Jan. 9): Write a 300-word synopsis of the Napolin or Kreilkamp essay: a meaty, precise summary of its concepts and claims. Then, identify two passages from *Heart of Darkness* relevant to the essay’s claims. Post to the D2L forum.

The Arts of Noise: Music, Modernity, Soundscape

Upcoming portfolio assignment (Jan. 25): find a place to sit and listen for an hour. Choose a place (work, school, in nature, in the city, etc.) where you can transcribe what you hear, using concepts from our readings.

Week Two

Tues., Jan. 14. (Don’t panic—it looks like a lot but most of these readings are very short.)
- ELM entries: Dada; Futurism; Italian Futurism; avant-garde
- Tzara, “Dada Manifesto” (1918); poems by Tzara and Ball (read/listen to a few).
- D2L: watch Marie Osmond (yes, that Marie Osmond) reading “Karawane.”
- Jan. 14 (portfolio): be prepared to perform a sound poem by Ball or Tzara in class, and to justify your choices. To D2L, post preparatory notes about performance, pronunciation, etc.

Thurs., Jan. 16.
- D2L: Westerkamp, “Soundwalking”; “Noise” (article from *Saturday Review of Literature*); listen to George Antheil’s *Ballet Mécanique*. (We’ll discuss it in more detail next week.)
- SSR: Schafer, “The Soundscape” (95-103); Picker, “The Soundproof Study” (141-51); Bijsterveld, “Listening to Machines” (152-67)
- Recommended website for browsin’: Emily Thompson, *The Roaring Twenties*

Week Three

Tues., Jan. 21. Music day! As a time-saver, feel free to read while listening.
- ELM: primitivism, Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*
- Readings (D2L): Eksteins and Ross on *Le Sacre*; Thompson, from *The Soundscape of Modernity*; Antheil, “My Ballet Mecanique”; handout on writing about music
- Jan. 19 (portfolio): choose an excerpt (30-40 seconds) from one of the musical pieces assigned for today. Write about specific, concrete features of this music (rhythm, instrumentation, etc.), using the advice on the handout. Post to D2L before class. Aim for 250-300 words.
Echoes of Empire, Montages of Modernity (or, “England Swings like a Pendulum Do”)  

Thurs., Jan. 23
- *ELM*: Eliot; Myth
- D2L: Mark Katz, excerpt from *Capturing Sound*
- Discuss “keywords” portfolio assignment due 2/22

Sat., Jan. 25: to D2L, post a report on your “sit ‘n’ listen” session (at least 600-800 words).

Week Four

Tues., Jan. 28. (Cont. discussing Eliot. Also, start reading *Passage to India* for Thursday.)
- Gitelman, “The Phonograph’s New Media Publics” (SSR 283-303); Stanyek and Piekut, “Deadness” (SSR 304-24); Anne Carson, “The Gender of Sound” (D2L)
- Optional: Andreas Huyssen, “Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism’s Other”

Thurs., Jan. 30
- Someone please remind me to talk about next week’s portfolio assignment.
- *ELM*: Forster; India; Rhythm

Week Five

Tues., Feb. 4
- Finish *Passage to India*

Thurs., Feb. 6.
- Wrap up on *Passage*; read Bhabha, “Articulating the Archaic” (D2L)
- Optional/recommended: Gayatri Spivak, “Echo” (LIB)
- For Feb. 6: Use a free sound editor (e.g. Audacity, GarageBand) to produce an audio version of the echo in Forster’s novel. Don’t just say “ou-boum” into your phone: experiment with a sound that amplifies (ha, ha) the echo’s sound or meaning. Post MP3 to D2L, with a 300-400-word synopsis.

Week Six

Tues., Feb. 11
- *Mrs. Dalloway* (1-100); Woolf, “Thoughts on Peace in an Air-Raid”; *ELM* on Woolf

- Finish *Mrs. Dalloway* and read Leah Toth, “Re: Listening to *Virginia Woolf*” (LIB).
- D2L: Excerpts from Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening “The Work is Never-Ending”: British Media at Work and Play*

Week Seven

Tues., Feb. 18. The films (posted to D2L) add up to about 100 minutes total.
- From *Projection of Britain*: read chapters by Anthony and Mansell (pp.1-17), plus a couple others related to your “expertise” films (I recommend Claydon, Richards, Haynes). The chapters are short.
- Strongly recommended: Patrick Milian, “A Quickening of the Heart” (on *Night Mail*, et al.)
- Optional: other short films uploaded to D2L (I had a hard time making up my mind…).
Thurs., Feb. 20.
- Continue discussing films. Before class, read ELM on film and modernism; surrealism; Chion, “Three Listening Modes” (SSR 48-53); Altman, “Four-and-a-half Film Fallacies” (SSR 225-33).

Sat., Feb. 22—by 9 p.m., post “keywords” essay to D2L forum. (Include in final portfolio.)

Week Eight
Tues., Feb. 25
- Watch West Indies Calling and Hello, West Indies (D2L)
- Procter, “Una Marson at the BBC” (LIB); Whittington, Writing the Radio War (excerpts on D2L)

Thurs., Feb. 27
- D2L: Una Marson, selected poems; Sam Selvon, selected short stories.
- LIB: read either Thomas, “Making Waves” (on Marson) or Gramaglia/McIntosh, “Censorship, Selvon, and Caribbean Voices” (your choice).
- Recommended/optional: Edouard Glissant, from Caribbean Discourse (D2L)

Sat., Feb. 29 (leap day!): read and reply to two classmates’ Keywords essays on D2L.

Week Nine
Tues., Mar. 3
- Read Under Milk Wood while listening to audio on D2L. Also read ELM on Dylan Thomas.
- D2L: Barnes, “For the Alert and Receptive Listener” (one-page insert on BBC Third Programme)

Thurs., Mar. 5
- Cont. discussing Under Milk Wood
- D2L: listen to MacColl and Seeger, The Ballad of John Axon.
- Ben Harker, “Class Composition” (LIB)
- Optional (D2L): J. Epstein, “We are a musical nation”; R. Williams, “Dylan Thomas’s Play for Voices”; D. Cleverdon, from The Growth of Milk Wood; Cardiff/Scannell, “Broadcasting and National Unity”
- Portfolio assignment due 3/5: write a proposal (250-300 words) for your final project, along with a working bibliography of at least 10 scholarly sources. (You do not need to have read all these sources yet; they are potential sources for your research.)

Never Knew Such Silence
Week Ten
Tues., Mar. 10
- Read and watch/listen to Beckett’s All That Fall, Embers, Cascando (audio on D2L). Also read Jeff Porter, “Samuel Beckett and the Radiophonic Body” (D2L).
- ELM: Beckett

Thurs., Mar. 12
- Beckett: read Krapp’s Last Tape, Not I, Quad I + II. Wrap-ups, fond farewells, Sacrificial Dance.
- Portfolio assignment due 3/12: Before class, write short annotations for two secondary sources for your final project (150 words each).

Thurs, Mar. 19 - Final project + Portfolio due.
Upload to D2L—>Activities—>Assignments. (If you have a hard copy of your portfolio, submit it to the English Dept. Office.)