

SO283 Urban Sounds and Migration

Seminar Leader: Agata Lisiak

Course Times: Wednesdays, 9am – 12.15pm

Room: K21-1-Seminar Room 11

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Office hours: Wednesdays 1-2.30 pm; Thursdays 10.30-12

Course Description

The dominant mode of apprehending society has been identified with seeing (Bull & Back 2003) and looking (Berger 1974), but everyday life is experienced in multisensory ways and so human experience can only be accounted for through what Joachim-Ernst Berendt called “a democracy of the senses”. While the visual continues to dominate the study of migration and cities, this class encourages students to listen – “with depth and humility” (Bull & Back 2003) – to the sounds of urban worlds. As migration contributes to linguistic diversity in contemporary cities, certain sounds and languages tend to be singled out as foreign and, as such, puzzling, threatening, unwanted. In the current political atmosphere, with the prevalent fear-mongering rhetoric against everything and everyone that seems foreign, critical engagement with urban sounds is not only academically exciting, it is politically urgent. The class aims at deepening students’ understanding of social experiences of migration and diversity in urban contexts and developing ways of addressing and countering exclusionary practices where they occur. Through a series of workshops, off-campus excursions, and guest lectures, students will familiarize themselves with a range of methods including sensory ethnography, sound walks, sonic mappings, and sound-artist interventions.

Requirements

Attendance and participation

Your preparation, attendance, and participation are crucial. Please complete the required readings, be on time for each class, and contribute energetically and meaningfully to the discussions. A class participation mark will be awarded on the basis of your engagement in class discussions and your completion of homework assignments (see below). Each Wednesday class consists of two sessions; missing more than two sessions (i.e., one class) will affect your

participation grade for this course. Please consult the [Student Handbook](#) for BCB's policy on absences. This mark makes up 30% of the final grade. A self-assessment rubric will be distributed in class and completed at the end of the semester.

Preparation for class

On a weekly basis, you will be expected to devote up to 4 hours to complete the assigned readings and listenings. Throughout the semester, you will also be asked to complete several homework assignments that will vary in length. Most of the readings will be made available via [Google Classroom](#).

Additionally, please obtain a copy of Brandon LaBelle's *Acoustic Territories* (continuum 2010; ISBN: 978-1441157249).

You will also need the following equipment and software:

- a smartphone with a recording function or a different recording device
- a pair of headphones
- a detailed paper map of the city or a functioning gps map app on your smartphone
- a notebook and a pencil
- a cable connecting your recording device or smartphone to your laptop
- a laptop (for selected sessions)
- [Audacity](#) – download for free and install on your laptop
- Create a personal account on [SoundCloud](#) (it's free).

Assignments

This class will include several assignments that will add up to your final alongside your participation grade. Please see below for more details on each assignment.

Grade Breakdown and Deadlines

Class participation (including homework): 30%

Assignment 1 (soundscape): 10% // 8 October

Assignment 2 (sound walk): 20% // 22 October

Assignment 3 (final assignment/sound essay): 30% // 20 December

Policy on Plagiarism and Late Submission of Papers

As specified in *The Student Handbook*, “Bard College Berlin students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of integrity and intellectual engagement in their academic work.

Attendance and thorough preparation for class, as well as commitment to the pursuit of excellence in written work, are fundamental requirements of Bard College Berlin’s programs.” Acts of academic misconduct (plagiarism, self-plagiarism, collusion, cheating) will be reported and result in a disciplinary process (please see the Student Handbook for details).

Assignments that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. If I agree to accept a late assignment, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade higher than a C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

SCHEDULE

Homework 1

Introduce yourself to class in a 3-min sound clip. This could be a compilation of sounds from your everyday life, your favorite music, the voices you have a special relationship with, the sounds of the places you frequent, etc. – the choice is entirely up to you. Please email (a link to) the file to Agata Lisiak (a.lisiak@berlin.bard.edu) by midnight **September 3**.

