

Resonant Frequencies: Exploring Radio Forms: CINE // ENG 486S
Profs. Monteith McCollum & Jennifer Stoever
Binghamton University

Class | Tuesdays 5:00-7:50, LH B-90

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Course Description

This course combines the art and skill of cinema production and scriptwriting with the emerging field of Sound Studies, an interdisciplinary site of inquiry into audio culture from multiple vantage points: historical, theoretical, textual, and material. The interdisciplinary field of Sound Studies has recently emerged in the U.S. and Britain to question the visual paradigm dominating contemporary scholarship across the disciplines and to develop a complex and nuanced understanding of the historical relationships between sound, society, and power. In addition to unearthing histories of lost, forgotten, and ignored sounds, Sound Studies addresses how sound—and ideas about sound—are embedded in our institutions, technologies, laws, histories, and cultures.

We have selected radio as the primary site of inquiry to explore the personal and social impacts of sound in American culture because of its foundational but still little-understood role in the history of mass media and the ways in which it isolated, utilized, and explored sound as its primary mode of storytelling, news delivery, and emotional and psychological influence. In today's audio-visual media landscape, the role of sound has only increased in importance both for its power to challenge visual modes of understanding the world but also its ability to creating powerful new cultural narratives and epistemologies. Once considered "old-timey," radio is re-emerging at the forefront of this new landscape—especially taking into account its newer forms such as the thriving arena of podcast production—and its methodologies, production conventions, sonic language of affect, and powers of influence have been revealed as central to the evolution and production of contemporary media. In this rapidly-evolving arena, sonic media literacy is a must, for producers as well as listeners; because we don't understand sound's influence nearly enough, it has the potential to exert tremendous power.

This interdisciplinary course is designed to equip students with sonic media literacy through traditional methods of study and research—particularly historical, theoretical, and literary analysis—but, importantly, through hands-on media production that will enable them to understand how sound constructs and challenges narratives by creating their own. The instruction in history and theory will allow them to make informed decisions as they build their own radio stories; the production of the radio stories will enable them to challenge, reframe, and add to the established body of knowledge regarding the study of sound.

Together, we will address such questions as: *How does sound tell stories and establish narratives? How do sound narratives differ from cinema or the written word on both an emotional and cerebral level? How can sound disrupt established narratives and ways of knowing? How has radio influenced contemporary global mass media and what is the place of radio within this landscape?*

REQUIRED TEXTS

***Sorry, Wrong Number*—Lucille Fletcher and Allan Ullman (1958 Bantam Edition)**

**This book is out of print and may be obtained used online ([@3.99 on Amazon](#), Alibris, Ebay) or eventually as a photocopy through the University Copy Center.

Unless otherwise marked, **all other readings and listenings will be available through **Blackboard** via links on the “Content” page. You are expected to print out copies, read them in advance, organize them in an accessible fashion, and bring them regularly to class

**Mandatory viewings will be made available via a links page on Google Drive.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

In this course, you will develop an understanding of listening as a critical, cultural, social, and historical practice. You will learn how to analyze sound to various forms of storytelling, both narrative and non-narrative, and to understand it as a key medium for communication that creates and often challenges visual epistemologies. You will gain an understanding of radio's history as an aural mass medium and consider the ways in which radio in its contemporary forms—internet broadcasting, podcasting, sonic art installation, and traditional broadcast—not only continues to be a vital source of information, education and entertainment, but importantly, has only increased in importance as a forum for social influence. Production tools and techniques will be taught as students learn to record, edit, and formulate sound compositions. You will learn the art of audio storytelling (fiction and non-fiction forms), including conducting research, finding and utilizing archives, selecting and interviewing subjects, pitching ideas, writing scripts, and holding to a production schedule. Ableton Live and Launchpads will be utilized as a way for students to learn about different ways to creatively work with sound, using it a performative tool as well as a traditional editing program. You will leave the class having made a developed sound composition that simulates “real-world” production conditions.

EXTENSIVE GROUP PROJECT

Along with required reading and listening assignments each student will be expected to work in a small group towards the completion of an 8 min radio program. The work entailed in this process ranges from research and writing to performance and sound production. The final sound composition will be performed live along side pre-recorded edited material. The top projects in the class selected by the students themselves will be showcased on the podcast series of *Sounding Out!: The Sound Studies Blog* and (hopefully, most likely, probably) broadcast on Binghamton University's WHRW and/or London's *Resonance FM*.

