

Writing on Tape in the 1970s:

Art and Politics of the Edit, the Overdub, Surveillance

AMST 4619, ENGL 4619, MUSIC 4454

Monday 12:20-2:15, Uris Library 311

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office hours

Tuesday 2:30-4:30

Goldwin Smith 136



www.hifiengine.com

This class examines the way audiotape enabled and corrupted aesthetic and political cultures of the late Cold War period in the United States. After writing *On the Road* in the mid-1950s, Jack Kerouac spent twenty years writing a novel that tried, in part, to emulate in literary writing the properties and capacities of tape recording. By the time *Visions of Cody* was finally published in 1972, audiotape had become an aesthetic medium in its own right, providing the means for revolutions in recorded music, sound art, and literary writing. By this same time, though — indeed from its very inception — it was also an instrument of political communication and surveillance.

For politics as well as for art, the possibilities of editing (via the cut, the loop, or the overdub) on one hand, and the seeming capacity for indiscriminate recording of sound on the other, revealed tape to be a medium with claims both for authentic documentation and for deception. Its increasing portability and ubiquity, moreover, erased long-standing divisions between private and public speech, a fact that is as appreciable in the work of Andy Warhol as it is in the career of Richard Nixon. With an eye to the state and another to the field of music, this class will focus on the way literary writing responded to and incorporated the new technology.

Required texts

Christopher Cox and Daniel Warner, eds. *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, rev. ed. (Bloomsbury 1501318365)

William S. Burroughs, *The Ticket that Exploded*, rev. ed. (Grove 0802122094)

Jack Kerouac, *Visions of Cody* (Penguin 0140179070)

Allen Ginsberg, *Planet News: 1961-1967* (City Lights 9780872860209)

Andy Warhol, *A: A Novel* (Grove 0802135536)

some internet resources:

1. [Les Paul and Mary Ford demonstrate overdubbing](#) on *Omnibus* television program (1953)
2. *Das magische Band* (German documentary on magnetic tape, 1959) [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#)
3. Slate's [Slow Burn](#) Watergate podcast (2017)
4. [Ubuweb](#) sound archive
5. The [Mix Machine](#) archive of 80s/90s hip hop mix cassettes
6. [Audio Arts](#) audiocassette magazine (1973-2006)
7. [Twentieth Century Music](#) special issue on tape
8. [How the Mellotron works](#) (tape-based keyboard instrument)
9. [A brief history of tape echo](#)
10. [How to make a DIY cassette tape loop](#)
11. [Sound on sound looping with cassette and reel-to-reel recorders](#)
12. [Editing \(splicing\) analog tape](#)

GRADING

option 1

Journals/in-class writing: 25%

Participation: 30%

First paper (6-8pp): 15%

Final paper (10-15pp): 30%

option 2

Journals/in-class writing: 25%

Participation: 30%

First paper (6-8pp): 15%

Final paper (6-8pp): 15%

Creative project: 15%

JOURNAL

In addition to each week's reading (and/or listening and/or viewing), a journal entry will be required for every class. I will provide a prompt on Canvas for each journal entry. It will typically ask you to summarize a part of the reading in two paragraphs or so, or to respond to the week's listening or viewing, or to put the reading in conversation with the other media. You will be expected to represent the arguments of critical texts accurately.

Journals are also a place where you may begin to articulate questions that the reading has generated for you. Is there a theme or concept that is unclear or confusing? Is there a topic that is interesting and you'd like to know more about?

These short writing pieces form a significant part of your grade, so they should be polished and proofread. The journal posts are due before class by **9pm** and must be posted on Canvas under your individual journals. The journals are private and cannot be read by other students, although there may be class periods where we will review posts together in the seminar. Since the aim is to prepare you for class discussion, late entries are typically not accepted.

While I do not grade each individual entry, I monitor the journals consistently throughout the semester and will periodically post questions or comments. I will also give a midterm grade on the journal to give students feedback on their standing on that assignment.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

1. Formatting: All papers must have standard formatting: a. Double-spaced b. Typed c. Page numbered d. Stapled e. 1" margins on all sides f. Titled g. Standard font-Times New Roman

2. Proofread: Technical, grammatical, or typographical errors will reduce your grade, so you should plan to proofread your work, and if possible have a friend read it too. We will have in-class workshops in advance of the writing assignments that will encourage you to test and develop your arguments. I expect you not only to proofread, but to revise each of your essays.

3. Citations:

Use footnotes to cite facts and quotations in your paper. Model citations from the *Chicago Manual of Style* are listed below. You do not need to include a works cited page. For further information, see: http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html

One author

1. Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 65.

Two authors

6. David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 7th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004), 104–7.

