

ENGLISH 831, Winter 2020
Sound Studies and Literary Studies

What can scholars of literary studies learn from sound studies?

This course provides an introduction to sound studies that focuses on its relevance to the study of literature. Reading has long been implicitly assumed, particularly in departments of English-language literature, to imply a silent and solitary process, but literature has always had a sonic component (even if precisely in its emphatic silencing of its reader). We will approach literary studies through questions of aurality and orality, as well as in the intersections of written texts with audio and video recording technologies.

Most of the books for this course are available online through the university library: if the hyperlink does not work, please find the resource through the main library search page (lib.umich.edu). As a result, you will need to purchase (or otherwise obtain) copies of only three books:

Braithwaite, Kamau. *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglo Caribbean Poetry*. New Beacon Books, 1984.

James, Marlon. *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. Riverhead Books, 2014.

Kaminsky, Ilya. *Deaf Republic*. Greywolf Press, 2019.

Please be aware, however, that reading on a screen can feel more taxing than reading print, and plan your book acquisitions accordingly.

Assignments:

- a short individual response paper (3-5pp.) at the midpoint of the semester;
- a longer final paper (20-25pp.), or an equally substantial final project (e.g. a podcast or video essay) due at the end of the term

READING SCHEDULE

1/9

no class (conflict with MLA)

1/16

Gandhi, Leela. [*Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*](#). 2nd Ed. Columbia UP, 2019.

1/23

Sterne, Jonathan, "Sonic Imaginations," in Sterne, ed. *The Sound Studies Reader*. Routledge, 2012: 1-18.

Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olanian, "Hearing Empire—Imperial Listening," in Radano and Olanian, eds. [*Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique*](#). Duke UP: 2016.

Weidman, Amanda. "Echo and Anthem" in Radano and Olanian, eds. [*Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique*](#). Duke UP, 2016.

Rubery, Matthew. "Introduction: Talking Books." In Rubery, ed. [*Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*](#). Routledge, 2011. 1-21.

Bernstein, Charles. "Foreword." In Rubery, ed. [*Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies*](#). Routledge, 2011. xiii-xvi

1/30

Barber, Karin. [*The Anthropology of Texts, Persons, and Publics*](#). Cambridge UP, 2009.

MacArthur, Marit J. "[Monotony, the Churches of Poetry Reading, and Sound Studies](#)." *PMLA* 131.1 (2016):38-63.

[Tuesday, 2/4, 7 to 9pm, Michigan Theater -- [Jim Jarmusch and Carter Logan, SQÜRL](#)]

2/6

Ilya Kaminsky *Deaf Republic*. Greywolf Press, 2019.

[Ilya Kaminsky reading](#), 5.30-6.30pm, UMMA Helmut Stern Auditorium

2/13

Sanchez, Rebecca. [*Deafening Modernism: Embodied Language and Visual Poetics in American Literature*](#). NYU Press, 2015.

2/20

Hosokawa, Shuhei. "[The Walkman Effect](#)." *Popular Music* 4 (Jan 1984): 165–180.

Van Maas, Sander. "[Opening the Audiobook](#)." *Comparative Literature* (2018) 70 (3): 337-356.
+ audiobook TBD

2/27

Saussy, Haun. [*The Ethnography of Rhythm: Orality and its Technologies*](#). Fordham UP, 2016.

3/5

no class (winter break)

3/8

Midterm papers due, by midnight via Canvas

3/12

M. NourbeSe Philip. [*Zong!*](#) Wesleyan UP, 2008.

3/19

Braithwaite, Kamau. *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglo Caribbean Poetry*. New Beacon Books, 1984.

3/26

Weidman, Amanda. [*Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India*](#). Duke University Press, 2006.

4/2

Paper workshops

4/9

James, Marlon. *A Brief History of Seven Killings*. Riverhead Books, 2014.

4/16

TBD

4/23

Final papers due, by midnight via Canvas