

EXPRESSIVE SOUNDS (HUMA 1108)

Spring 2025, Tues & Thurs, 3:00-4:20 pm, CYT-LTL

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Approach & Objectives: This course explores the various ways auditive phenomena (sound, silence, noise, music) are conceived, produced, perceived, and organized by humans into meaningful (and often musical) forms and events. Beginning with basic concepts in the physical acoustics of sound, we the class will then discuss how the ear functions and humans hear and perceive sound; the relationship and interaction of sounds with the environment (soundscapes); the musicalization of natural and man-made sounds; the social and cultural foundations of music (ideas about music and how these are manifested in certain musical practices); music's transformative and persuasive power such as its use in advertising, propaganda, and as "sonic wallpaper"; culminating in case studies of music from two different regions of the students' choice.

Intended Learning Outcomes:

- Intelligently talk and write about sonic phenomena and the various ways they function as forms of cultural expression
- Explain basic terms and concepts pertaining to various auditive phenomena as sociocultural means of expression and background information of each related case study
- Identify aurally the characteristics of various examples of sonic phenomena discussed
- Recognize the relationship between sound and culture.

Readings & Listening:

- There is no required textbook for this course. However, there will be assigned selected readings for the topic taken up each week. Much of the information needed for understanding this course's content is based on information contained in the reading, listening and music video assignments and in class lectures which will be presented in PowerPoint slide presentations. The readings **are required** and are meant to supplement the lectures and will serve as important source materials for the short, written assignments and the required concert report. The links of most journal article readings and PDF copies of chapter readings from anthologies or monographs are posted in Canvas under "FILES".

- Music listening is a necessary and important component of this course. Music listening examples are embedded in the PowerPoint (PPT) lecture presentations which will be made accessible after each lecture. Since these PPT files tend to be large because of the embedded audio and music video files, the links to them will be emailed to all from my cloud. Students are expected to review the PowerPoint lecture presentations each week.

Canvas Course Website: To ease administration of the class and facilitate communication, a Canvas website has been set up for this course. Registered students must enroll and be listed as authorized users to access the site. Make it a point to log on to our Canvas course site regularly every week to read the announcements, postings, any discussion threads, etc. and to submit all written assignments.

Course Requirements:

1. **Short written assignments:** There will be 3 short written assignments in which students will answer 1 or 2 questions based on a lecture or a reading in 100-150 words. Students are expected to do and submit any written assignments **by the due date IN CANVAS**. **Assignments handed in late will have 0.5 point deducted from the score for each day that they are late. Late assignments will *not* be accepted beyond 1 month after they are originally due.** Please submit late assignments **in Canvas as an attachment in the “Comments” section of the assignment in question.**
2. **Review Essay:** In lieu of a midterm test, each student will write and submit a 5-page review essay of a live concert / a sound- art installation / a public commercial space in which music constitutes an integral part. Suggestions of appropriate concert events, exhibits and soundwalks for the review essay will be given in Canvas in due course.
SUBMISSION DATE: Friday, April 11, 2025
3. **Group Presentation:** In lieu of a final exam, there will be presentations by groups comprised of 6-7 students each for 30 minutes per group on topics relating to “Sounds of People & Places” during the last 2 weeks of class.
4. **Individual Report:** Each student will write and submit a report of about 500 words on his/her contribution to the group presentation based on his/her group’s chosen topic relating to “Sounds of People & Places” during the last 2 weeks of class.

Grading Breakdown:

Class attendance & active participation	10%
Short written assignments	10%
Review Essay	30%
Group Presentation	25%

Individual Performance During Presentation	15%
Individual Report	10%

Class Policies:

- Attendance will be taken throughout the semester.
- In the case of any recorded lectures, viewership will be checked.
- You may miss three classes without penalty, but **starting from your fourth absence, 1 point will be deducted from your "Attendance" grade for each absence.**
- Non-attendance during the final group presentation will result in a grade of "0" for the absent student ****unless the absence is due to an emergency, medical or otherwise, and a valid medical certificate signed by a doctor and/or other valid written proof attesting to the emergency is submitted. ****
- **Absolute grading system** will be used to calculate your final letter grade. The University has strictly forbidden faculty from grading on a curve due to grade inflation in the past. **Pay attention to how each aspect of the course is weighted in the grading breakdown.**
- If you are being dishonest in the course, the penalty is an "F" for the COURSE. Cheating and plagiarism are grounds for being given an "F" and failing the course.

Cheating: a) If you look at other students' papers or materials (ex. notes) during exam or test; b) If you claim credit for another student's work in group projects.

Plagiarism: If you copy sections and/or ideas from a source without referencing it.
Excerpt from <http://www.ust.hk/vpao/integrity/Links to an external site.>

Sample Readings:

Dorfman, Andrea. "How Muzak Manipulates You," *Science Digest*, May 1984.

Sterne, Jonathan, (1997) "Sounds Like the Mall of America: Programmed Music and the Architectonics of Space," *Ethnomusicology* 41(1): 22-50, 1997.

Taylor, Charles. "The Physics of Sound." In: P. Kruth and H. Stobart, eds., *Sound* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 34-64.