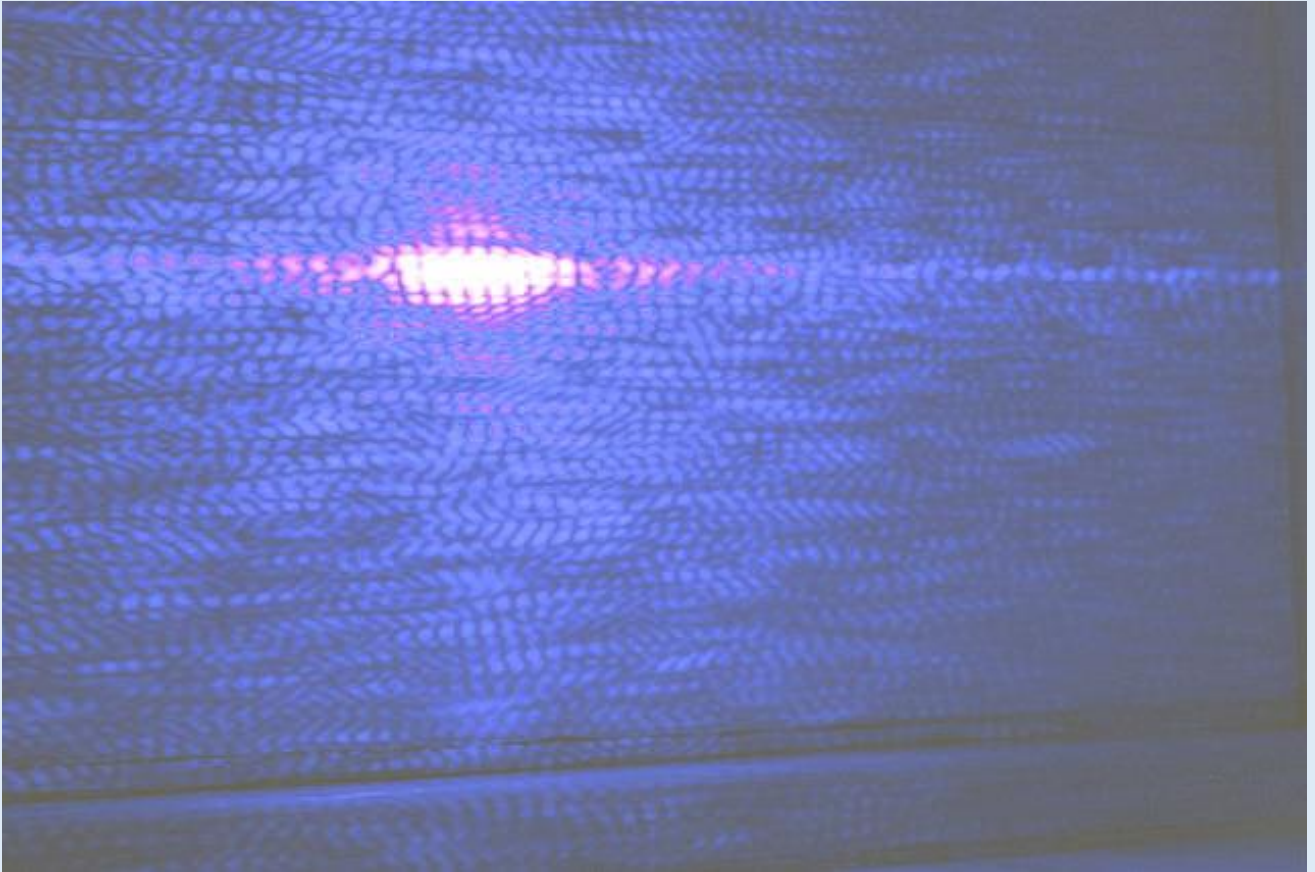


Unit Guide: Contemporary Issues in Sound Art



BA (Hons) Sound Arts Year 2 – 2023-24

Unit Introduction:

This unit prepares you for your final year and builds upon previous study enabling you to compare, contrast and contextualise your sonic interests with the approaches, works and careers of relevant sonic practitioners.

It encourages a critical voice that debates gender, race, class (cultural diversity) as well as climate, ecological and social justice contexts. A diverse range of artists and designers are related to an associated range of debates within contemporary and historical sound art discourse. While researching and authoring your work for this unit, you experience the value of the traditional formats associated with undergraduate study i.e. the written essay.

