

**University of Calgary**

**Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**COMS 491 L01: *Introduction to Acoustic Communications and Acoustic Ecology***

**Fall 2022 Block Week**

**Monday August 29 – Friday September 2**

**Lecture: MTWRF 9 – 5**

**Instructor:** Dr. Marcia Jenneth Epstein

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**Web Page:** D2L available through MyUofC portal

**Office Hours:** By appointment or during breaks in class

**Course Description**

In an increasingly noisy and visually-oriented culture, are we losing the ability to access information about the world through hearing? What are the implications of sound for communication and learning? What is a soundscape? What is acoustemology, and why is it important for human (and animal) health?

Acoustic Ecology (AE) studies the effects of sound -- including speech, music, noise, and silence -- in natural and human environments, including its effects on health, cognition and culture. Acoustic Communications (AC) is concerned with the ways in which sound and silence convey meaning. Both fields involve combinations of research with experiential learning.

This course will provide an introduction to selected concepts, techniques and applications from AE and AC.

## **Pre-Session Study**

Consult the following article for an overview of the scope of Acoustic Ecology and Soundscape Studies:

[https://hrmars.com/papers\\_submitted/11652/narrative-review-of-soundscape-studies.pdf](https://hrmars.com/papers_submitted/11652/narrative-review-of-soundscape-studies.pdf)

## **Additional Information**

-This is a Block Week course that moves at a fast pace. Be prepared to keep up with readings, discussions, and group work so that you can benefit from the information and the whole class can benefit from what you're able to contribute. While some class time will be used for group project work, you will also need to use time outside of class for group meetings and individual research.

-Because this course is about sound and listening, please let me know on the first day of classes if you have a significant hearing impairment.

-Be aware that recent research shows that taking lecture notes on a keyboard produces results that are inferior to handwriting:

[http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/?&WT.mc\\_id=SA\\_MB\\_20140604](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/?&WT.mc_id=SA_MB_20140604) and  
<http://pss.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/04/22/0956797614524581.abstract>

## **Objectives of the Course**

Participants will be expected to demonstrate the following skills upon completion of the course:

- Ability to perceive and describe a variety of acoustic environments;
- Demonstrable familiarity with concepts and issues presented in the course, including those related to acoustic communications and auditory culture;
- Ability to conceptualize, plan and complete individual and group assignments;
- Ability to write clearly and cogently.

## **Readings**

-“Epstein Readings” posted on the course site in D2L

-Articles available through the website of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE):

[https://wfae-library.librarika.com/search?category\\_id=201079](https://wfae-library.librarika.com/search?category_id=201079)

and through links on this outline.

*Recommended reading for those who develop a particular interest in the subject:*

Epstein, M.J., *Sound and Noise: A Listener's Guide to Everyday Life* (McGill-Queen's Press, 2020).

*-Recommended listening:*

Sound Blogs <http://soundexplorations.blogspot.ca/>

Earth Ear: <http://earthear.com/acousticecology.html>

### **Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices**

Please familiarize yourself with the University's policy on the recording of lectures, which is outlined at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-6.html>, and carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

Phones must be turned off in class unless you are a health care or law enforcement professional, or responsible for the care of a family member.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

|  |     |                  |
|--|-----|------------------|
| Listening Exercise: Soundwalk -----                    | 20% | Due 8/30         |
| Project Plan & Annotated Bibliography -----            | 20% | Due 8/31         |
| Presentation on project research -----                 | 20% | In class, 9/2    |
| Participation in class & D2L -----                     | 5%  | Due 9/2          |
| Participation score: commentary on 2 Powerpoints ----- | 10% | due 9/23         |
| Final project (Powerpoint) -----                       | 25% | Due in D2L, 9/16 |

Note: You will be graded on the results of your work. Hard work does not merit an A unless it produces outstanding results.

### **Instructions for Assignments**

#### **Listening Exercise: Soundwalk**

Describe what you hear(d) during an outdoor walk, without media, for at least 20 minutes. *No talking, just listening.*

Length: 1-3 page equivalents.

## **Group Project**

Projects groups: 4-5 members.

Each group will choose a focus in AE (fieldwork) or AC (research), and prepare:

- a plan of research with an annotated bibliography of preliminary sources; and
- a presentation to the class followed by a project document (see below)

*Topic areas for projects (topics will develop from these general categories):*

Speech – as carrier of information, emotion, identity, and/or means of discrimination. These will involve perspectives from Communication Studies.

Music – as communication, inspiration, remedy and/or addiction. These will involve perspectives from sociology, psychology, and/or aesthetics.

Noise – as celebration, territorial boundary, nuisance, and/or hazard to health. Perspectives from environmental or health sciences are preferred.

Silence – as contemplation, restoration, and/or restriction. Again, sociology/psychology or Religious Studies.

All topics must be cleared with the instructor; specific advice will be given to each group about methodology.

*General examples of topics:*

AE: You may choose to describe and sound-map a place (e.g., business, neighbourhood, restaurant, rink). This usually involves a focus on environmental Noise or Music, or perhaps Silence (e.g., mapping the campus for quiet study spaces, although that one's been done too many times). Comparing two or more examples can be a feasible approach; so can interviewing employees or residents about their reactions to the soundscape.

AC: Research for Speech can be focused on history (e.g., radio in WWII), sociology (e.g. how the voice changes in gender reassignment), or biology (e.g. how birds or whales communicate). Research for Music will focus on music as communication (but not the merits of your favourite artist or style, please). Research for Silence can involve historical or biological approaches (e.g., the effects of quiet environments on stress reduction).

Topics about film soundtracks –Music and/or Speech --require at least one Film Studies student in your group; topics about Music require at least one group member with some training in music.

