



MUS 211

Sound Cultures

S1 Day 2018

Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Lecturer

Andrew Alter

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Contact via email

Rm 169, Building Y3A

Any time by appointment

Credit points

3

Prerequisites

12cp at 100 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

One of the most distinctive features of the modern world is its sonic environment. Since the late 19th century we have been able to store and circulate sound on a mass scale, producing a sonic environment that is louder, more saturated and increasingly heterogeneous. We are overloaded with sound, making it one of the fastest growing causes of environmental pollution. Today we inhabit multiple and overlapping sonic worlds in a way once unimaginable. We define ourselves and our space acoustically and some of our most profound experiences are sonic. However while scholars have long meditated on things visual, the invisible world of sound has been barely explored. We will examine various aspects of sound, including its relationship with power, politics and technology. We explore what is unique about sonic experience; the history of sound; the production, distribution and consumption of sound; sound and music; sound and image; and sound and embodiment. We analyse the ways in which sonic experience challenges fundamental assumptions that underpin cultural studies including the mind/body split and the cultural construction of identity. This unit draws on a range of disciplines including sociology, media and performance studies, making it relevant to filmmakers, musicians, sound recordists, listeners, writers and to anyone wanting to deepen their understanding of human communication.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Demonstrate understanding for the history of recorded sound and familiarity with a wide variety of illustrative examples.

Evaluate, synthesise and analyse scholarly literature on sound cultures within the areas of critical theory, sociality, signification and aesthetic value.

Communicate (in either performative, oral and/or written form) a clear and coherent exposition of the theoretical and analytical knowledge of the field.

Apply knowledge and ideas from the literature to the context of sound and popular music in the contemporary world.

General Assessment Information

Assessment Standards and the MQ Assessment Policy

Assessment standards in this unit align with the University's grade descriptors, available at: <http://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/assessment>

Late Submission Penalty

“Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.”

Requesting a Remark

See the following MMCCS Session Re-mark Application Form: <http://www.mq.edu.au/pubstatic/public/download/?id=167914>

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Short Answer Task	20%	No	4 April
Group Sound Project	30%	No	23 May
Research Essay	50%	No	6 June

Short Answer Task

Due: **4 April**

Weighting: **20%**

Submit this assessment using the Turnitin link provided on the iLearn site for this unit.

A list of short answer questions related to the concepts discussed in the lectures and readings for Weeks 1 - 5 will be provided in Week 4 via the iLearn site. Provide a short answer to each of the questions as required.

Assessment Criteria

- Are the concepts within the readings/lectures summarized appropriately?
- Is the language used clear and concise?

On successful completion you will be able to:

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Group Sound Project

Due: **23 May**

Weighting: **30%**

During weeks 8 - 10 students will be formed into small groups during the tutorial session. Each group will create a "Sonic Idea" for presentation in Week 11. The Sonic Idea may take different forms depending on the group's interests and skills. Ideas might be inspired by one of the following:

- A musical event based on chance and random sound generation in some way (i.e. ideas of John Cage).
- A live performance of music and sound effects to a short film clip.
- A live ensemble performance using found objects.
- An organized piece created using field recordings of some kind (i.e. bird songs; urban sounds, etc...)
- A plan for an installation sound project - the presentation need not create the actual installation, but can simply be a description of the intention and structure of the installation/event.
- Your own idea

Projects will be performed (or presented) in the tutorial sessions for Week 11. In addition, each student will submit a personal reflection of 500 words length on their project. The personal reflection should: 1) describe the project/event; 2) explain the ways sound were created and structured in the event; and 3) briefly identify other inspirations that influenced the task. These may be other sound projects, other compositions or written sources of some kind.

Assessment Criteria

- Did the Sonic Idea demonstrate a high level of creative thinking?
- Did the presentation reveal a coherent overall structural plan?
- Did the presentation illustrate a high level of collaboration amongst the group members?
- Did the reflective piece appropriately and coherently summarize the project?

On successful completion you will be able to:

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- Apply knowledge and ideas from the literature to the context of sound and popular music in the contemporary world.

Research Essay

Due: **6 June**

Weighting: **50%**

A series of questions will be uploaded to iLearn by Week 7 of the term. Write a 2000 word research essay in response to one of the questions given. Questions will require students to more fully explore one of the concepts from the Topic List for the semester. Students should read the questions carefully to answer the specific issue being raised.

