

S0283: URBAN SOUNDS AND MIGRATION

Seminar Leader: Agata Lisiak

Course Times: Wednesday, 9 am-12:15 pm

Room: K24, Seminar Room 11

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Office hours (P98): Wednesdays, 1-2 pm F2F and by appointment via zoom

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-art interventions.

Requirements

Attendance and participation

Regular attendance is essential to the collaborative work of learning in seminar format and forms part of the participation grade. 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 preparedness and engagement in class discussions. Attendance and participation make up 30% of the final grade. A self-assessment rubric will be distributed in class and completed at the end of the semester.

As we meet only once a week, missing more than one session may certainly affect your participation grade. If more than one absence is unavoidable, please be in touch with the instructor before the class to determine whether you need to provide documentation to excuse the absence. Every unexcused absence lowers the participation grade by one step (i.e., from B+ to B). Please consult the Student Handbook for more details on BCB’s

attendance policy.

COVID-19 provisions

In Fall 2020, some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. Also, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill or exhibit any symptoms linked to COVID-19. Hence, the assignments for this course are conceived in a way that allows all students to complete them remotely. The non-graded assignments will be shared with all class participants via various collaborative platforms such as SoundCloud, Padlet, and Google Classroom. The graded assignments will be shared directly with the instructor via email. All sessions are planned as blended-learning experiences (with some students in class and some joining remotely). More details on the specific format of each session will be shared via email on a weekly basis to accommodate any changes that may occur.

Preparation for class

On a weekly basis, you will be expected to devote up to four 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. The readings will be made available as PDFs via Google Classroom and as links in the syllabus.

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 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) and charger
- [Audacity](#) – download for free and install on your laptop
- create a personal account on [SoundCloud](#)

On-campus Resources

- Media Lab (K24)
- Audio-recording equipment (Factory)
- Reserve Shelf (Library)

Assignments

This class will include several assignments that will add up to your final grade alongside your participation grade:

Grade Breakdown and Deadlines

Class participation (including homework): 30%
Assignment 1 (soundscape): 15% // 28 September
Assignment 2 (soundwalk): 25% // 26 October
Assignment 3 (final assignment/sound art): 30% // 15 December

Academic Integrity

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 in a 3-min sound clip. This could be a compilation of sounds from your everyday life, your favorite music, the voices with which you have a special relationship, the sounds of the places you frequent, etc. Please email (a link to) the file to me by **August 31**.

Week 1 // 2 September

Introduction to Urban Sounds and Migration

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.
- Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Trans. Claudia Gorbman. New York: Columbia UP, 1994. (Excerpts)
- Blesser, Barry and Linda-Ruth Salter. *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007. Excerpts.
- Kimmelman, Michael. “Dear Architects, Sound Matters.” New York Times 2015: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/12/29/arts/design/sound-architecture.html? r=1&mtrref=undefined&assetType=REGIWALL> (for best experience read & listen on Firefox or Chrome; make sure to hover over the images and listen carefully to the sounds on your headphones)

Homework 2

In class you have received your first walking prompt for this semester. Make sure to designate some time in the coming week to complete it. Document your walk in a way you find most fitting (audio recording, video, a single photo or a series of photos, a

drawing, a poem, etc.) Please be prepared to present it in class and upload it to the padlet (for students joining remotely) by 9 September.

Week 2 // 9 September

Urban Soundscapes – Past and Present

This class includes on-campus listening and recording exercises. Please bring your recording devices.

Readings:

- Schafer, R. Murray. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester: Destiny Books, 1977. Excerpts.
- Tonkiss, Fran. "Aural Postcards: Sound, Memory, and the City." *The Auditory Culture Reader*. Ed. Michael Bull and Les Back. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. 243-247.

Listenings and viewings:

- How noisy is Lagos? Emeka Ogboh offers some answers: Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi, "Emeka Ogboh's Experimental Videos and Soundscapes of Lagos." *Africa Is a Country* 2013:
<https://africasacountry.com/2013/08/emeka-ogbohs-experimental-videos-and-soundscapes-of-lagos/> (please make sure to view all the videos!). To find out more about his art, listen to this 2017 interview with Emeka Ogboh:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPTtWsAKVww>.
- Does New York City seem loud now? How noisy was it a hundred years ago? Explore Emily Thompson's project "The Roaring Twenties" to find out:
<http://vectorsdev.usc.edu/NYCSound/777b.html>.
- What does everyday life in Baddawi camp sound like?
<https://refugeehosts.org/readings-and-soundscapes/>.