GRADING

To pass this course, all of the following elements must be satisfactorily completed:

- 25%** Active, Prepared Participation (reading, listening, discussions, and critiques) and Attendance
- 15%** Listening Journal
- 20%** Individual 60 X 60 Projects
- 40%** Final Group Radio Compositions (Includes individual studies)

ACTIVE, PREPARED PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE (25%)

We have given the participation and attendance grade in this course a high percentage for a reason—your success in the course (and success as a group) depends upon your commitment to doing the reading, *really* listening and thinking about what you hear, and coming to class ready to talk about it in detail. You also must be present, physically and mentally, for the tech instruction—and seek the help that you need from us and each other. Ask questions! Furthermore, we will spend a lot of time improving each other's work via critique—it is your responsibility to be critically generous in giving and accepting critique (i.e. tough and rigorous, but ultimately out of concern and respect). Finally, any written or tech assignments not specifically designated a percentage will impact this grade.

You are entitled to 1 class absence, no questions asked (That's technically a week!). Please don't email us about the first one. Starting with your second absence, however, each unexcused absence will lower your participation grade by one full grade (i.e. 4 absences and your highest participation grade is a "B," 5 absences and your highest participation grade is a "C," etc.). Also, more than 3 late arrivals may impact your grade. Any absence for official BU purposes must be arranged with us at least one week prior to the event. You are responsible for any missed lectures and course materials—please make arrangements with a classmate concerning notes missed. You are also responsible to your group for any collective work missed.

Under normal circumstances, course credit will not be given if you have more than four absences.

LISTENING JOURNAL (15%)

Listening is simultaneously a physiological activity, a skill, an art, and a critical practice. It is also learned behavior that can be molded, shaped, and honed. In this class, we will be listening A LOT, both inside and outside of class, to radio work designed only to be heard and imagined in the "Theatre of the Mind," some of it designed to be "easy listening," and some not so much. Radio listening, in general, is an important art perpetually on the brink of "lost" status, but yet it remains, nonetheless: gravely intoning through public radio, faintly lingering in cars, returning in another form via podcast, and continually being reinvented by sound artists.

To improve your listening—and, importantly, to help you participate more sharply in class and to create a concrete toolkit of aesthetic technique to draw on for your —you will keep a spiral bound, college ruled, listening journal to document your reactions. This will be graded on completeness, care, and evolving complexity of thought, rather than form or grammar, although we ask for complete sentences.

You will have two weekly tasks, one micro and one macro. Bring your journal to class each week. These will be collected and graded twice during the semester:

- 1) Log 3-5 moments in the listening that you find particularly interesting/compelling over the full course of the week's home listening—it may be a particular sound, a vocal intonation, an edit or technique, a narrative plot point. Log the time code [30:30= Thirty Minutes and Thirty Seconds] so that we may re-listen to it during discussion and for reference while working on your individual and group projects. Jot 3-5 sentences about the moment and why you selected it.
- 2) When you finish the week's listening, write an overall response to it—this can be visceral, intellectual, ideological, aesthetic, technical, or a combination of the above. How did it make you feel? What did make you think? How did the listening interact in the reading? Why might we be making you listen to it? What excited you and why? What bored you and why? What did you learn about radio from the listening? **These should be ½ a page to a full page.**

INDIVIDUAL 60X60 PROJECTS (20%) (ROUGH CUTS DUE 11/11, FINAL CUTS DUE NOVEMBER 14)

You will create a 60 second radio composition for the [wavefarm mix](#). This piece should explore sound in an abstract and artistic manner in this work, focusing more on exploring sound processes rather than narrative. You will be expected to submit this work to Wave Farm in addition to turning it in to us.

Here is the call for work:

“Vox Novus and Wave Farm are delighted to collaborate on a special edition of 60x60 focused on Radio Art. Artists are invited to submit recorded works (created with, for, about radio and transmission) with durations of 60 seconds, to be included in the eleventh annual 60x60 project; a FM broadcast on Wave Farm’s WGXC 90.7-FM; and distributed as a Wave Farm Dispatch Series download. 60 compositions will be selected to be played continuously in a one-hour live event and broadcast.”