Week 1 // 5 September

Introduction

Readings:

- hooks, bell. “Critical Thinking”. *Teaching Critical Thinking*. London: Routledge, 2010. 7-11.
- Bull, Michael and Les Back. “Into Sound ... Once More with Feeling.” *The Auditory Culture Reader*. Ed. Michael Bull and Les Back. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. 1-20.
- Tonkiss, Fran. “Aural Postcards: Sound, Memory, and the City.” *The Auditory Culture Reader*. Ed. Michael Bull and Les Back. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. 243-247.
- Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Trans. Claudia Gorbman. New York: Columbia UP, 1994. (Excerpts)

Homework 2

Make an aural postcard consisting of one image and up to 2 minutes of sounds from an urban place of your choice – the scope and focus of the recording are up to you, but make sure to note down the address and time of the recording. Email the aural postcard and its description to Agata by midnight **10 September**.

Week 2 // 12 September

Soundscapes – part 1

This class will include on-campus listening and recording exercises. Please bring your recorders.

Readings:

- Schafer, R. Murray. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester: Destiny Books, 1977. (Introduction, 3-12)
- Arkette, Sophie. “Sounds Like City.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 21.1 (2004): 159–168.
- Nilsen, BJ. “Recording the City: Berlin, London, Naples.” *The Acoustic City*. Ed. Matthew Gandy and BJ Nielsen. Berlin: Jovis, 2014. 35-39.
- Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi, “[Emeka Ogboh’s Experimental Videos and Soundscapes of Lagos](#).” *Africa Is a Country* 2013. (please make sure to view all the videos)
- [Interview with Emeka Ogboh](#) (2017).

Listenings:

- Sound Matters podcasts: [Episode 19 \(Decibels of New Delhi\)](#)
- The Acoustic City [sounds](#).

Week 3 // 19 September

Sound walks

The class will start on the platform of U2 Pankow at 9 am. More details to follow.

Readings:

- Westerkamp, Hildegard. “Soundwalking.” *Sound Heritage* 3.4 (1974, revised 2001).
- LaBelle, Brandon. *Acoustic Territories*. Chapters 1 (Underground) and 4 (Street)

Listening:

- [Sounding Underground](#).

Week 4 // 26 September

Soundscapes – part 2

Please bring your laptops, headphones, and recording devices.

Readings:

- LaBelle, Brandon. *Acoustic Territories*. Chapter 2 (Home)
- Hall, Suzanne. *City, Street and Citizen: The Measure of the Ordinary*. London: Routledge, 2012. (Chapter 3)

Assignment 1

Record the sounds of one specific urban interior or exterior of your choice (a café, a square, a club, a park, etc.). Make a 3 to 5-minute sound file and write a 500-word statement engaging with at least one of the texts we have discussed in class. Write down the exact address, date, and time of the recording(s). Send the sound file and the accompanying data to Agata by midnight, **8 October**.

NO CLASS ON 3 OCTOBER – PUBLIC HOLIDAY (makeup during completion week)

Week 5 // 10 October

Mapping urban experience – part 1 (expressing a sense of place)

The second half of the class will include an excursion.

Readings:

- Massey, Doreen. “A Global Sense of Place.” *Space, Place, and Gender*. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 1994. 146-156.
- Pearce, Margaret Wickens. “Framing the Days: Place and Narrative in Cartography.” *Cartography and Geographic Information Science* 35.1 (2008): 17-32
- Rich, Adrienne. “Notes toward a Politics of Location” (1984)

Week 6 // 17 October

Mapping urban experience – part 2 (acoustic mapping)

In-class workshop. Please bring your laptops, headphones, and recording devices.

Readings:

- Ouzounian, Gascia. “Acoustic Mapping: Notes From the Interface.” *The Acoustic City*. Ed. Matthew Gandy and BJ Nielsen. Berlin: Jovis, 2014. 164-173.
- In preparation for this class, please explore various urban sound maps available on the internet, including [these](#).

Assignment 2

You will receive a handout that will help you design and document a sound walk. Record the sound walk and add a 1000-word statement to it, in which you describe the sound walk and engage critically with at least two of the texts we have discussed in class. Make sure to give your sound walk a title and specify the geographical location. You may also want to add images to it. Send the assignment file to Agata by midnight **22 October**.

Week 7 // 24 October

Sound art and the city

Off-campus excursion and guest lecture. More details to follow.

