

The University of Iowa
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Department of Cinema and Comparative Literature

FILMS SOUND: 048:053
Spring 2009

Class Times

Discussion: 12:30 – 1:20 MWF 201 BCSB

Screening: 3:30 – 5:45 M E246 AJB

Contact information:

Instructor: Kyle J. Stine

Office: W239 AJB

Hours: 11:00 – 12:00 TR and by appointment

Phone: 335-2844

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Overview:

“Today, Noise triumphs and reigns supreme over the sensibility of men.” –Luigi Rossolo (1913)

“Media, however, exist only as arbitrary selections from a noise that denies all selection.” –Friedrich Kittler (1988)

“I always like to think, not only about the sound of the space of a character, but also about what’s outside—to break the wall and invoke some kind of presence of the exterior. Of course, it has to be a reasonably loud or percussive sound, something with a tonality to it, in order to penetrate through walls. Otherwise, you hear a generalized wash of city noise, which sounds like pink noise. It doesn’t have much character.” –Walter Murch (2000)

Introduction to Film Sound examines aspects of sound in cinema from a historical and theoretical perspective. Although the course is designed in roughly chronological order, the emphasis is not so much on historical continuity or progress than on the diverse, heterogeneous, and at times competing sound practices of given historical periods. The course is divided into four main sections: 1) historical and theoretical questions; 2) sound and sound technologies; 3) the voice; and 4) film music. The first section sets out the key terms and major theoretical questions involved in the study of film sound. The second considers the impact of various sound technologies on sound aesthetics, both as models for sound practices and as visual figures for sound within film narratives. Study of the voice will focus on Michel Chion’s concept of the *acousmêtre* and on questions of gender and the voice in cinema. The final section on film music considers the role of music in a variety of different forms, ranging from the film score in narrative films to the Musical to music documentary. The goal of the course will be to promote an understanding of the role of sound practices and sound technologies in *selecting* sounds for use in cinema, selections which exist in a dialogical relationship with cultural constructions of hearing and listening.

Requirements include in-class participation, two papers, a midterm, an in-class presentation (either scholarly or creative), and a final exam.

Required Texts (Available at The University Book Store):

Altman, Rick. *Sound Theory Sound Practice*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Trans. Claudia Gorbman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Sterne, Jonathan. *Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Additional readings are available on ICON.

Every film screened in class is available for you to view in Media Services (Main Library).

Course Web Site:

The syllabus and readings on electronic reserve can be accessed on ICON. When you are registered for this class, you will be able to access the site: (<http://icon.uiowa.edu/index.shtml>). You will need your Hawk ID and password to login to ICON.

Assignments and Evaluation:

20% — Participation

*including attendance, short assignments, and group projects

10% — Short Paper (4 pages)

15% — Midterm Exam

20% — Presentation

20% — Long Paper (7 pages)

15% — Final Exam

Grading:

Grading is on a plus and minus scale. Essays turned in late are graded down, one grade per day during the week and two grades over the weekend. No written work is accepted by email. Any late work can be placed in my mailbox. Please notify me by email when you submit late work to my mailbox. Incompletes should not be contemplated. They are granted only in exceptional circumstances.

Attendance and Participation:

Students should attend all classes and are responsible for any classes missed. There will be no excused absences for exams and quizzes, and no make-up exams or quizzes except in the case of documentable illness. In case of absence due to illness or a family emergency, please see me or contact me by email to make up missed work as soon as you return to campus. All screenings are required. Students who cannot regularly attend the screenings should drop the course.

Administrative Home

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall or see the Academic Handbook. www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/index.shtml

Statement on Plagiarism:

For information regarding the collegiate policy on plagiarism, cheating, and procedures for students' complaints regarding faculty actions, please see the relevant pages in the Schedule of Courses and CLAS Bulletin. See also the CLAS Student Academic Handbook available on the web: (http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml).