Your research, analytical and critical skills are developed and synthesised following your Block 1 Sound Studies and Aural Cultures unit. Your learning for this unit expands the necessary skills and context should you be interested in choosing Route A:

You will be supported to deepen and refine your critical skills in undertaking a scholarly exploration of research topics, analysing and evaluating relevant sources. This will be consolidated into essay form and annotated bibliography as well as developed into a research project proposal. You will enhance the connections between your sound practice and your critical reflective skills and produce a creative sound work related to your chosen area.

NB: Both hand-in elements are submitted together on the submission deadline.

Learning Outcomes:

On completion of this unit you will be able to:

- Demonstrate coherent knowledge of creative strategies and techniques emerging from your engagement with contemporary issues in sound art (Knowledge)
- Show practice-based research to produce original pieces of creative sound arts using available skills, technologies and concepts and critically evaluate your current skills in relation to your future career goals, identifying strategies for further personal and professional development (Process)
- Analyse and evaluate sound work with regard to contemporary aesthetics, ideologies, cultural practice and contexts with reference to the UAL principles on climate, social and racial justice (Enquiry)
- Demonstrate an understanding of the conceptual considerations and technical issues pertinent to creative areas of interest (Communication)
- Use the technological skills and conceptual insights gained through the specialisms to research, devise and realise your own project and to plan forward to your final year of study. (Realisation)

Assessment

Please refer to your Unit Assignment Brief for assessment details.

Unit Tutors:



Annie Goh is an artist, researcher, curator and educator working primarily with sound, space, electronic media and generative processes within their social and cultural contexts. Her teaching, as well as her wider work, takes a critical approach to contemporary debates in the fields of sound and media arts, digital technologies, generative and computational processes and communication studies, with a particular focus on intersectional feminism, decolonial theory and the politics of knowledge production.

a.goh@lcc.arts.ac.uk



David Mollin is an artist and writer teaching on BA and MA Sound Arts courses. He is interested in the use of writing and sound as a process of materialising an artwork that fails to materialise. This focus narration and re-writing is informed by his own visual impairment, and has founded a belief in collaborative working and in community as a source of empowerment, to re-vision norms and expectations of aesthetics and of knowledge.

d.mollin@arts.ac.uk



Matthias Kispert is an artist and researcher with an interest in the intersections of art, politics and activism. His practice crosses various media, including video, sound, electronic and improvised music, documentary, installation and a range of performance and interventionist approaches. Besides this, he is also involved in journal publishing and the convening of networks of activist filmmakers.

m.kispert@lcc.arts.ac.uk



Salomé Voegelin is an artist, writer and researcher engaged in listening as a socio-political practice of sound. Her work and writing deal with sound, the world sound makes: its aesthetic, social and political realities that are hidden by the persuasiveness of a visual point of view. She pursues sound studies as a transversal study able to deal with the complex interdependencies of a connected world. Her essays and text-scores are written for performance and publication. Books include *Listening to Noise and Silence* (2010), *The Political Possibility of Sound* (2018) and *Sonic Possible Worlds* (2014/21).

Programme Administration:

Sound and Music Team

Email: sound.music@arts.ac.uk

Unit Timetable

Week	Date	Topic	Lecturer
17	Mon 12 th Feb 10am-1pm	Unit Introduction & Practice-based Research	Annie Goh
18	Mon 19 th Feb 10am-1pm	Anthropology of the Senses & Sensory Arts	Annie Goh
19	Mon 26 th Feb 10am-1pm	Guest Lecture: Modern Acousmatic Music Composition	Berk Yagli & Annie Goh
20	Mon 4 th March 10am-1pm	Sonic Ecologies	Matthias Kispert
	<i>Mon 4th March 1.30--5.30pm or Tues 5th March 11am-4pm</i>	<i>Group tutorials – see Moodle announcements for details</i>	<i>Salomé Voegelin</i>
21	Mon 11 th March 10am-1pm	Sonic Practices of Resistance and Activism	Matthias Kispert
		Spring Break	
22	Mon 8 th April 10am-1pm	Sounding Knowledge(s) Hand-in draft 1,000-1,500 word draft essay in class (print out)	Salomé Voegelin
		<i>Group/Individual tutorials - see Moodle announcements for details</i>	<i>Salomé Voegelin</i>
23	Mon 15 th April 10am-1pm	Site-situated Practices	Annie Goh
24	Mon 22 nd April 10am-1pm	Research Project Proposal	David Mollin
25	Mon 29 th April 10am-1pm	Electronic Dance Music Cultures	Annie Goh
26	Tues 7 th May 10am-1pm *NB due to Bank Holiday this session is on a Tuesday	Materials, Interaction & Generative Arts	Annie Goh
27	Monday 13 th May 10am-1pm	Final Session	Annie Goh
		Assessment Deadline: By 3 pm	

		Thursday, 16th May 2024 (see Assignment Brief)	
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Note for students: Timetables are subject to change. Always check your calendar and Moodle announcements for regular updates.