*-Project Plan & Annotated bibliography:* This is a preliminary plan for your research project, including a statement of what you are investigating, what sources and methods you will use, how you plan to divide and carry out the work involved, and how you will ensure that work is fairly divided and that all group members do their share.

The annotated bibliography will consist of written and/or recorded sources that will enable you to start your work, cited with correct bibliographic citations (APA format) and annotated with concise descriptions of each source, the author's or artist's background, and how the source will be useful to your project. Annotations are usually sufficient at 1 paragraph. Each group member should contribute at least two entries.

Length: avg. 4-5 page equivalents.

*-Presentation in class:* Each group will present a “state of research” report to the class, explaining their research methods and findings and incorporating audio and visual materials that will enhance the audience’s understanding of the project. The group must also be prepared to answer questions on the work.

Presentation length: usually 20 minutes.

*-Project document:* A PowerPoint covering the full content of your project, since it won’t be complete during Block Week. This will be posted on the D2L Discussion Board (not Dropbox) so that everyone can see it.

The Project PowerPoint must be accompanied by:

- a written document relevant to your posted PowerPoint. Each element must be clearly written, proofread and corrected. It will include:
- a detailed and orderly outline of contents;
- a bibliography of all written and “clipped” sources, including audio and video sources;
- a statement from each group member of what you learned from doing the project.

Document length: Depends on topic and size of group.

### **Participation grade**

Besides your in-class participation (5%), the following exercise (10%) will be counted toward your participation grade:

A commentary, posted on D2L Dropbox, describing your observations about two group project Powerpoints posted in D2L Discussion Board (not by your own group). Relevant questions include: *What did you learn from the Powerpoint? Was the information clear? Were you left with any questions about the topic: what were they? Do you have any information to add? (Add anything else you want to say: details count)*

A paragraph or two is usually sufficient (if aiming for excellence, more detail is recommended but extreme length is not). This assignment will not be counted for the grade of the group you comment on; it will count for your participation score.

### **Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No**

All assignments must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

### **Submission of Assignments:**

All documents will be submitted electronically on D2L. When they involve sound files, the URL links for the files must be included in the document.

**Note:** *Title your group files as follows:*

COMS 491: Surnames of all group members, in alphabetical order and separated by commas.

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recording for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

### **Department Regulations:**

Please send in your essays directly to your instructor: use the Dropbox or Discussion Board function of D2L (be sure to check which one is specified).

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

## **Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g., B to B-) for each day late. If you know that the assignment is going to be late for a good reason (Illness? University sports team travel? Extreme stress?), ask for an extension before it's due.

## **Student Accommodations**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/). Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy>

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require a medical note. For information on the use of a statutory declaration, see the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

## **Expectations for Writing**

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

## **Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film**

Final grades are reported as letter grades. However, assignments, exams, and other work in this course will be graded using raw scores (e.g., a score out of 15 for an assignment worth 15 /100 of the final grade)

The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department. If letter grades are used for an assignment or other course component, the percentage equivalent in the final column will be used for calculating the final grade:

| Grade Point Value | Description  | Grade      | Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents* | Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* |
|-------------------|--|------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>4.00</b>       | Outstanding performance  | <b>A+</b>  | 96 - 100%                            | 98.0%                                       |
| <b>4.00</b>       | Excellent performance  | <b>A</b>   | 90 - 95.99%                          | 93.0%                                       |
| <b>3.70</b>       | Approaching excellent performance  | <b>A -</b> | 85 - 89.99%                          | 87.5%                                       |
| <b>3.30</b>       | Exceeding good performance   | <b>B+</b>  | 80 - 84.99%                          | 82.5%                                       |
| <b>3.00</b>       | Good performance   | <b>B</b>   | 75 - 79.99%                          | 77.5%                                       |
| <b>2.70</b>       | Approaching good performance   | <b>B-</b>  | 70 - 74.99%                          | 72.5%                                       |
| <b>2.30</b>       | Exceeding satisfactory performance   | <b>C+</b>  | 65 - 69.99%                          | 67.5%                                       |
| <b>2.00</b>       | Satisfactory performance   | <b>C</b>   | 60 - 64.99%                          | 62.5%                                       |
| <b>1.70</b>       | Approaching satisfactory performance   | <b>C-</b>  | 55 - 59.99%                          | 57.5%                                       |
| <b>1.30</b>       | Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject | <b>D+</b>  | 53 - 54.99%                          | 54.0%                                       |
| <b>1.00</b>       | Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject  | <b>D</b>   | 50 - 52.99%                          | 51.5%                                       |
| <b>0.00</b>       | Failure. Did not meet course requirements.   | <b>F</b>   | 0 - 49.99%                           | 0%  |

## Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html)



If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

## **Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation**

Course materials created by the instructor (including lectures, course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments, and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed, or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

To ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes & electronic versions of textbooks), all students are required to read the *University of Calgary Policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright* at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy> and the requirements of the *Copyright Act* (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>). Students who use material protected by copy-right in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

## **Academic Misconduct**

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

## **Research Ethics**

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

If you plan to conduct any interviews with people or observations of them for your Project, see your instructor about Ethics clearance.

## **Important information, services, and contacts for students**

### **Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal**

For university regulations and procedures related to deferral of term work, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

### **Student Support Services and Resources**

Please see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk. For resources on D2L, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/resources-for-students/>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

### **Schedule of Lectures and Readings**

*Note: The full schedule will be posted in the week before Block Week. It may change somewhat to accommodate guest speakers. Changes will be announced by email.*

**8/29 - Introduction** of concepts; acoustics, auditory system, psychoacoustics, acoustic ecology, acoustic communications, auditory culture; speech, music, noise, silence.

Discussion of pre-session readings; introduction of soundwalking practices.