

# SM4143: SONIC ARTS AND THE HISTORY OF SOUNDS AND NOISES

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## Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

## Part I Course Overview

### Course Title

Sonic Arts and the History of Sounds and Noises

### Subject Code

SM - School of Creative Media

### Course Number

4143

### Academic Unit

School of Creative Media (SM)

### College/School

School of Creative Media (SM)

### Course Duration

One Semester

### Credit Units

3

### Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

### Medium of Instruction

English

### Medium of Assessment

English

### Prerequisites

Nil

### Precursors

Nil

### Equivalent Courses

Nil

### Exclusive Courses

Nil

## Part II Course Details

### Abstract

This course engages with the emerging practice of sound art, the history of sound as a medium, and the concurrent development of a discourse and theory of auditory culture. We will focus our discussion on a number of important themes in sound art to (1) illustrate how sound is put to use within modes of installation, composition and performance; and (2) how sound has developed into a core component of contemporary culture. We will consider noises, music, voices, sounds, the technologies of sound, and the role they play in historical and contemporary thoughts. Critical listening and survey of key sonic art works are aimed at extending listening skills, and at developing a vocabulary with which to describe and engage with the auditory.

### Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs	Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Reproduce general historical and social accounts of sound as a culture and as an artistic medium.		x	
2	Describe the relationship between technology and the materiality of sound.	x		
3	Listen discursively, and with a heightened sense of hearing.			x
4	Write about music, sound and noises.	x		
5	Generate and consolidate personal insight on theoretical issues related to sound through independent research.		x	

#### A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

#### A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

#### A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

### Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lecture	1/ Lectures 2/ Weekly assigned readings 3/ Visiting artist lecture	1, 2, 4
2	Lecture, debate and discussion	4/ In-class critique of canonic sound art pieces 5/ In-class experimentation and workshops with various equipment and technologies 6/ Weekly assigned private listening	2, 3, 4

3	Presentation and discussion	7/ Case study and in-class presentation	4	
4	Final evaluation and discussion	8/ Drop-in clinics and individual guidance (semester-end project)	5	

**Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)**

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	1/ Mid-term project presentation	1, 2, 4	30	The use of AI should be restricted to appropriate tasks such as assisting with coding and writing text, and understanding code and text. It should not be used for writing code and text from start to finish. All uses of AI should be referenced appropriately.	Yes
2	2/ Participation in in-class discussion, critique and workshops	5	10	-	No
3	3/ Text, audio and media log-book and journal	3	10	-	No
4	4/ Semester-end project	5	50	The use of AI should be restricted to appropriate tasks such as assisting with coding and writing text, and understanding code and text. It should not be used for writing code and text from start to finish. All uses of AI should be referenced appropriately.	Yes

**Continuous Assessment (%)**

100

**Examination (%)**

0

**Minimum Continuous Assessment Passing Requirement (%)**

0

**Minimum Examination Passing Requirement (%)**

0

**Assessment Rubrics (AR)**

**Assessment Task**

1. Assessment of in-class critique and class participation

**Criterion**

This assessment task reviews students' participation and performance in discussions, debates and peer critique during the tutorial sessions. The evidence of 'negotiation', the sign of discovery, lies in students' pre-class preparation and interpersonal sensitivity to his/her peer members.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, strong ability to stimulate and positively steer class discussion.
- Evidence of extensive pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports.
- Readiness to share informed personal insights.
- Constructively critical, thus facilitating the discovery of new issues.

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

- Active in-class participation, positive listening, ability to initiate and contribute to class discussion.
- Adequate pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports.

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

- Attentive in in-class participation, listening with comprehension, infrequent contribution.
- Adequate pre-class preparation and familiarity with peer reports.

**Marginal (D)**

- Unmotivated to participate in in-class discussion.
- Inadequate pre-class preparation.

**Failure (F)**

- Unwilling to participate in in-class discussion even when requested by the instructor.
- No evidence of pre-class preparation.