Upload by November 14th - <http://www.60x60.com/submission>

FINAL GROUP RADIOPHONIC COMPOSITIONS: (includes individual studies) (40%)

In groups of three, you will create two versions of the same radiophonic composition, one prepared for broadcast and one to be performed live. The broadcast version will be about 8 minutes duration (can be slightly longer, but not shorter). Expect the live version to run longer. You will also be expected to meet all deadlines for rough cuts as well as meet with us

- **Pre-Writing: Written Sound Study: (DUE SEPTEMBER 9)**
Select a place, concept, person, or object to do a written sonic exploration. Pick something that is captivating and unique! Ideally, this freeform but descriptive and atmospheric writing will be something that you believe has the potential to inspire (and hopefully grow into) a longer work. The length should be one page, single-spaced.
- **Recorded Sound Study (DUE SEPTEMBER 23)**
You will follow up on your written study with a recorded study. This version be an extension of your written study or you can present a new idea altogether. The length of this project will be 3 minutes. You will turn in the file on Google Drive for sharing with your group as well as with us.
- **Rough Cut (HALF OF CLASS DUE OCTOBER 14, OTHER HALF DUE OCTOBER 22, order TBA)**
You will play six-minute rough cuts of your radio narrative in progress for critique by the class.
- **Broadcast Version (DUE DECEMBER 7th)**
Informed by your pre-writing ideas and recordings on the keyterms of Place, Concept, Person/s, and Object/s, prepare a radiophonic work that explores radio and sound through a narrative. This narrative should be an artistic exploration utilizing a combination of varied techniques and sound sources (montage, voiceover, concrète, sampling, etc). Your work will be informed by the many readings and listenings we will perform over the first 6 weeks.
- **Performed Version (DUE DECEMBER 9th)**
Each broadcast composition should also be structured and adapted for performance. We will spend at least two in class weeks discovering ways to translate some of the broadcast sounds to the performance mode working with launchpads and contact mics. Expect the performance version of your work to have a very different timing and sonic parameter; it should, however, have a similar structure. To the broadcast version.

Final group performances of the work will be expected the last week of classes. This work will be submitted to [Sounding Out!](#), and [Resonance FM](#), for broadcast consideration.

GROUP PROJECT GRADING

We will initially give the group a letter grade for the project, based on the following rubric: completeness as a whole, creativity, integration of course concepts, and technique. However, we will then convert the letter grade to the 100 point scale, multiply the score by the amount of people in your group, and then leave it to **the group to assign the individual grades that will go into the gradebook.**

For example:

B- = 80 points X 3= 240 points to disperse.

If your efforts were *genuinely comparable*, then everyone gets an 80 (B-).

If your efforts varied *a little*, grades might look like this: Person 1= 74 C Person 2=83 B, Person 3=83 B

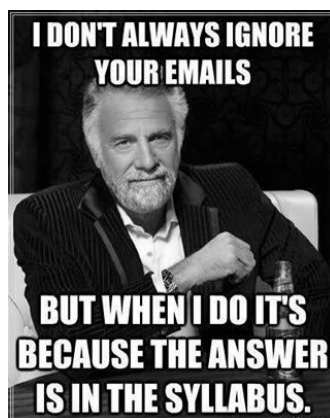
If your efforts varied *a lot*, grades might look like this: Person 1=60 D-, Person 2=80 B-, Person 3=90 A-

Ultimately, your first accountability is to each other, and only you know who did what (and who didn't). You will have ample time to discuss grades together on the day of our scheduled final and to come to an agreement before you leave. **The final exam meeting time is: TBA.**

A NOTE ON EMAIL

While we are *accessible* by email, we insist that electronic communication not take the place of office hours. We invite you to stop by during office hours (or use e-mail to make an appointment) for any course issues, major or minor, or to talk about your progress on your projects. Personal health, grading, or other such matters should always be discussed in person. Always consult your syllabus first (and thoroughly) if you have questions about assignments, policies, readings, etc. If you still have questions, then contact your group members and ask if they caught something in lecture you missed. If results are still inconclusive and your question cannot wait until office hours or the next class period, then email us. But we will likely suggest office hours.

