

# Syllabus V0

## *Reflecting human Environment Relations (Through Sound)*

### Course Overview:

This course explores the complex relationship between sound, nature, and culture through theoretical, practical, and artistic lenses. Students will engage with concepts such as the nature-culture divide, the Anthropocene, acoustic ecology, ecoacoustics, and sound activism. By combining readings, outdoor soundwalks, field recordings, and studio sessions, students will develop critical listening skills and artistic responses that raise ecological awareness. The course culminates in the creation of a sound-based artistic project addressing human-environment interactions.

### Course Description

In light of the serious impact of human activities on the environment, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and noise pollution, we must rethink our relationship with the natural world. A significant barrier to this reimagining is the long-lasting division between 'culture' and 'nature' in Western thought. Through a cross-disciplinary approach that includes acoustic ecology, the arts, environmental artistic activism, and natural history, this foundational course reflects on recent and ongoing efforts to dismantle this divide, providing students with a blend of theoretical and practical knowledge. Students will critically examine the reasons behind the societal separation of nature and culture and how this division has shaped our environmental perceptions and actions. They will develop a deeper appreciation of the interconnectedness of all life forms and the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in addressing complex ecological issues.

Approaches include investigating how soundscapes and acoustic ecology can challenge conventional boundaries of the nature-culture divide, reflecting on the potential of creative expression to re-connect culture and nature, examining the role of environmental artistic activism in addressing noise pollution and ecosystem impact, and engaging in hands-on practical activities and fieldwork to connect theory with real-world experiences. Alongside the practical activities, students will engage with critical theoretical readings by thinkers such as Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, and Jane Bennett, as well as composers and sound ecologists such as Murray Schafer and Hildegard Westerkamp. These readings will offer insights into the historical separation of nature and culture, the contemporary efforts to overcome this divide, the broader implications of the Anthropocene, and how artists work to create awareness of the environmental crisis.

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- **Interpret and apply** theoretical frameworks from Acoustic Ecology, Noise Pollution, and Animal Communication to analyze case studies related to human-environment relations.
- **Critically evaluate** diverse perspectives on the Nature-Culture divide, drawing from sound studies, environmental humanities, and ecological discourse.
- **Debate and engage** in informed discussions around listening practices, ecological sound art, and environmental activism.
- **Synthesize knowledge** through the composition of a reflective essay that demonstrates integrated understanding of course concepts.
- **Utilize and operate** field recording equipment and software to capture and process high-quality soundscapes with technical proficiency and creative autonomy.
- **Produce original soundscape compositions** that creatively apply theoretical concepts, demonstrating artistic expression and environmental awareness.

### Learning goals

- **Develop ecological awareness** through critical listening and sound-based inquiry.

- **Bridge theory and practice**, encouraging students to move from conceptual understanding to artistic expression.
- **Foster interdisciplinary thinking** across sound art, environmental studies, and activism.
- **Support creative experimentation** and personal artistic development.
- **Encourage collective reflection** on environmental responsibility and sonic agency.

## Assignments

Class participation and practical activities

Essay (2500 words) (Submit until 17h October)

Artistic project + Concept + Bio (Submit until 5th Dec; Present on the 12th December)

### Assignments Overview:

#### 1. Reflective Essay (2500 words)

Topic: Chosen by the student in connection with class themes.

Assessed on: relevance, research depth, structure, argument clarity, citation style.

#### 2. Soundscape Composition

- Based on student field recordings; software use is mandatory.
- Assessed on: creativity, integration of recordings, technical skill, aesthetic coherence.

#### 3. Practical Assignments:

- **Home Soundscape:** Identify and reflect on dominant and subtle everyday sounds.
- **Sound Walk Report:** Describe your experience and perception of environmental soundscapes.
- **Artist Presentation:** Analyze an ecological sound artist's intention, methods, and environmental message.
- **Final Project Pre-Writing:** Submit a title, artist bio, and conceptual synopsis for your final sound work.

## Schedule

### Week 1: SET 3 - Introduction to the Course (AV room)

**Input:** Course overview, objectives, and expectations.

**Practical:** AV intro + share personal experiences related to nature and sound (nature quiz).

**Discussion:** Initial thoughts on the nature-culture divide and the importance of sound in understanding human-environment relations.