Browse through these tech tips on field recording:

- <https://aporee.org/maps/info/#techtips>
- <http://quietamerican.org/links.html>
- <https://citiesandmemory.com/2014/03/ten-top-simple-field-recording-tips/>

Homework 3

Drawing on our discussion in class, make an aural postcard consisting of one image and 2-3 minutes of sound from an urban location of your choice, past or present. The scope and focus of the recording are up to you. Don't forget to note down the address and time of the recording. Post the postcard on SoundCloud by **14 September**.

Week 3 // 16 September

Soundwalking

The class will start on the U2 Pankow subway platform. 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).

Listenings:

- Subway sounds in London, Paris, and Mexico City:
<http://soundingunderground.org/startjourney.html>.
- Sound Matters, Episode 19 (New Delhi):
https://soundcloud.com/sound_matters/19-decibels-of-new-delhi.

Homework 4

Revisit the S/U Pankow area at a different time of day and/or on a weekend; document your experience and take detailed notes. Before you head there, note down the sounds you are expecting to experience. When you revisit the area around the station, make sure to record the sounds that seem “of that place” to you. Think also of the following: What sounds are similar to those you experienced during our soundwalk? What sounds are radically different? What sounds are you surprised to hear? Post your responses to the padlet and prepare to discuss them on 23 September.

Week 4 // 23 September

How to Listen Attentively and Critically

*This session includes an Audacity workshop.
Please bring your laptops, headphones, and recording devices to class.*

Readings/listenings:

- Mattern, Shannon. “Urban Auscultation; or, Perceiving the Action of the Heart.” *Places Journal* 2020:
<https://placesjournal.org/article/urban-auscultation-or-perceiving-the-action-of-the-heart/>.
- Robinson, Dyland. *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020. Excerpts.
- Radio Aporee’s archive of sounds of the COVID-19 lockdown:
<https://aporee.org/maps/work/projects.php?project=corona>.

Assignment 1: Soundscape

Record a soundscape of one specific urban location of your choice (a café, a square, a club, a park, etc.). Make a 2-minute track and write a 500-word statement engaging with at least one of the texts we have discussed in class. Send the sound file and the accompanying data to me by midnight, **28 September**.

Week 5 // 30 September

Mapping Urban Experiences 1 (expressing a sense of place)

This session includes an on-campus mapping assignment.

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).

Homework 5

In preparation for next class, please explore various urban sound maps referenced and/or hyperlinked in the assigned texts and do some research on the internet to find at least one that is not mentioned in either of them. Please be prepared to present one sound map of your choice in class and upload it to the padlet (for students joining remotely).

Week 6 // 7 October

Mapping Urban Experiences 2 (acoustic mapping)

This session includes a workshop. Please bring your laptops, headphones, and recording devices.

Readings/listenings:

- Waldock, Jacqueline. "Soundmapping: Critiques and reflections on this new publicly engaging medium." *Journal of Sonic Studies*: <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/214583/214584>
- Ouzounian, Gascia. "Acoustic Mapping: Notes From the Interface." *The Acoustic City*. Ed. Matthew Gandy and BJ Nielsen. Berlin: Jovis, 2014. 164-173.
- Droumeva, Milena. "Soundmapping as critical cartography: Engaging publics in listening to the environment." *Communication and the Public* 2.4 (2017): 335-351.

Assignment 2: Soundwalk

You will receive a handout that will help you design and document a soundwalk. Record the soundwalk and add a 1000-word statement to it, in which you reflect on the soundwalking experience and engage critically with at least one of the texts we have discussed in class and at least one of the books from the Reserve Shelf in the library. Make sure to give your soundwalk a title and specify the geographical location. You may also want to add images to it. Send the completed assignment file to me by **26 October**.

Week 7 // 14 October

Sound Art and the City

More details to follow. This session will likely include an off-campus excursion.

Readings/listenings: TBA

***** FALL BREAK *****

Week 8 // 28 October

Urban Nature, Migration, and Sound

This session features a screening of Matthew Gandy's 2017 documentary Natura Urbana

and an off-campus walk.

Readings/listenings:

- Selected essays on *Natura Urbana* by Matthew Gandy, Sandra Jasper, Stephen Barber, Dorothee Brantz, and Joachim Schlör.
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*. Oregon State UP, 2003. Excerpts.
- Zheng Bo & Natasha Myers. Politics of Plants: Preliminary Questions. Listen to the audio walk conversation:
https://www.berlinerfestspiele.de/en/berliner-festspiele/programm/bfs-gesamtprogramm/programmdetail_313814.html.

Homework 6

Allocate 10-15 min this week to complete the listening prompt you received in class. Prepare to share your responses during our session on 4 November and post it on the padlet (for students joining remotely).