Week 17 - Unit Introduction & Practice-based Research

We will begin with a Unit Introduction, overview of the expectations and looking at the Unit Assignment.

Lecture: Practice-based research is about foregrounding the doing/making element of an investigation within the process of producing or creating knowledge. It is a methodology that challenges the traditional modes of research such as reading and writing (and indeed interviewing and surveying). As part of this we will also focus on the importance of the essay format i.e. developing a question, planning, gathering research, referencing, structuring your essay, stages of the writing process and so on.

Workshop: develop a question for both your essay and research project.

Independent Study/Personal Creative Practice

Post your practice-research questions to your blog. Write a blog post (200-500 words) reflecting on your possible choices of topic for this unit and the various advantages and disadvantages of these.

Begin gathering sources for your essay and annotated bibliography. Note down at least three keywords regarding your chosen topic as well as some terms that you might find difficult to understand or define. Scan tables of contents and abstracts to see which might be most relevant texts and begin reading these. Collect relevant quotes and think about where they might work in your essay structure.

Preparation for next session:

Read: Constance Classen "Foundations for an Anthropology of the Senses"

Bring a source that you are planning to use in your research to class, either a book from the library or an academic article.

Week 18 - Anthropology of the Senses & Sensory Arts

In this session, we will consider the role of sensory perception more broadly, in order to situate our focus on listening and hearing within this. Part of this will be thinking historically and through anthropological methods, how we come to know the world through our senses. We will work in groups to analyse how we as sound practitioners and theorists approach ocularcentrism. We will think about how sound arts can be considered part of the 'sensory arts' and look at artistic practices related to senses beyond seeing and hearing. We will begin to develop ideas for our research topics.

Workshop: Choose a paragraph from one of the sources you have brought that you either find interesting or difficult to understand for discussion with the class.

Independent Study:

- 1) Write a short synopsis (at least 200 words) about the text that you chose for discussion.
- 2) Continue reading and collecting quotes, and follow up material cited in the texts that you read. Locate at least two of the sources you think you will be including in your Annotated Bibliography.

Personal Creative Practice:

- 3) Start developing your creative ideas. Post reflections and considerations on your blog and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. How does your practice overlap with and feed into your research?

Preparation for next session:

Go to <https://empreintesdigitales.bandcamp.com> and listen to some of the works listed. Pick one or two artists/works that you find interesting and try listing what is unique about them (their artistic characteristics/their approach to building form/their approach to building timbral, textural, and gestural materials, and so on).

Week 19 – Guest Lecture Berk Yagli “Modern Acousmatic Music Composition”

This session will introduce contemporary practices and theories about electroacoustic music and provide methods for composing such music. Together, we will investigate some of the significant contemporary works, and discuss how they might differ from the previous canon (in turn, enabling us to start familiarising various approaches to contemporary electroacoustic music-making). At the end of the session, various methods for the creation of this type of music will be introduced and discussed.

Personal Creative Practice:

Either: Compose a two-minute compositional statement while exploring some concepts/methods mentioned in the lecture. Write your influences and insights regarding composing the statement: what worked, what did not, and how you would continue building up this statement if you had a chance.

Or: continue working on your creative project for this unit.

Document the progress in your blog.

Independent Study:

Find a further book or article relevant to your topic and post a short synopsis (at least 200 words) on your blog about it. Add this to the draft of your Annotated Bibliography.

Begin work on the first draft of your essay by making an essay plan and post this to your blog. Write a 300–500 word introduction to your essay that sets out your areas of interest and argument.

Preparation for next session:

Read: Gilmurray, Jonathan (2016), 'Introduction', in: Bianchi, Frederick and Manzo, V.J. (eds.), *Environmental sound artists: in their own words*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Week 20 – Sonic Ecologies

Sonic ecologies encompass many forms, including practices and debates around acoustic ecology, artist practices that range from cross-species collaboration to making sensible the destruction of ecosystems and the global climate, critiques of the material footprint of sound technologies, and much more. We will be discussing the different ways in which ecologies are articulated through these methodologies, with a view to their implicit assumptions, ethics and politics.

Independent Study:

Continue drafting your essay. Find a further book or article relevant to your topic and post a short synopsis (at least 200 words) on your blog about it. Add this to the draft of your Annotated Bibliography.