#### Readings:

Cobussen, B. (2022). *Engaging with Everyday Sounds* (Chapter 2, p. 13-14)

Shafer, M. (1977). *The Soundscape – Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. (p. 3-10; 53-67)

Schultz, P. Wesley. (2002). *Inclusion with Nature: The Psychology Of Human-Nature Relations*. (p. 61-74)

Possamai, F. (2013). Nature and Culture Dualism: Genesis of an Obsolete Dichotomy (p. 836-841)

Practical assignment: Home soundscape.

### Week 2: SET 10 - Historical Perspectives on Human-Environment Relations

**Input:** Emergence of ecological sciences, environmental movement, soundscapes, AE and the nature-culture divide.

**Outdoor: Soundwalk.** Identify positive/ negative sounds from your home environment and at exterior places in the campus surroundings.

**Discussion:** Reflections on the shift from admiring nature to exploiting nature.

#### Readings:

Cobussen, B. (2022). *Engaging with Everyday Sounds* (p. 101-105)

Krause, Bernie. (2015). Voices of the Wild Animal Songs, Human Din, and the Call to Save Natural Soundscapes. (p. 1-15)

Steffen, W. et al. 2011. *The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives*. (p. 845-849)

Truax, B. (2019). *Acoustic Ecology and the World Soundscape Project* (In Droumeva and Jordan; Chapter 2; p. 21-30)

Shafer, M. (1977). *The Soundscape – Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. (p. 212-213)

Practical assignment: Soundwalk reflection.

### **Week 3: SET 17 - The Anthropocene and Its Implications / Invited Guest lecturer (AV Room)**

**Input:** Listening and understanding the Anthropocene – definitions and debates. What is Sound?

**Practical: The physical aspect of sound.** Hands on equipment.

**Discussion:** Reflecting on the debate and personal viewpoints.

**Reading:**

Chion, M. (2012). *The Three Listening Modes* (In: The Sound Studies Reader; (Chapter 5; p. 48-52)

Tuuri et al. (2007). *Same Sound - Different meanings: A Novel Acheme for Modes of Listening*. (p.13-18)

Schafer, R. M. (1997). *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. (p. 3-10; p. 133-150)

Erbe, C.; Thomas, J. (2022). History of Sound Recording and Analyses Equipment (In: Exploring Animal Behavior Through Sound: Volume 1: Methods Chapter 1, p. 2-12)

### **Week 4: SET 24 - Acoustic Ecology and Soundscapes (AV Room)**

**Input:** Introduction to acoustic ecology and soundscapes.

**Outdoor: Field trip to local parks to record natural and anthropogenic soundscapes.**

**Discussion:** Analysis of the recordings and what they reveal about the environment.

**Reading:**

Truax, B. (2019). *Acoustic Ecology and the World Soundscape Project* (In Droumeva and Jordan; Chapter 2; p. 21-30)

Haraway, D. J. (2008). *When Species Meet* (p. 3-19)

Cobussen, B. (2022). *Engaging with Everyday Sounds* (p. 28-30; 34-37)

Gilmurray J. (2021). *Beyond Phonography An Ecomusicological analysis of Contemporary Approaches to Composing with the Sounds of the Natural World* (p. 1-24)

Class assignment: Organize your recorded sounds.

### **Week 5: OCT 1 - Sound and Biodiversity. Transecology and oral histories.**

**Input:** Transecology. Oral histories. Natural Soundscapes. The role of sound in animal communication and ecosystem health.

**Practical: Listening to Oral Histories. Analysing animal communication recordings of various species.**

**Discussion:** Comment on the recordings.

**Reading:**

Vakoch, D. (2020). Transecology Transgender perspectives on environment and nature (Chapter 9; p. 174-187)

Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. (p. 99-103)

Farina A. and Gage S. (2017). Ecoacoustics: The ecological Effects of Noise on Species and Communities (p. 95-100)

Schafer, R. M. (1997). *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. (p. 71-77)

Goldsmith, M. (2012). *Discord The Story of Noise*. Oxford University Press. (p. 42-46)

Class assignment: Choose a citation from one of the authors to discuss next class.

### **Week 6: OCT 8 - Sound Activism, Noise Pollution and Its Impact on Ecosystems (AV Room)**

**Input:** Noise pollution and conservation. Sources and effects of noise pollution.

**Outdoor: Soundmap - Map noise pollution levels in the campus surroundings.**

**Discussion:** Soundmap findings.

**Reading:**

Bianchi, F. and Manzo, V.J. (2016). *Environmental Sound Artists*. New York: Oxford University Press. (p. 144-151)

Farina A. and Gage S. (2017). *Ecoacoustics: The ecological Effects of Noise on Species and Communities* (p. 95-100)

Labelle, B. (2018). *Sonic Agency* Goldsmiths Press (p. 160-162).