Four or more authors

13. Edward O. Laumann et al., *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 262.

Editor, translator, or compiler instead of author

4. Richmond Lattimore, trans., *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 91–92.

Chapter or other part of a book

5. Holly Herndon, "Laptop Intimacy and Platform Politics," in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, ed. Christopher Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 556-7.

4. Lateness: Papers turned in late will be lowered one letter grade. The grade will go down another letter grade every additional day the paper is late.

You are allowed to miss one journal entry without any penalty or need to explain. Post on your journal that you are taking your one "free pass." No credit will be given for subsequent late journal entries.

CREATIVE ASSIGNMENT

If you wish, you may pursue a creative project involving audiotape. I hope to have a small amount of equipment which you may check out for limited periods of time for the purposes of recording, experimenting, and editing. See also the links above for inspiration!

Students who choose this option may write a shorter final paper. Please indicate your intention to do a creative option no later than April 13. These projects will be due at the time of the final class period.

POLICIES

Disabilities: In compliance with the Cornell University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except in unusual circumstances, so that arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

Academic integrity: All the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course and not another and must originate with you in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Make yourself familiar with Cornell's Academic Integrity Code, which is distributed to students in the *Policy Notebook*. The code, together with a guide to *Acknowledging the Work of Others*, can be downloaded at <http://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/academic-integrity/>. In this course, the normal penalty for a violation of the code is an "F" for the term.

No Screen Policy: Please do not use phones, computers, tablets, ipads or laptops during class. If you have a condition or disability requiring that you take notes on a computer, please speak to me at the beginning of the semester and I will be happy to make appropriate accommodations.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. Students are responsible for finding out what they missed when absent. In cases of religious holidays, athletic events, and other school-related activities, you must notify me one week ahead of time, bring the appropriate documentation, and complete the reading and assigned journal post. *Two unexcused absences will result in the loss of 10 % of final grade.* Repeated lateness can add up to an absence and will therefore affect your grade.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

(C) indicates reading is on Canvas
 (AC) indicates reading is in Cox and Warner's *Audio Culture* book.
 Movies are on reserve at Uris Library.
 All audio is available on Blackboard.

- All readings posted to Blackboard must be printed and brought to class.

27 January	<p>Introduction: space and time Samuel Beckett, Krapp's Last Tape (1958) Alvin Lucier, "I am Sitting in a Room" (1969)</p>
3 February	<p>phasing, noise, and politics listening: Steve Reich, "It's Gonna Rain" (1965), "Come Out" (1966)</p> <p>reading: Jacques Attali, "Noise and Politics" (AC) Sumanth Gopinath, "The Problem of the Political in Steve Reich's Come Out" Steven Connor, "Looping the Loop: Tape-Time in Burroughs and Beckett" (C)</p> <p>further reading: Andrea F. Bohlman and Peter McMurray, "Tape: Or, Rewinding the Phonographic Regime"</p>
10 February	<p>bardic dictation reading: Allen Ginsberg, "Beginning of a Poem of These States," "Continuation San Francisco Southward," "These States into Los Angeles," "Hiway Poesy L.A. to Wichita" (C) Ginsberg, "Wichita Vortex Sutra" (1966) (in <i>Planet News</i>) Ginsberg, from <i>Composed on the Tongue</i> (C) Jack Kerouac, "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose," "Belief and Technique for Modern Prose" (C) Michael Davidson, "Technologies of Presence: Orality and the Tapevoice of Contemporary Poetics" (C)</p> <p>listening: Allen Ginsberg, "Howl" (first public reading, Reed College 1956)</p>
17 February	<p>Spontaneous Prose/Mediated Speech reading: Jack Kerouac, <i>Visions of Cody</i> (1951/1972) Walter J. Ong, "Writing Restructures Consciousness" (C)</p> <p>viewing/listening: Kerouac reads from Visions of Cody on the Steve Allen Show (1959)</p>

