



AVT 374.001/474.001 | Spring 2014 | 4 credits | Syllabus
Instructor: Thomas Stanley | tstanle1@gmu.edu
Office Hours: T (1:30 -2:30) by appt. | AB 2014
T 1:30-4:15 | AB 1007

Sound Art I and II

This class is an attempt to introduce sound as an artistic material focusing on the expressive possibilities of sound in context. Our encounters with sound always occur in a particular context. Rather than restrict our attention to the relation of sound to any one particular context (e.g., installation/networked media/cinema/video), this course will address itself to the communicative properties of sound as such and will attempt to develop competencies for manipulating and deploying sound that are (hopefully) relevant to any number of contextual applications. We *will* explore the physics, phenomenology, sociology, and bioacoustics of sound with an understanding that theory grounds practice.

This class is *not* software-driven. Students will be introduced to and have ample opportunity to gain proficiency with a number of different tools for working with sound. Students are encouraged to pick the right tool for the job and to be fearless in pursuing new and alternative tools to fit their (creative, economic, professional) needs. **You will be graded on the quality of your work, not the tools you use to create it.**

Course Objectives:

Students who complete this course should be better able to:

- > Critically appreciate the potency of sound as an expressive force.
- > Create novel sound instrumentalities and deploy these artistically.
- > Create novel interactivity between sound and events.
- > Work collaboratively.
- > Discuss sound in language consistent with current standards of digital sound production.
- > Discuss the social theory of intentional sound particularly as this theory relates to the still somewhat inchoate domain of sound art.
- > Discuss and operate within sound art as a domain of contemporary practice having certain institutional and definitional constraints.

Lab Time:

Labs in the School of Art Building will be open during the week. Opening times will be posted every two weeks. Additional facilities are available at the Johnson Center. The Johnson Center facilities are separate from the Fine Arts Building facilities and are administered through a separate office. Please contact the Johnson Center facilities concerning lab hours and policies. **The School of Art has a dedicated ProTools-based audio lab located in AB 1008** that may be appropriate for projects in this course. Access to this lab will be provided according to a protocol that your instructor will describe in class.

Required Texts and Supplies:

There are **no mandatory texts** for this class. All readings will be available in the reserve system of the Johnson Center Library and/or in class and/or on-line. If students have digital sound recorders (including cell phones and camcorders), there will be ample opportunities to use them. **A good set of headphones is required.** This does *not* need to be an expensive set of headphones, but most **in-ear type buds are inadequate** for our purposes. An **external hard drive will be needed** to store and transport your work and enable you to work away from the lab. **Wii remote controllers** can be used with MAX to create motion sensitive sonic instruments. If you want to try this, you'll need your own controller. Students are also encouraged to download a non-beta (but recent) version of **Audacity**, a flexible, versatile, open source digital production software.

Attendance:

This is a studio class and your grade is a composite of completed assignments and effective utilization of in-class time. Poor attendance will therefore necessarily have a negative impact on a student's grade. Attendance is taken at every class. One unexcused absence is permitted per semester. Each unexcused absence beyond that will result in a reduction of one letter grade. This means that even with perfect performance, four unexcused absences would make a passing (D or better) grade impossible. Students are expected to be on time and do course-related work the entire class. It is possible that course assignments will send students out into the campus community or the larger world to collect data or perform artistic interventions. At all such times, students are expected to conduct themselves lawfully, within complete abidance of all university policies, and with full respect for the humans, animals, and environments impacted by the student's work.

Students are responsible for missed assignments, lectures, and quizzes. Students should contact a fellow student for missed assignments. Do not contact the instructor for missed assignments.

Materials of a Potentially Objectionable Nature and Classroom Civility:

This is an advanced undergraduate/graduate level course and we may be viewing or reading materials that some students find distressing or objectionable. These materials are presented as part of the educational process and not for any sensationalist value they may have. If these concerns apply to you, please see the instructor at the beginning of the term and we will explore our alternatives. Similarly, classroom discussions may enter controversial areas about which students and/or the instructor feel strongly. In these instances and all others, it is expected that students and the instructor should express their disagreement with the highest level of mutual respect and academic decorum.