Practical assignment: Choose an environmental sound artist work to present next class.

### **Week 7: OCT 15 - Environmental Sound Art. Sound Activism. (AV Room)**

**Input:** The history and evolution of environmental sound art. Key works and their impacts.

**Outdoor: Field trip to local canal/ river to record natural and artificial underwater soundscapes.**

**Discussion:** How environmental sound art can influence the perception of places.

**Reading:**

Farina A. and Gage S. (2017). *Ecoacoustics and its Expression through the Voice of the Arts: An Essay* (p. 297~311)

Barclay, L. (2019). *AE and Ecological Sound Art: Listening to Changing Ecosystems* (In Droumeva and Jordan; Chapter 8; p. 153-174)

Polli, A. (2012). *Soundscape, sonification and sound activism*.

Class assignment: Your soundmap.

### **MID-TERM ESSAY**

### **Week 8: OCT 29 Software and Spectrograms. Case Studies in Ecological Sound Art**

**Input:** Ecological Sound Art. Overview of software for sound editing.

**Practical: Sound editing and artistic soundscape exploration and experiments.**

**Discussion:** Methods and impact of these works.

**Reading:**

Gilmurray J. (2021). *Ecological Sound Art*. In The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sonic Methodologies; Chapter 28; p. 449-458)

Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern*. (p.1-12)

Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. (p. 99-103)

Class assignment: Start exploring your recorded sounds.

### **Week 9: NOV 5 - Practical visit - TBC Place (AV Room)**

**External: Field trip - location tbc.**

**Discussion:** Reflecting on the experience and artworks.

**Reading:**

Harris, Y. (2021) *Melt Me into the Ocean: Sounds from Submarine Spaces* (In The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sonic Methodologies; Chapter 30; p. 469-478)

Bennet, J. (2009). *Vibrant Matter*

### **Week 10: NOV 12 - Creative Expression to Reconnect Culture and Nature**

**Input:** The role of art in environmental awareness.

**Practical: Sonic Postcards. Hands-on workshop to develop a concept for a sound art piece that reflects environmental themes. Creative sound walking.**

**Reading:**

Taylor, S. and Fernstrom, M. Acouscenic Listening (In Sound, Media, Ecology, Chapter 13, p. 243-258)

Class assignment: Sonic postcard (max. 1 minute)

### **Week 11: NOV 19 - Immersive Listening and Environmental Awareness (AV ROOM)**

**Input:** Concepts of intention, attention, focus. Underwater Soundscapes and immersive sound.

**Practical: Studio sessions - immersive audio set-up. Guided immersive listening exercises.**

**Reading:**

Duncombe, S. and Steve L. (2018). *Artistic Activism*. (In The Routledge Companion to Media and Activism; Chapter 5; p. 57-64)

Practical assignment: Final Project pre-writing (Title, Synopsis, Artist bio)

### **Week 12: NOV 26 - The Intersection of Ecology, Art, Activism, and Sound**

**Input:** Introduction to ecological artistic activism.

**Practical:** Open class for deepening any practical aspect that the class wants to improve or develop further.

**External (optional):** Group visit at selected exhibition or artistic studio from selected artist.

**Discussion:** Interdisciplinary approaches and their effectiveness. How activism shaped current environmental awareness.

**Week 13: DEC 3 - Emerging Topics. Contemporary issues on the Nature-Culture Divide.**

**Input:** Emerging Topics, Artists and Works. Examples: Joannie Lemercier, Leah Barclay, Kat Austen, Robertina Sebjanic, Marco Barotti, Fara Peluso, Pablo Diserens, Spela Petric.

**Practical:** Studio Sessions - rehearsals for final project *in loco*. Selected artists discussed.

**Week 14: DEC 10 - Rehearsal Presentation and Critique of Final Projects (AV ROOM)**

**Presentation:** Students present their final projects at Monopol. **Critique:** Group discussion and feedback.

**Troubleshooting:** final adjustments.

**Conclusion:** Recap and reflections on the course.

**FINAL ARTISTIC PROJECT DELIVERY**

**Essay Deadlines**

Class participation and practical activities (Discussions in the following class)

Essay (2500 words) (Submit until 17th October)

Artistic project/ soundscape composition + Concept + Bio (Submit until 5th Dec; Present on the 12th Dec)