Assessment Criteria

- Does the essay demonstrate an understanding for key debates, theories and perspectives related to the question chose?
- Does the essay synthesize material from a variety of sources in a logical fashion?
- Does the essay apply knowledge and ideas from relevant literature to the context of sound and popular music in the contemporary world?
- Is the language of the essay clear and does the essay use appropriate academic style?

On successful completion you will be able to:

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- Apply knowledge and ideas from the literature to the context of sound and popular music in the contemporary world.

Delivery and Resources

Lectures and tutorials for the unit are compulsory. Lectures for the unit are at 9 am on Wednesdays in Building Y3A, Rm 212. Tutorials are in room 211, although some sessions will be held elsewhere as announced.

Yes, there are tutorials in Week 1! Some of these may be combined with another unit to show students the facilities available for performance.

The reading list for the unit has been constructed using the Library's Leganto system. The iLearn site for the unit contains a link to the appropriate reading for each week's topic.

Announcements for the unit will be made using the iLearn site. Please ensure that you receive (and read!) the emails that will be generated through the announcement system.

The Assessment section of the iLearn website contains the Turnitin link for the submission of each assignment.

Unit Schedule

MUS 211 “Sound Cultures” Topic Schedule

Week 1 (28/2): Introduction

Week 2 (7/3): Acoustic Realities and Electronic Modifications

Week 3 (14/3): Sound and Hearing: The World of Listening

Week 4 (21/3): Sound and Power

Week 5 (28/3): Preserving Dead Voices: Archiving Sound

Week 6 (4/4): Sound and Environments

Week 7 (11/4): Intonation and Sound Waves: Different Global Experiences

Mid-Term Break

Week 8 (2/5): Sound Futures: Installations and Interactive Spaces

Week 9 (9/5): Sonic Textures

Week 10 (16/5): Digital Disruption: Democratised Recording and Production

Week 11 (23/5): Sound and Gender

Week 12 (30/5): Sounds, Refrains and Territory: On Philosophies of Sound

Week 13 (6/6): Music and Sound: The Research World

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central\)](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](#)
- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#) (**Note:** *The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.*)

Undergraduate students seeking more policy resources can visit the [Student Policy Gateway](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway>). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit [Policy Central](http://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central) (<http://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central>).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/study/getting-started/student-conduct>

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Communicate (in either performative, oral and/or written form) a clear and coherent exposition of the theoretical and analytical knowledge of the field.
- Apply knowledge and ideas from the literature to the context of sound and popular music in the contemporary world.

Assessment task

- Group Sound Project

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Evaluate, synthesise and analyse scholarly literature on sound cultures within the areas of critical theory, sociality, signification and aesthetic value.
- Apply knowledge and ideas from the literature to the context of sound and popular music in the contemporary world.

Assessment tasks

- Group Sound Project
- Research Essay

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally

and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Evaluate, synthesise and analyse scholarly literature on sound cultures within the areas of critical theory, sociality, signification and aesthetic value.
- Communicate (in either performative, oral and/or written form) a clear and coherent exposition of the theoretical and analytical knowledge of the field.

Assessment task

- Group Sound Project

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

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- Communicate (in either performative, oral and/or written form) a clear and coherent exposition of the theoretical and analytical knowledge of the field.
- Apply knowledge and ideas from the literature to the context of sound and popular music in the contemporary world.

Assessment tasks

- Short Answer Task
- Group Sound Project
- Research Essay

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to

critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate understanding for the history of recorded sound and familiarity with a wide variety of illustrative examples.
- Evaluate, synthesise and analyse scholarly literature on sound cultures within the areas of critical theory, sociality, signification and aesthetic value.
- Communicate (in either performative, oral and/or written form) a clear and coherent exposition of the theoretical and analytical knowledge of the field.
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Assessment tasks

- Short Answer Task
- Group Sound Project
- Research Essay

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

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- Communicate (in either performative, oral and/or written form) a clear and coherent exposition of the theoretical and analytical knowledge of the field.
- Apply knowledge and ideas from the literature to the context of sound and popular music in the contemporary world.

Assessment tasks

- Group Sound Project
- Research Essay

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Demonstrate understanding for the history of recorded sound and familiarity with a wide variety of illustrative examples.
- Evaluate, synthesise and analyse scholarly literature on sound cultures within the areas of critical theory, sociality, signification and aesthetic value.
- Communicate (in either performative, oral and/or written form) a clear and coherent exposition of the theoretical and analytical knowledge of the field.

Assessment tasks

- Short Answer Task
- Research Essay

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Assessment task

- Group Sound Project

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Communicate (in either performative, oral and/or written form) a clear and coherent exposition of the theoretical and analytical knowledge of the field.