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**Assessment Task**

2. Assessment of Log Book

**Criterion**

The evidence of 'discovery' lies in the students' demonstrated ability to address and approach problems in multiple perspectives, and to provide illuminating documentation of the research or problem-solving process.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

- Rich content, excellent ability to interpret and integrate various resources
- Rigorous organization, coherent structure, systematic composition
- Precision in argument, well defined and reasoned points of view grounded in insightful interpretation of existing literature
- Readiness to respond to peer opinion and other views initiated in class discussion
- Discussion shed light on new dimensions of the issue

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

- Adequate content, sufficient ability to integrate various resources based on demand
- Reasonable organization with balanced structure and composition
- Clear elaboration of ideas that sticks to the point, with clearly differentiated issues, ability to interpret opinions independently
- Sufficient responses to peer comments to sustain a discussion

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

- Adequate content, fair ability to integrate various resources based on demand
- Fair organization with adequate structure and composition
- Relevant points made to the subject matter in question
- Ability to respond to other statements and engage in class discussion

**Marginal (D)**

- Weak content, limited use of resources
- Poor organization, structure and composition
- Relevant points to the subject matter, marginal ability to interpret opinions
- Ability to respond to other comments in simple terms

**Failure (F)**

- Inadequate content, no/ irrelevant use of resources
- No organization, structure or/and composition
- Irrelevant points to the subject matter, no ability to interpret opinions
- Fail to respond to other comments

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**Assessment Task**

3. Assessment of Projects

**Criterion**

Students should demonstrate ability to utilize primary and secondary sources, execute creative ideas and projects. The threshold of 'discovery' lies in a student's proactively turning theory into praxis, to transform course material into self-owned authorship.

**Excellent (A+, A, A-)**

- Work has strong affective quality and the articulation of personal styles and signature.
- Excellent appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium.
- Refined execution, evidence of a high level of technical competency.
- Highly efficient adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available with constructive adjustment.

**Good (B+, B, B-)**

- Strong appreciation, exploration and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium.
- Successful execution, evidence of a satisfactory level of technical competency.
- Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available and constructive feedback/ suggestions

**Fair (C+, C, C-)**

- Basic appreciation and/or application of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium.
- Evidence of an adequate level of technical competency.
- Proper adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

**Marginal (D)**

- Marginal appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the medium
- Limited adjustment of plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available

**Failure (F)**

- Little to no appreciation of the aesthetics and expressive qualities of the medium.
- Fail to adjust plans and strategies in response to resources (time, space, equipment, etc) available.

**Additional Information for AR**

All A+/A/A- grade assignment should comply with the highest performance of Discovery-oriented learning.

**Part III Other Information****Keyword Syllabus**

The history of sound art; auditory culture; music, sound, noise and silence; virtual sonic space and the recording studio; the conceptual turn in sound; radio and the materiality of sound; musique concrete; acoustic ecology; experiments in notation, sound sculpture; non-cochlear sonic art.

**Reading List****Compulsory Readings**

	Title
1	Bull, M & Back, L. (eds) 2003. The Auditory Culture Reader. New York: Berg.
2	Cox, C. & Warner, D. (eds.), 2004. Audio Culture. New York: Continuum.
3	LaBelle, B., 2006. Background noise: perspectives on sound art. New York: Continuum International.
4	Augoyard, J. & Torgue H. (eds.), 2006. Sonic Experience: a Guide to Everyday Sounds. Montreal and Kingston, London: McGill-Queen's University Press.
5	Attali, J., 1985. Noise: The Political Economy of Music. University of Minnesota Press.
6	Blessner, B. & Salter, L. (eds.), 2009. Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture. Cambridge: MIT Press.
7	LaBelle, B., 2010. Acoustic Territories / Sound Culture and Everyday Life. New York: Continuum International.
8	Cage, J., 1961. Silence. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
9	Emmerson, S. (ed.), 1986. The Language of Electroacoustic Music. Palgrave Macmillan,
10	Hegarty, P., 2007. Noise / Music: A History. New York: Continuum.
11	Kahn, D., 1999. Noise Water Meat: a History of Sound in the Arts. Cambridge: MIT Press.
12	Manning, P., 2004. Electronic and Computer Music. Oxford University Press.
13	Martin, E. (ed.), 1994. Architecture as a Translation of Music. Princeton Architectural Press.
14	Nattiez, J.J., 1990. Music and Discourse. Princeton University Press.
15	Roads, Curtis, 2001. Microsound. Cambridge: MIT Press.
16	Russolo, L., 1986. The Art of Noises (1916); trans. Barclay Brown. New York: Pendragon Press.
17	Schafer, Murray, 1977. Soundscape. Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World. New York: Destiny Books.
18	Strunk, O., 1998. Source readings in Music History, Volume 7, The Twentieth Century. New York and London: W. W. Norton.
19	Thompson, E., 2002. The Soundscape of Modernity. Cambridge: MIT Press.

**Additional Readings**

	Title
1	Nil