If you e-mail us, please make sure to put 486S in the subject line and do not expect an immediate response. We hold regular daytime email hours for classroom related correspondence; we will respond to e-mail within 48 hours, but we do not check e-mail after 7 p.m or on weekends. Email etiquette is also important to us. Please remember we write to each other in a professional setting. Therefore, use formal salutations/signatures as well as appropriate word choice and tone. Throughout the semester, we will e-mail you with important information pertinent to our course such as due date and/or assignment clarifications; please check your binghamton.edu address regularly.



COURSE SCHEDULE

Special Note: Because of the intensive amount of time it will take for you to prepare and understand the timing of the live performance elements, some weeks have extensive time dedicated to critique and in-class experimentation. The reading and listening assignments are frontloaded, so please stay caught up and know they will phase out as projects become more involved. Furthermore, as a new class with a production element, we reserve the right to alter the syllabus as needed.

All readings, listenings, and viewings must be performed by our class on day it is listed. For the listenings, we ask that you attempt, as best as possible, to listen to them on the same day each week, and to begin them at the same time, to simulate, at least in some small albeit artificial way, the “live” experience of radio programming as it unfolds in real time, without individual listener control. Your group, should consider all listening at the same day and time to re create the experience of listenership.

| Dates & Deadlines | Class |
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| <p>Week One 2 September</p> | <p>Welcome to the Course! Playful Listening and Project Overview In-Class Reading: -- “Toward a Definition of Radio Art” and “La Radia” -- Marinetti and Masnata --Radio Terramoto Proposal and Map--Maile Costa Colbert and Rui Colbert Costa</p> |
| <p>Week Two 9 September: <i>**Written Sound Study Due</i> <i>**Bring radios today!</i> <i>** Add/Drop deadline 9/12</i></p> | <p>Concept: Radio as a Technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: --Brian Hanrahan, “The Mobilization of Weimar Radio: Actuality, Microphone, Radio-Film” -- Timothy D. Taylor, “Introduction to Radio” and historical selections from <i>Music, Sound, and Technology in America</i> • Listening: --“Departure of a troopship” pre-microphonic descriptive speciality (1905) --Recordings of Charles Lindbergh’s 1927 return to the US (varied, but short) • Viewing: Ableton tutorials, available on Google Drive Doc |
| <p>Week Three: 16 September</p> | <p>Concept: Radio, Sound and Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: --Neil Verma, “Producing Perspective in Radio” and “Intimate and Kaleidosonic Styles” --Jacob Smith, “Devil’s Symphony: Orson Welles’s Hell on Ice as Eco-Sonic Critique” (<i>Sounding Out!</i>) • Listening: -- Archibald Macleish/Orson Welles, “The Fall of the City” (27:00) (acc. Verma) -- Norman Corwin, <i>We Hold these Truths</i> (59:00) (accompanies Verma) --Orson Welles, Hell on Ice (59:00) (on <i>Sounding Out!</i>) at beginning of post --selected early works of Pierre Schaeffer --“Listening to The Tuned City of Brussels, Day 3: “Ephemeral Atmospheres” (<i>Sounding Out!</i>) (13:00) • Viewing: --TBA |