Personal Creative Practice:

Develop your creative ideas with more experiments and tests. Post documentation of these on your blog and reflect on their relative successes or failures. How will you move forward from these? Are your practice and research aiding one another to develop mutually in some way?

Preparation for next session:

Read: Yoganathan, Nimalan (2021), 'Soundscapes of resistance: amplifying social justice activism and aural counterpublics through field recording based sound practices', *Organised Sound*, 26 (2), 201–210, doi.org/10.1017/S1355771821000248

Week 21 - Sonic Practices of Resistance and Activism

Feedback & questions: reflection on how the module is going so far, and any questions about the assignment or anything else.

Lecture: both sounds and silences are important aspects of gathering collectivities, of putting forward collective demands and of being together in the process. In this session, we

will encounter various aspects of sounds' activist potentials, as well as the work of a number of artists who work across sound and activism.

Workshop: essay surgery – bring your essay plan and any questions or issues you have encountered in writing to class.

Independent Study:

Draft your essay of 1,000-1,500 words for hand-in after the Spring Break

Personal Creative Practice:

Continue developing your creative work. Ensure you are on target to complete at least blog five entries on the process, context and concept for your creative work, the Sound Arts Lecture series and your own future goals.

Spring Break

Week 22 - Sonic Knowledge(s)

Please submit your draft essay or essay plan (c. 1000 – 1500 words) this week. Please print it out and hand it to the M115 office for the Unit Leader by the end of the session. Feedback will be provided by Week 24.

In this session we will pursue an exploration of the relationship between knowledge, art and sound. We will take as our starting Steven Feld's essay *Acoustemology*, (in David Novak & Matt Sakakeeny, eds, *Keywords in Sound*. Duke University Press: 2015, pp. 12-21) available as a free download here: <http://www.stevenfeld.net/articles>

We will also be listening to an excerpt from Dylan Robinson's book *Hungry Listening, Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*, (University of Minnesota Press, US: 2020), Which you can access for free here: <https://disclaimer.org.au/contents/unsettling-scores/hungry-listening> (no. 2 Hungry Listening excerpt).

These two publications will guide us into a discussion of epistemology, the theory of knowledge, in relation to reality and legibility, visibility and sound. From them, and by listening to various works and field recordings, we will consider the role of sound, sound art and music in the construction, legitimisation, mediation, as well as the rupture and pluralisation of knowledge. We will consider how what we understand as knowledge and knowable is related to (visual) cultural norms, and we will speculate on how else we could know the world. The aim is to explore how sound might offer alternative, embodied, experiential, invisible knowledge possibilities; to investigate the role of art and culture in relation to these knowledge possibilities; and to discuss what the consequences of such a plural and different (sonic) knowledge might be.

Independent Study:

Practice your critical reflection skills. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of at least two voices on a particular topic within your interest area e.g. between two of the sources you are outlining in your Annotated Bibliography.

Personal Creative Practice:

Develop your creative work further, by documenting tests and experiments or by reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of the current state of the work in a blogpost.

Week 23 – Site-situated practices

We will re-cap the assessment requirements for this unit and answer any questions arising.

In this session we will explore the role of site in sound arts as installation, performance and other interventions. How might works of sound art interact with the physical and social environments in which they exist? How might they engage in social and political questions of place, history, memory and context? In order to examine how sound can affect site, space and place, as well as be affected by them in turn, we will experiment with performing sounds in space within the building and local area.

Preparation: bring a selection of recorded sounds to the class (a minimum of three distinct recorded sounds). You might want to think about differences in pitch, noise, duration, dynamics as well as meaning or context that the sounds evoke.

If possible, please bring a device to play these sounds back from (this can be your laptop or mobile phone. If you have a mobile or Bluetooth speaker you can connect it to, please bring it with you).

Independent Study:

Continue researching for your essay and drafting the next section/editing previous sections.

Book in for an Academic Support workshop or tutorial if you do not feel confident about any aspect of academic writing or want to improve your current skills.

Personal Creative Practice:

1) Reflect critically on your experience of putting sounds in a particular context. What was the effect of placing sounds within a particular site or place? What worked as expected and what surprised you? Why? Post your thoughts on your blog.

2) Draw a mind-map based on sounds that are important to you for your project. What places, spaces or sites do they concern? What meanings do these each have? How do they connect or inter-relate? Post this mind-map on your blog.