Readings/listenings:

- Waldock, Jacqueline. “Hearing Urban Regeneration: Community Composition As a Tool for Capturing Change.” *The Auditory Culture Reader*. Ed. Michael Bull and Les Back. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. 151-162.
- In preparation for this class, please also make yourself acquainted with the works of sound art by Adrian Piper, Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller, Laurie Anderson, Brandon LaBelle (*links to follow*)

NO CLASS ON 31 OCTOBER – FALL BREAK

Homework 3

On YouTube, find a song/tune made by (a) migrant musician(s) and email it to Agata latest by midnight, 26 October. Agata will compile and share a YouTube playlist that everyone is required to listen to before our class on 7 November.

Week 9 // 7 November

Music, migration, and the city

Readings:

- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and the Double Consciousness*. London: Verso, 1993. (Chapter 3, 72-110)
- Saucier, Paul Khalil. "Continental Drift: The Politics and Poetics of African Hip Hop." *Sounds and the City: Popular Music, Place and Globalization*. Ed. Brett Lashua, Karl Spracklen and Stephen Wagg. Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. 196-208.
- Hancox, Dan. "In the Roots." *Inner City Pressure: The Story of Grime*. London: William Collins, 2018.

Listenings:

YouTube playlist , as well as [Dizzee Rascal – Sittin Here](#)

Week 10 // 14 November

Language and power

Readings:

- Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Production and Reproduction of Legitimate Language." *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1981. 37-65.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. "How to Tame a Wild Language." *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987. 53-64.
- De Swaan, Abram. *Words of the World: The Global Language System*. Cambridge: Polity, 2001. (Introduction, 1-24)

Homework 4

Read the texts assigned for Week 11. Go to a market, a supermarket or a shopping street and record sounds that "speak to you". Compile the sounds into a two-minute recording and email the file (with basic info data: place, time, date) to Agata by midnight, **19 November**.

Week 11 // 21 November

Migration and urban languages – part 1

- Pennycook, Alastair and Emi Otsuji. *Metrolingualism: Language in the City*. London: Routledge, 2015. 1-19.
- LaBelle, Brandon. *Acoustic Territories*. Chapter 5 (Shopping mall)

Week 12 // 28 November

Language, race, and space

Readings:

- Gunaratnam, Yasmin. *Death and the Migrant: Bodies, Borders, and Care*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. (Excerpt)
- Smith, Mark M. "Making Sense of Race." *The Auditory Culture Reader*. Ed. Michael Bull and Les Back. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. 99-108.
- Shoshan, Nitzan. *The Management of Hate: Nation, Affect, and the Governance of Right-Wing Extremism in Germany*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2016. (Excerpt)
- Lisiak, Agata. "[Fearing the Foreign on Europe's Streets](#)." *Public Seminar* 2016.

Week 13 // 5 December

Voice, Gender, and Space

Readings:

- Carson, Anne. "The Gender of Sound" (1992).
- Lorde, Audre. "The Transformation of Voice into Language and Action." *Your Silence Will Not Protect You*. London: Silver Press, 2017. 1-6.
- Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Emily Wilson. London: Norton, 2017. (Excerpts)
- Chandola, Tripta. "I Wail, Therefore I Am." *The Acoustic City*. Ed. Matthew Gandy and BJ Nielsen. Berlin: Jovis, 2014. 212-217.
- Power, Nina. "Soft Coercion, The City, and the Recorded Female Voice." *The Acoustic City*. Ed. Matthew Gandy and BJ Nielsen. Berlin: Jovis, 2014. 23-26.

Week 14 // 12 December

Cities and the political imagination

Readings/listenings:

- Garcia, Luis-Manuel. "At Home, I'm a Tourist: Musical Migration and Affective Citizenship in Berlin." *Journal of Urban Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1+2 (2015): 121–34.
- Jaffe, Rifke. "Cities and the political imagination." *The Sociological Review* online first 2018. 1-14.
- Kunreuther, Laura. "Sounds of Democracy: Performance, Protest, and Political Subjectivity." *Cultural Anthropology* 33.1 (2018): 1-31.
- Boone, Alastrair. "[The Sounds of Protest Are Getting Louder.](#)" *CityLab* 2017.

Assignment 3 (more specific instructions to follow)

Your final 2500-word paper will be a critical reflection on urban sounds and migration. Alternatively, you may also submit a sound essay accompanied by a 1000-word statement engaging critically with at least two readings we have discussed in class. Please be prepared to discuss your ideas for the final assignment with your instructor and peers by the end of Week 12 (part of the class on December 5 will be devoted to this). The final assignment is due on midnight, **20 December**.