Project Portfolios:

Because this class must accommodate graduate students and undergraduates as well as an introductory and advanced level of curriculum, **you will not all be doing the same work**. The beginning of the semester will be spent with the instructor developing an **individualized written portfolio contract** describing the work that each student will be graded on. In general, the work included in the portfolio can be expected to be drawn from the following categories:

- (1) **Production Practica**. These are guided assignments of a practical nature. In most cases students will be given sound files and asked to perform some editing and processing tasks preliminary to the applied use of those sounds. **Everyone will do at least one of these.**
- (2) **Instrument Construction (mechanical)**. Students are asked to build something that generates sound that can be used in an artistic context. Options include (but are not limited to) sound sculptures and circuit bending. Grades will be based on creativity of concept, effectiveness of execution, and some qualitative assessment of the sounds produced. **All undergraduate students and level II will do this.**
- (3) **Instrument Construction (digital)**. Students are asked to use software that generates sound that can be used in an artistic context. Grading criteria is identical to that for mechanical instruments. **All level II students will do this.**
- (4) **Installation (non-site specific)**. Student is expected to install a sound-based work. Instructor will help student identify and access appropriate locations. **All students will do this or the site specific version.**
- (5) **Installation (site specific)**. Student is expected to install a sound-based work that makes use of the sounds found at the site of installation. Instructor will help student identify and access appropriate locations.
- (6) **Open (individual)**. This is a project that a single student conceptualizes and develops using any sound producing modalities that the student feels are appropriate. **Everyone will do at least one of these. At least one of these must utilize the student's instrument.**
- (7) **Open (collaborative)**. This is a project to which more than one student makes a substantial contribution. Students participating in the same collaborative project need not necessarily receive the same grade. **Everyone will do at least one of these.**
- (8) **Open (performative)**. Several Fridays during the course of the semester will be designated for sound based performance. While these nights will follow an open-mic format, they are intended to showcase performed instances of what can authentically be described as sound art and are not suitable forums for your favorite band or other more "musical" offerings. **All students are expected to participate (as performers and/or organizers) in Noise Awareness Day activities.**

Critiques:

Critiques are performed by the class and instructor in a collegial and constructive setting. On "critique days" in all members of the class must be prepared to present their work in whatever stage of completion it is in at the time. Critiques do not result in a grade, but should provide enough feedback for students to gauge their incremental progress.

Grading:

80% of your grade is based on your **project portfolio**.

20% of your grade is based on a **readings and lectures exam** administered at the end of the semester.

Schedule:

All students will meet in AB 1007 unless otherwise directed.
Your Project Portfolios must be submitted for grading by April 29.
Your exam is administered on the last scheduled day of class, April 29.

University and School of Art Policies

In accordance with George Mason University policy, **turn off all beepers, cellular telephones and other wireless communication devices at the start of class.** The instructor of the class will keep his/her cell phone active to assure receipt of any Mason Alerts in a timely fashion; or in the event that the instructor does not have a cell phone, he/she will designate one student to keep a cell phone active to receive such alerts.

Commitment to Diversity

This class will be conducted as an *intentionally* inclusive community that celebrates diversity and welcomes the participation in the life of the university of faculty, staff and students who reflect the diversity of our plural society. All may feel free to speak and to be heard without fear that the content of the opinions they express will bias the evaluation of their academic performance or hinder their opportunities for participation in class activities. In turn, all are expected to be respectful of each other without regard to race, class, linguistic background, religion, political beliefs, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, veteran's status, or physical ability.

Statement on Ethics in Teaching and Practicing Art and Design

As professionals responsible for the education of undergraduate and graduate art and design students, the faculty of the School of Art adheres to the ethical standards and practices incorporated in the professional Code of Ethics of our national accreditation organization, The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD).

Open Studio Hours

SOA teaching studios are open to students for extended periods of time mornings, evenings and weekends whenever classes are not in progress. Policies, procedures and schedules for studio use are established by the SOA studio faculty and are posted in the studios.