Complaints:

If you have any concerns or complaints related to the course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me. If we cannot come to a resolution, Prof. Kathleen Newman is the course supervisor (W209 AJB) and Prof. Russell Valentino is the Chair of the Department of Cinema and Comparative Literature (E210 AJB). See the CLAS Student Academic Handbook for information on the rights and responsibilities of students.

Students with Disabilities:

I would like to hear from anyone who has a disability that may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Please see me after class or during my office hours. Request forms are available at Student Disability Services, 3103 Burge Hall (335-1462).

Sexual Harassment:

Sexual harassment is reprehensible and will not be tolerated by the University. It subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Visit this site (<http://www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu/>) for definitions, assistance, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather

In severe weather, the class members should seek shelter in the innermost part of the building, if possible at the lowest level, staying clear of windows and free-standing expanses. The class will continue if possible when the event is over.

Other Information:

Students are forewarned that the norms for the presentation of sexuality and violence in international cinema are different from those of Hollywood. *Please turn off cell phones and all other electronic devices during class.*

Selected Sound Resources

Bibliography

- Altman, Rick. *Silent Film Sound*. New York: Columbia UP, 2004.
- Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*. Ed. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner. New York: Continuum, 2004.
- Chion, Michel. *The Voice in the Cinema*. Trans. Claudia Gorbman. New York: Columbia UP, 1999.
- Crafton, Donald. *The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926-1931*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1999.
- Film Sound: Theory and Practice*. Ed. Elisabeth Weis and John Belton. New York: Columbia UP, 1985.
- Gianluca, Sergi. *The Dolby Era: Film Sound in Contemporary Hollywood*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2005.
- Gomery, Douglas. *The Coming of Sound*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity*. Ed. Veit Erlmann. Berg: Berg Publishers, 2004.
- Kahn, Douglas. *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999.
- Kittler, Friedrich A. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999.
- Lastra, James. *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity*. New York: Columbia UP, 2000.
- Movie Music, the Film Reader*. Ed. Kay Dickenson. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Ondaatje, Michael. *The Conversations: Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*. New York: Knopf, 2004.
- Smith, Jeff. *The Sounds of Commerce*. New York: Columbia UP, 1998.
- Spadoni, Robert. *Uncanny Bodies: The Coming of Sound Film and the Origins of the Horror Genre*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 2007.
- Wurtzler, Stephen J. *Electric Sounds: Technological Change And the Rise of Corporate Mass Media*. New York: Columbia UP, 2007.

Online Resources

- Film Sound (<http://www.filmsound.org/>)
- Rob Bridgett (<http://www.sounddesign.org.uk/>)
- The Art of Foley (<http://www.marblehead.net/foley/>)
- Cylinder Preservation and Digitization Project (<http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/>)
- Library of Congress' American Memory (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/browse/>)
- Internet Archive (<http://www.archive.org/>)

I. Sound Aesthetics/Sound Theory

Week 1	Introduction
M 01/19	NO CLASS - UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY NO SCREENING
W 01/21	Introduction and syllabus overview
F 01/23	READING: Lastra, "Reading, Writing, and Representing Sound" STSP, p.65-86 Sound recording exercise
Week 2	The Soundtrack
M 01/26	READ: Chion, <i>Audio-Vision</i> . Chapters 1-3. SCREEN: <i>Mon Oncle</i> (1958)
W 01/28	READ: Chion, "This House Has Eyes." ICON
F 01/30	READ: Sound terminology exercise
Week 3	Listening and Point of Audition
M 02/02	READ: Chion, <i>Audio-Vision</i> . Chapters 4-6. SCREEN: <i>A Man Escaped</i> (1956)
W 02/04	READ: Altman, "Sound Space" STSP, p.46-64; Bresson, "Notes on Sound" ICON
F 02/06	READ: Shaeffer, "Acousmatics"; McLuhan "Visual and Acoustic Space" ICON
Week 4	Synchronous and Asynchronous Sound
M 02/09	READ: Chion, <i>Audio-Vision</i> . Chapters 7-10. SCREEN: <i>The Invisible Man</i> (1931)
W 02/11	READ: Altman, "The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound" STSP p.15-31
F 02/13	READ: Eisenstein, et. al., "A Statement" ICON * SHORT PAPER DUE *