	<p>further reading & listening: Tim Hunt, introduction, <i>The Textuality of Soulwork</i> (C) Lord Buckley, "The Nazz" (1950s)</p>
24 February	February break
*2 March	<p><i>cut-ups, edits, splices</i> reading: William S. Burroughs, <i>The Ticket that Exploded</i> (1964) Burroughs, "The Invisible Generation" (AC)</p> <p>listening: Burroughs, "Are You Tracking Me?" (1965)</p> <p>further exploration: Burroughs, "Last Words of Hassan Sabbah" more Burroughs recordings on UbuWeb</p>
9 March	<p><i>surveillance part 1: Watergate</i></p> <p>viewing: <i>Watergate</i> (BBC/Discovery 1994), especially episodes 3 "Scapegoat," 4 "Massacre," and 5 "Impeachment"</p> <p>reading: J. Anthony Lukas, "Leaks and Taps" (C) Mary McCarthy, "A Bomb in the White House," "Exit Mutt, Enter Jeff" (C) Hunter S. Thompson, from <i>The Great Shark Hunt</i> (C) William S. Burroughs, "Playback from Eden to Watergate" (C)</p> <p>further reading and listening: Rick Perlstein, from <i>The Invisible Bridge</i> (C) National Lampoon, The Missing White House Tapes (1974) The Erase Heads, "The Telltale Tape" (1973-4)</p>
15 March (Sunday)	<p><i>film screening</i></p> <p>6:00PM Lewis Auditorium, Goldwin Smith Hall</p> <p><i>The Conversation</i> (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974)</p>
16 March	<p><i>surveillance part 2: corporate surveillance</i></p> <p>viewing: <i>The Conversation</i> (Francis Ford Coppola, 1974)</p> <p>reading: Lawrence Abu Hamdan, "Forensic Listening" (AC) David Copenhafer, "Overhearing (in) Touch of Evil and The Conversation: from 'real time' surveillance to its recording"</p> <p>further viewing: <i>Klute</i> (Alan Pakula, 1971) <i>Blow Out</i> (Brian de Palma, 1981)</p>

23 March	<p>Surveillance and/or Documentation</p> <p>reading: Andy Warhol, <i>A: A Novel</i> Gus Stadler, "My Wife: The Tape Recorder and Warhol's Queer Ways Listening"</p> <p>listening: <i>Andy Warhol from Tapes: Sounds of His Life and Work</i></p> <p>further reading: Drew Daniel, "Queer Sound" (AC)</p>
<p>assignment due Thursday 26 March 4 pm</p>	<p>essay #1 due</p>
30 March	<p>spring break</p>
6 April	<p>The Mixing Desk</p> <p>listening: The Firesign Theatre, <i>Don't Crush That Dwarf Hand me the Pliers</i> (1970) and <i>I Think We're All Bozos on this Bus</i> (1971)</p> <p>reading: Aphorisms, "Music in the Age of Electronic Reproduction" (AC 167-68) Brian Eno, "The Studio as Compositional Tool" (AC) Glenn Gould, "Prospects of Recording" (AC) Robert Ray, "Tracking"</p>
13 April	<p>origins of the mashup</p> <p>listening: The Residents, "Beyond the Valley of a Day in the Life" (1977) Double Dee and Steinski, "Lessons 1, 2, 3," (1983), "Jazz" (1998) Steinski and Mass Media, "The Motorcade Sped On" (1986), "It's Up to You" (1992) Negativland, "You Don't Even Live Here," "Time Zones" (1987)</p> <p>reading: John Oswald, "Bettered by the Borrower: The Ethics of Musical Debt" (AC) Chris Cutler, "Plunderphonia" (AC) The Situationist International, "Détournement as Negation and Prelude" (AC)</p> <p>further listening: Negativland, "Helter Stupid" (1989) "Plunderphonics" (1989)</p>

<p>20 April</p>	<p>surveillance and sound today</p> <p>reading: Sophia Ciocca, "How Does Spotify Know You So Well?" Liz Pelly, "The Problem with Muzak" Shoshana Zuboff, "Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization" Cornell University Library Privacy Services policy</p> <p>listening: Damon Krukowski, Ways of Hearing podcast, episodes 4 and 5 ("Money," "Power")</p> <p>Further reading: John Mowitt, "Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (esp pp218-20) (C)</p>
<p>27 April</p>	<p>cassettes 1: sociology of tape outside the West</p> <p>Charles Hirschkind, from <i>The Ethical Soundscape</i> (introduction, "Cassettes and Counterpublics") (C) Peter Manuel, <i>Cassette Culture</i> (introduction, "Cassettes and Sociopolitical Movements") (C) Brian A. Horne, "The Bards of Magnitizdat: An Aesthetic Political History of Underground Russian Recordings"</p> <p>further reading: Iain Chambers, "The Aural Walk" (AC)</p>
<p>4 May</p> <p>creative projects due in class</p> <p>final papers due Monday 11 May 4pm</p>	<p>cassettes 2: hip hop mixtapes</p> <p>listening: 1980s mixtapes: World Famous Supreme Team, Dr. Dre, et al. (C)</p> <p>viewing: Nas remembers the golden age of cassette mixtapes (2011 interview)</p> <p>reading: David Novak, "The Future of Cassette Culture" Anthony Kwame Harrison, "Cheaper than a CD, plus we really mean it" Susan McClary, "Rap, Minimalism, and Structures of Time in Late Twentieth-Century Culture" (AC)</p> <p>further reading: Joanna Demers, "Cassette Tape Revival as Creative Anachronism" Jared A. Ball, from <i>I Mix What I Like</i> (C)</p>