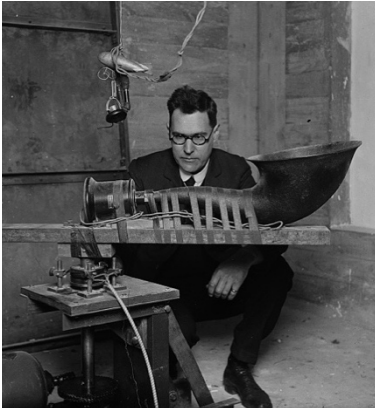


Sounding Out Power and Dissent
COLT 40.08
Winter 2021: C (M,W,F 10:20-11:25)
Sam Carter
Office Hours: TBD



COURSE DESCRIPTION

How does authority reach the ear? What are the sonic features of speaking truth to power? Who shapes the ways we hear, and where might we learn to listen differently? This course sounds out displays of authority as well as how we can act against such structures by turning to representations of the auditory in both literature and cinema. As we consider questions of sound and its reproduction, we will work across geographical contexts to determine which concerns resonate widely and what role acoustics, or the specific properties of a space, might play. Readings will come from writers such as Valeria Luiselli, María Sonia Cristoff, Franz Kafka, Frantz Fanon, and Severo Sarduy, while films will range from *Fitzcarraldo* to *Sorry to Bother You*.

Although one might not expect an ostensibly silent text to actually say something about sound, literary works can help us reflect on how we listen. In addition to framing our understanding of the affordances of technologies like the gramophone, tape recorder, and radio, texts transcribe speech and other sounds in a way that records only some sonic features while failing to render others. To grasp the contours of some of these processes, we will examine a number of literary forms: novels, short stories, radio plays, nonfiction works, and even a graphic novel. Doing so will allow us to assess how texts depict audible forms of authority or, in some cases, depend on ties to sound to acquire an authority of their own.

Complementing these literary works are films that engage the ear as well as the eye and that demonstrate an inseparability of sound, authority, and space. We will also contemplate the differences between sources of sound that appear onscreen and those that do not in order to ask how cinematic techniques place the aural into conversation with the visual. Beyond offering the opportunity to consider film as a sound reproduction technology in its own right, viewing these works will underscore the sonic specificity of the literary texts we study.

As it shifts between literature and cinema and travels among the Americas, Europe, and Africa, the course tunes in concerns about colonialism and its reverberations, intersections of race and technology, and silence as a sense of control, among others. By encountering these representations of the acoustic working either in concert with authority or against it, students will become more alert

to both the sound of power and the power of sound on the page, onscreen, and in their own lives. As a result, our discussions will not only acknowledge that there is no such thing as a neutral listener but also explore how the sharing of sonic experiences can activate solidarities or signal new political possibilities.

Even though the course will introduce some of the most important ideas from the interdisciplinary field of sound studies through a handful of readings, its focus will be the careful analysis of the literary works and films. The assignments therefore encourage students to develop their skills in close-reading and close-listening, and throughout the term there will be progressively more emphasis on a comparative approach that echoes the attention to context demanded by the course's two keywords: acoustics and authority. Just as acoustics is a category for thinking through the connections between sounds and the spaces that shape them, authority, too, is circumscribed by the conditions in which it is enacted or enunciated. In this way, these questions of acoustics and authority amplified by the course are not only deeply intertwined but also consonant with an attempt to articulate the need to think across languages and regions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze films and texts through attention to sound
- Construct engaging arguments that encompass different media
- Describe how their own listening habits have been formed
- Explain how sound and power can intersect
- Evaluate comparisons across disparate temporal and cultural contexts

GRADING

The final grade for the course will be calculated according to the following categories:

Participation: 25%
 Soundwalk reflection: 10%
 First paper: 15%
 Second paper: 20%
 Final paper: 30%

PARTICIPATION

Active listening and participation are an essential component of the course. You should prepare for each session by bringing at least one question and one other potential contribution to our discussion.

SOUNDWALK REFLECTION (2 PAGES)

You will conduct a soundwalk on campus that is intended to activate your critical ear. The prompt will guide you to pay particular attention to places where changes in sound correspond to changes in forms of authority or control. In your reflection, which will be due at the end of the second week of the course, you will explain the effects of some of these changes.

FIRST PAPER (4 PAGES)

For this first paper, which will be due at the end of the fourth week, you need to work closely with one of the objects we have discussed. This is an opportunity to develop the

techniques of close-reading and close-listening that will be expected of you throughout the course. You can expect to receive detailed feedback that will help you with your close-readings in future assignments.

SECOND PAPER (6 PAGES)

This second paper, which you will submit at the end of week seven, demands a comparative perspective. You will need to work with objects from at least two different weeks within the course, and you can treat it as an opportunity to begin articulating some of the ideas you might explore further in the final paper.

FINAL PAPER (8-10 PAGES)

For this final assignment, you will write a paper that works with three objects from the course in order to craft a compelling argument about the intersections of sound and authority. Some original research is required, and you are expected to address at least one film, one literary work, and one theoretical text (either from the course or chosen with the instructor's help) in your analysis.

Students are granted two absences. Any additional missed classes, or chronic tardiness, will affect your final grade. Late work will only be accepted in extraordinary circumstances.