II. Sound Cultures and Sound Technology

Week 5	The Coming of Sound
M 02/16	READ: Sterne, <i>The Audible Past</i> , "Hello!" and Chapter 1. SCREEN: <i>The Dickson Experimental Sound Film</i> , Early DeForest Phonofilms, Early Vitaphones, <i>The Voice From the Screen</i> , and <i>Finding His Voice</i>
W 02/18	READ: Altman, "Introduction: Sound/History" STSP p.113-125
F 02/20	READ: Williams, "The Coming of Recorded Sound to Cinema" STSP p.126-137
Week 6	Film and Radio
M 02/23	READ: Sterne, <i>The Audible Past</i> . Chapters 2-3. SCREEN: <i>Say It With Songs</i> (1929)
W 02/25	READ: McLuhan, "Radio: The Tribal Drum" ICON
F 02/27	READ: no reading; in-class exercise on <i>The Audible Past</i>
Week 7	The Telephone and Dictaphone in Film Noir
M 03/02	READ: Sterne, <i>The Audible Past</i> . Chapters 4-5. SCREEN: <i>Sorry, Wrong Number</i> (1948)
W 03/04	READ: Telotte, "Tangled Networks and Wrong Numbers" ICON.
F 03/06	READ: Reynolds, "Noise"; Russolo, "Art of Noises: Futurist Manifesto" ICON
Week 8	Sound Surveillance, Portable Sound Recording, Wiretapping
M 03/09	READ: Sterne, <i>The Audible Past</i> . Chapter 6 and Conclusion. SCREEN: <i>The Conversation</i> (1974)
W 03/11	READ: Attali, "Noise and Politics" ICON
F 03/13	* MIDTERM EXAM *

03/16 - 03/20

SPRING BREAK

III. The Voice

Week 9

M 03/23

W 03/25

F 03/27

Acousmètre

READ: Chion, "Raising the Voice" and "Acousmètre" ICON

SCREEN: *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955)

READ: no reading; discussion of film

READ: Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice" ICON

Week 10

M 03/30

W 04/01

F 04/03

Voice and Body

READ: Silverman, "The Fantasy of the Maternal Voice" ICON;

SCREEN: *Bound* (1996)

READ: no reading; discussion of film

READ: Lawrence, "Women's Voices in Third World Cinema" STSP p.178-190

Week 11

PRESENTATIONS

IV. Film Music

Week 12

M 04/13

W 04/15

F 04/17

Film Scores

READ: Adorno and Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (excerpts) ICON

SCREEN: *In the Mood for Love* (2000)

READ: Gorbman, "Narratological Perspectives on Film Music" ICON

READ: no reading; discussion of film music and ideology

Week 13

M 04/20

W 04/22

F 04/24

Movies and Popular Music

READ: Smith, "Did They Mention the Music?" ICON

SCREEN: *Velvet Goldmine* (1998)

READ: *Please Kill Me* (excerpts)

READ: no reading; * **LONG PAPER DUE** *

Week 14

M 04/27

W 04/29

F 05/01

Music Documentary, Music Video, Music in Cartoons

READ: Ruoff, "Conventions of Sound in Documentary" ICON

SCREEN: *Gimme Shelter* (1970)

READ: Altman, "Introduction: Sound's Dark Corners" STSP p.171-177.

READ: Curtis, "The Sound of Early Warner Bros. Cartoons" STSP p.191-203.

Week 15

M 05/04

W 05/06

F 05/08

Cinematic Sound vs. Sound in Cinema

READ: Fischinger, "Statements by Oskar Fischinger"; McLaren, "Notes on

Animated Sound" ICON

SCREEN: *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (2006)

READ: Reynolds, "Post-Rock" ICON; Mitchum, "Mogwai: Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait OST." ICON.

Review and course evaluations

DATE/TIME

* **FINAL EXAM** *