Week 9 // 4 November

Listening with Displacement

Readings/listenings:

- Western, Tom. "Listening with Displacement: Sound, Citizenship, and Disruptive Representations of Migration." *Migration and Society: Advances in Research 3* (2020): 294–309.
- Azar, Rihab. "A Response to 'Listening with Displacement.'" *Migration and Society: Advances in Research 3* (2020): 310-315.
- Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Disputed Utterance (2019) and Conflicted Phonemes (2012) at Hamburger Bahnhof plus a video lecture TBA.
- Ghayath Almadhoun, "Ode to Sadness" (2018):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOSPvjDmpec>.
- A selection of poems by Suheir Hammad, performed with takht ensemble (2011):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4Q885qRMwU>.

Homework 7

Read Josh Kun's chapter assigned for 11 November and think of the questions you would like to ask the author. Your question should engage with the social processes the text examines, the concepts it uses to analyze them, and/or the language it uses to represent them. Ideally, your contribution should not simply pose a question, but provide some context. Do your best to explain how you arrived at your question, as appropriate by referring to a specific passage (mentioning page numbers will help!) from the text. In the end, your "discussion question" should be composed of a few sentences or a short paragraph. Post your question to the padlet no later than 9 November. All the questions will be shared with Josh Kun ahead of his guest lecture.

Week 10 // 11 November

Music, Migration, and the City – feat. guest lecture by Josh Kun

Readings/listenings/viewings:

- Kun, Josh. "Allá in the Mix: Mexican *Sonideros* and the Musical Politics of Migrancy." 2016.
- *Additional readings and listenings selected by Josh Kun TBA.*

Homework 8

Allocate 20 min this week to complete the recording prompts you received in class. Once you have completed the recordings, reflect on the prompts themselves by annotating the handout. Make sure to store the recorded sounds safely – you may end up using them later!

Week 11 // 18 November
Language, Power, and Space 1

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 Tongue." *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. 1-24.
- Okri, Ben. "'I can't breathe': why George Floyd's words reverberate around the world." *The Guardian* 2020:
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/08/i-cant-breathe-george-floyds-words-reverberate-oppression>.

Week 12 // 25 November
Language, Power, and Space 2

Readings:

- Smith, Mark M. "Making Sense of Race." *The Auditory Culture Reader*. Ed. Michael Bull and Les Back. London: Bloomsbury, 2016. 99-108.
- Gunaratnam, Yasmin. *Death and the Migrant: Bodies, Borders, and Care*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. (Excerpt)
- Shoshan, Nitzan. *The Management of Hate: Nation, Affect, and the Governance of Right-Wing Extremism in Germany*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2016. (Excerpt)
- Lisiak, Agata, Les Back, and Emma Jackson. "Urban multiculturalism and xenophobia in London and Berlin." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 2019.

Week 13 // 2 December
Voice, Gender, and Space

Readings/listenings:

- Lorde, Audre. "The Transformation of Voice into Language and Action." *Your Silence Will Not Protect You*. London: Silver Press, 2017. 1-6.
- Shanti Suki Osman, The Exotic Bird in the Corner:
<https://soundcloud.com/shanti-suki-osman/the-exotic-bird-in-the-corner>.
- Carson, Anne. "The Gender of Sound" (1992).
- Daniari, Serena. "What does a woman sound like? Vocal training helps trans women find their voices." *The Guardian* 2019:
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/may/20/what-does-a-woman-sound-like-vocal-training-helps-trans-women-find-their-voices>.
- Chandola, Tripta. "I Wail, Therefore I Am." *The Acoustic City*. Ed. Matthew Gandy and BJ Nielsen. Berlin: Jovis, 2014. 212-217.
- Kunreuther, Laura. "Sounds of Democracy: Performance, Protest, and Political Subjectivity." *Cultural Anthropology* 33.1 (2018): 1-31.

Week 14 // 9 December
Sounds of Berlin

Readings/listenings/viewings:

- 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.
- Shanti Suki Osman, Berlin mit allen Sinnen:
<https://soundcloud.com/shanti-suki-osman/berlin-mit-allen-sinnen-tonstuck-shanti-suki-osman>.
- The sound of (West) Berlin in the 1980s captured by Wim Wenders in *Himmel über Berlin*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YfKap4mxlM>.
- Paul Hanford's Lost and Sound podcast:
<https://www.bearradio.org/lostandsound>.
- IDEAL, Berlin (1980): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6YRkshKFQ>.
- Barbara Morgenstern, Come to Berlin (2008):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qd8tMz8KM6E>.
- DENA, Cash, Diamond Rings, Swimming Pools (2012):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4CDc9yCAqE>.

Assignment 3: Essay or Sound Art

Your final 2500-3000-word paper will be a critical reflection on one of the topics we discussed in class. Alternatively, you can submit a sound art piece. The sound art piece will be 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. The final assignment is due on midnight, **15 December**.