Week 24 – Research Project Proposal

This session will be run by David Mollin, unit tutor for the final year research project routes A and B. David will introduce the routes to you as well as the proposal document you will be expected to hand in as part of this unit submission.

Independent Study:

Ensure you feel confident with Harvard citation practice. Summarise a further important text source for your essay topic. Practice by paraphrasing a section or chapter and ensuring you know how to use Harvard referencing correctly. See:

<https://www.citethemrightonline.com/category-list?docid=CTRHarvard>

Personal Creative Practice:

Continue developing your work towards its completion. Ensure you are on target to complete at least blog five entries on the process, context and concept for your creative work, the Sound Arts Lecture series and your own future goals.

Preparation for next session:

Read: Garcia, Luis-Manuel. 'Beats, Flesh, and Grain: Sonic Tactility and Affect in Electronic Dance Music'. Sound Studies 1, no. 1 (1 January 2015): 59–76.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/20551940.2015.1079072>

Week 25 – Electronic Dance Music Cultures

Whilst many people associate electronic dance music events with 'fun', in recent years we have seen a growth in the 'serious' scholarship that surrounds electronic dance music cultures. Indeed, within most sound arts histories concentrated over the past fifty years, electronic dance music cultures have typically not been featured heavily, if at all. In this session we will think about some of the unique aspects of dancefloor cultures, the challenges to studying them and introduce some ethnographic practices.

We will devote time to work-in-progress presentations in small groups to enable you to get feedback from your peers and tutor on issues you are currently facing in developing your creative sound work.

Independent Study:

Continue working on your essay. Ensure it has a solid structure of: Introduction, Main & Conclusion. Re-read the learning outcomes of the Assignment Brief and ensure you know how to evidence these.

Personal Creative Practice:

Continue developing your work towards its completion. Post on your blog about the ongoing process of your work and/or about the Weekly Sound Arts lecture

Week 26 – Materials, Interaction & Generative Arts

In this session, we will focus on how sound artists have used materials and media (natural, mechanical, electrical, digital or otherwise) in their works. We will be asking: does all sound art have to make sound? How have artists incorporated sonic processes into their work?

What might it mean to use sonic processes in a sound art work that is not audible? We will compare some sound art works based on fixed media with those that invite audience participation or interaction.

Furthermore, we will think about generative artworks that use processes over time to arrive at a work. We will address ideas of control and indeterminacy or randomness in historical and contemporary works.

Workshop: in small groups, you will give and receive feedback to and from your peers about your creative projects and essays.

Independent Study:

Finalise your essay.

Personal Creative Practice:

Finalise your creative work. Ensure you have completed at least five entries on the process, context and concept for your creative work, the Sound Arts Lecture series and your own future goals.

Week 27 – Final Session

We will re-cap of some of the key ideas of this unit.

The remainder of the session will combine peer-feedback alongside the option of 1-2-1 discussions with your tutor about your work.

Independent Study & Personal Creative Practice:

Finalise your components for Elements 1 & 2 and ensure you have all constituent parts.

Assignment Hand-in: **3 pm Thursday, 16th May 2024** (see Unit Assignment Brief)

Further Reading/Resources:

Armitage, Joanne (2018), 'Spaces to fail in: negotiating gender, community and technology in algorave', *Dancecult*, 10 (1), 31–45, doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2018.10.01.02.

Bianchi, Frederick and Manzo, V.J. (eds.) (2016), *Environmental sound artists: in their own words*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Chambers, Ellie and Northedge, Andrew (2008), *The arts good study guide*, 2nd ed., Milton Keynes: Open University.

Collins, Nicolas (2006), *Handmade electronic music: the art of hardware hacking*, New York: Routledge

Devine, Kyle (2019), *Decomposed: the political ecology of music*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

García-Mispireta, Luis Manuel. *Together, Somehow: Music, Affect, and Intimacy on the Dancefloor*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2023.

Garcia, Luis-Manuel. 'Editor's Introduction: Doing Nightlife and EDMC Fieldwork'. *Dancecult* 5, no. 1 (2013): 3–17. <https://doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2013.05.01.01>.

Ghazala, Reed (2005), *Circuit-bending: build your own alien instruments*, Indianapolis, IN: Wiley.

Godwin, Janet (2019), *Planning your essay*, 3rd ed., London: Red Globe Press.

Iles, Anthony and Mattin (eds.) (2009), *Noise & capitalism*, San Sebastián: Arteleku.

Smith, Jacob (2015), *Eco-sonic media*, Oakland, California: University of California Press.

Warburton, Nigel (2006), *The basics of essay writing*, London: Routledge.