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| <p>Week Four: 23 September</p> | <p>Concept: Listening & Music as Sound</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Leon Botstein and Josh Kun, "How We Listen" --Yvon Bonenfant, "Queer Listening to Queer Timbres" --Regina Bradley, "To Sir, With Ratchety Love: Listening to the (Dis)Respectability Politics of Rachel Jeantel" (<i>Sounding Out!</i>) --Jennifer Stoeber, "Broadcasting Race: African American Radio Listeners in America's 'Golden Age'" --David Pownall, Chapter 2 of <i>Sound Theatre</i> -- Kate Lacey, "Listening in the Digital Age," • Listening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Regina Bradley, "Post-Soul Pusherman: Curtis Mayfield's 'Pusherman' and The Hangover 2'" (<i>Sounding Out!</i>) --Jacob Smith, "This is Your Body on the Velvet Underground," (<i>Sounding Out!</i>) --Listen in full to all of the examples and musical clips embedded in <i>SO!</i> posts |
| <p>Week Five 30 September: <i>**Turn in Listening Journals in, Pick up on Thursday</i> <i>**Share 2 min. compositions and meet during the week to pick focus of radio project</i></p> | <p>Concept: Voice as a Musical Entity & **Informal presentations on group project idea today</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice" --Hadley Cantrill and Gordon Allport, "Voice and Personality"(1935) --Murray Pomerance, "Vox Orson"(<i>Sounding Out!</i>) --T. Hagen, "The Live Wire of Los Angeles: Aimee Semple MacPherson on Radio" • Listening (PAYING ATTENTION FOR SOUND OF VOICE): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Orson Welles, <i>War of the Worlds</i> (60:00) --Aimee Semple McPherson Sermon, "From Milk Pail to Pulpit" (30:00) --"16th Anniversary" Episode of <i>March of Time</i> (27:00) • Viewing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Paul & Lynn Cooper Harvey "Rest of the Story" |
| <p>Week Six 7 October:</p> | <p>Concept: Voice as a Narrative (voiceover, monologue, interview)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Cantrill and Allport, "Sex Differences in Radio Voices" (1935) -- Bill Kirkpatrick, "Voices Made for Print: Crip Voices on the Radio" --Charles Wolfe, "Historicizing the 'Voice of God:' The Place of Voice-Over in Classical Documentary" • Re-Listening (PAYING ATTENTION FOR VOICE AS NARRATIVE): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Orson Welles, <i>War of the Worlds</i> (60:00) --Aimee Semple McPherson Sermon, "From Milk Pail to Pulpit" (30:00) --"16th Anniversary" of the <i>March of Time</i> (28:00) --"NPR's Diane Rehm and Spasmodic Dysphonia" (5:00) --Listen to Diane Rehm's most recent radio show on her WAMU/NPR site (51:00) • Viewing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --TBA |

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| <p>Week Seven 14 October: <i>** Transfer 5 min. of group project to mag tape or ¼ inch for cutting.</i> <i>** ½ of Rough Cuts due Today</i></p> | <p>Concept: Montage and Foley I (Planned Visit from Radio Scholar Shawn VanCour)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Jennifer Stoever, Splicing the Sonic Color-Line: Tony Schwartz Remixes Postwar <i>Nueva York</i> --Shawn VanCour, "Arnheim on Radio: materialtheorieand beyond" --Benjamin Wright, "Footsteps with character: the art and craft of Foley" • Listening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Tony Schwartz, <i>Nueva York</i> (40:00) (accompanies Stoever) -- Delia Derbyshire, <i>Dreams</i> (45:00) --"The Coffin in Studio B" (30:00) (accompanies VanCour) |
| <p>Week Eight 22 October: <i>**Turn in Listening Journals</i> <i>** ½ of Rough Cuts due Today</i></p> | <p>CONCEPT: RADIO SCRIPTS AND ADAPTATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Sorry, Wrong Number (Radio Script)-- Lucille Fletcher --<i>Sorry Wrong Number</i> (Novella)-- Lucille Fletcher and Allan Ullman • Listening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --<i>Sorry Wrong Number</i> from <i>Suspense</i> (30:00) • Suggested reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Neil Verma, "Honeymoon Shocker: Lucille Fletcher's 'Psychological' Sound Effects and Wartime Radio Drama" |
| <p>Week Nine 28 October: <i>**Last Day to Withdraw, 10/31</i></p> | <p>PERFORMANCE SESSIONS AND CRITIQUES</p> |
| <p>Week Ten 4 November:</p> | <p>PERFORMANCE SESSIONS AND CRITIQUES</p> |
| <p>Week Eleven 11 November <i>**Submit 60 X 60 online by 11/14</i></p> | <p>60 X 60 CRITIQUES --Play 60 second works in class and critique toward final drafts due 11/14</p> |
| <p>Week Twelve 18 November</p> | <p>MONTAGE AND FOLEY II: More Examples --We will use this day as a listening/ technique day to reinforce previous concepts and provide more discussion, in particular, on montage techniques and the creation of Foley Sound.</p> |
| <p>Week Thirteen: 25 November: <i>**Bring in clips!</i></p> | <p>STUDENT LED LISTENING DAY: --Listen widely this week online. Bring in in 2-3 clips that have inspired you as you have worked on your group project. Be prepared to share in class and to lead discussion.</p> |
| <p>Week Fourteen 2 December</p> | <p>Final Projects Due: RADIO VERSIONS</p> |
| <p>Week Fifteen 9 December</p> | <p>Final Projects Due: PERFORMANCE VERSIONS</p> |

FINAL DISCUSSION AND GRADING EVENT: TBA!

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