REQUIRED READINGS

You will be expected to purchase the following works:

- Valeria Luiselli, *Lost Children Archive* (Knopf, 2019)
- María Sonia Cristoff, *Include Me Out* (Transit, 2020)
- Ulli Lust, *Voices in the Dark* (New York Review, 2017)

All other course materials will be made available to you via Canvas. If you encounter any financial challenges related to this class, please let the instructor know.

RESOURCES

Please contact the instructor as soon as possible with any doubts or difficulties. Because a good portion of your grade rests on your ability to present your ideas cogently and persuasively through your writing, you are encouraged to take full advantage of The Research Center for Writing, and Information Technology. Located in Berry 183, RWIT is a free service dedicated to helping members of the Dartmouth community develop more effective strategies for generating and organizing their ideas, finding and evaluating research sources, and presenting and revising compositions in a variety of media.

DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who may need disability-related academic adjustments and services for this course are encouraged to speak with the instructor as early in the term as possible. Students requiring disability-related academic adjustments and services must consult the Student Accessibility Services office (Carson Hall, Suite 125, 646-9900). Once SAS has authorized services, students must show the originally signed SAS Services and Consent Form and/or a letter on SAS letterhead to the instructor. As a first step, if students have questions about whether they qualify to receive academic adjustments and services, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

Should you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please alert the instructor before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodation.

SUPPORT

The academic environment at Dartmouth is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including:

Undergraduate Dean (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~upperde/>)

Counseling and Human Development (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~chd/>)

Student Wellness Center (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/>)

HONOR CODE

Please note the Dartmouth College honor code and plagiarism/cheating policy in the current catalogue. Plagiarism will result in an F grade in the course. Use caution in your work, and consult me, your Dean etc. if you have any questions or concerns etc. Please, consult Dartmouth's Academic Honor Principle at <https://students.dartmouth.edu/judicial-affairs/policy/academic-honor-principle>

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

This course aims to foster a diverse and inclusive environment and is committed to upholding the principles of the Dartmouth citizenship pledge: “We learn together. We teach one another. We create knowledge together. We treat ourselves and each other with dignity and respect. We recognize that our diverse backgrounds broaden our understanding of the world. We appreciate that an honest and civil exchange of ideas—especially conflicting ones—strengthens our intellect and makes for an inclusive community.”

COURSE CALENDAR

WEEK 1	OVERTURE	
	Monday	Introduction to course In class: “Sounds and Silences,” dir. Rod Serling (from <i>The Twilight Zone</i>)
	Wednesday	Italo Calvino, “A King Listens”
	Friday	Friedrich Kittler, “Gramophone” (excerpt) Rainer Maria Rilke, “Primal Sound”
WEEK 2	COLONIAL ACOUSTICS	
	Monday	Frantz Fanon, “This is the Voice of Algeria”
	Wednesday	Severo Sarduy, <i>The Ant Killers</i>
	Friday	Ken Saro-Wiwa, <i>The Transistor Radio</i>
WEEK 3	COLONIAL ACOUSTICS (II)	
	Monday	Luis Cárcamo-Huechante, “Indigenous Interference: Mapuche Use of Radio in Times of Acoustic Colonialism”

	Wednesday	<i>Fitzcarraldo</i> , dir. Werner Herzog
	Friday	<i>Fitzcarraldo</i>
WEEK 4	SILENCE	
	Monday	María Sonia Cristoff, <i>Include Me Out</i> (part 1)
	Wednesday	<i>Include Me Out</i> (part 2)
	Friday	<i>Include Me Out</i> (part 3)
WEEK 5	SILENCE (II)	
	Monday	Michel Chion, “The Three Listening Modes”
	Wednesday	<i>The Aerial</i> , dir. Esteban Sapir
	Friday	<i>The Aerial</i>
WEEK 6	(IN)AUDIBLE ARCHIVES	
	Monday	Valeria Luiselli, <i>Lost Children Archive</i> (part 1)
	Wednesday	<i>Lost Children Archive</i> (part 2)
	Friday	<i>Lost Children Archive</i> (part 3), including excerpts from audiobook
WEEK 7	TAPE AND TESTIMONY	
	Monday	Rigoberta Menchú, <i>I, Rigoberta Menchú</i> (selections)
	Wednesday	Larbi Layachi and Paul Bowles, <i>A Life Full of Holes</i> (selections)
	Friday	<i>Blow Out</i> , dir. Brian De Palma
WEEK 8	SEIZING SONIC CONTROL	
	Monday	Ulli Lust, <i>Voices in the Dark</i> (part 1)
	Wednesday	<i>Voices in the Dark</i> (part 2)
	Friday	Orson Welles, <i>The War of the Worlds</i>
WEEK 9	KAFKA AND HIS INTERLOCUTORS	
	Monday	Franz Kafka, “The Burrow,” “The Silence of the Sirens,” “My Neighbor”
	Wednesday	Franz Kafka, “Josephine the Singer” Roberto Bolaño, “Police Rat”
	Friday	Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, <i>Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature</i> (selections)
WEEK 10	RACE, SOUND REPRODUCTION, REVOLUTION	
	Monday	Kodwo Eshun, “Operating System for the Redesign of Sonic Reality”
	Wednesday	<i>Sorry to Bother You</i> , dir. Boots Riley
	Friday	<i>Sorry to Bother You</i> , class conclusions