ArtsBus - Dates for Spring 2014

February 22
March 22
April 19

ArtsBus Credit

- Each SoA major must have up to 5 AVT 300/Artsbus credits before graduation. For credit to appear on your transcript you must enroll in AVT 300. This also applies to anyone who intends to travel to New York independently, or do the DC Alternate Assignment.
- If you plan/need to go on multiple ArtsBus trips during a semester and need them towards your total requirement, you must enroll in multiple sections of AVT 300. Please go to the ArtsBus website: <http://artsbus.gmu.edu> "Student Information" for additional, very important information regarding ArtsBus policy.
- Non-AVT majors taking art classes do not need Artsbus credit for graduation **BUT** may need to go on the Artsbus for a class assignment. You can either sign up for AVT 300 or buy a ticket for the bus trip at the Center of the Arts. Alternate trips must be approved by the instructor of the course that is requiring an ArtsBus trip.

Visual Voices Lecture Series Spring 2014

Visual Voices is a year-long series of lectures by artists, art historians and others about contemporary art and art practice. Visual Voices lectures are held on Thursday evenings from 7:20- 9:00 p.m. in Harris Theater.

January 21, Syllabus Review Linton

February 6, Dale Culleton; *Improvising a Living Beyond the Studio*
February 13, Adel Iskandor; *Activist Arabia: Revolt as Medium, Street as Canvas*
February 27, Monica Amor; *Lygia Clark: Object to Subject*
March 30, Margery Amdur; *Between my Selves*

Important Deadlines

Last Day to Add **Tuesday, January 28**
Last Day to Drop (No Tuition Penalty) **Tuesday, January 28**
Selective Withdrawal Period – **February 24-March 16**
Incomplete work from Fall 2013 due to instructor- **Friday March 28**

Once the add and drop deadlines have passed, instructors do not have the authority to approve requests from students to add or drop/withdraw late. Requests for *late adds* (up until the last day of classes) must be made by the student in the SOA office (or the office of the department offering the course), and generally are only approved in the case of a documented university error (such as a problem with financial aid being processed), LATE ADD fee will apply. Requests for non-selective *withdrawals* and *retroactive adds* (adds after the last day of classes) must be approved by the academic dean of the college in which the student's major is located. For AVT majors, that is the CVPA Office of Academic Affairs, Performing Arts Building A407.

Students with Disabilities and Learning Differences

If you have a diagnosed disability or learning difference and you need academic accommodations, please inform me at the beginning of the semester and contact the Disabilities Resource Center (SUB I room 234, 703-993-2474). You must provide me with a faculty contact sheet from that office outlining the accommodations needed for your disability or learning difference. All academic accommodations must be arranged in advance through the DRC.

Official Communications via GMU E-Mail

Mason uses electronic mail to provide official information to students. Examples include communications from course instructors, notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account, and are required to activate that account and check it regularly.

Attendance Policies

Students are expected to attend the class periods of the courses for which they register. In-class participation is important not only to the individual student, but also to the class as a whole. Because class participation may be a factor in grading, instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation. Students who miss an exam with an acceptable excuse may be penalized according to the individual instructor's grading policy, as stated in the course syllabus.

Honor Code

Students in this class are bound by the Honor Code, as stated in the George Mason University Catalog. The honor code requires that the work you do as an individual be the product of your own individual synthesis or integration of ideas. (This does not prohibit collaborative work when it is approved by your instructor.) As a faculty member, I have an obligation to refer the names of students who may have violated the Honor Code to the Student Honor Council, which treats such cases very seriously.

No grade is important enough to justify cheating, for which there are serious consequences that will follow you for the rest of your life. If you feel unusual pressure about your grade in this or any other course, please talk to me or to a member of the GMU Counseling Center staff.

Using someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit is *plagiarism*, a very serious Honor Code offense. It is very important to understand how to prevent committing plagiarism when using material from a source. If you wish to quote verbatim, you must use the exact words and punctuation just as the passage appears in the original and must use quotation marks and page numbers in your citation. If you want to paraphrase or summarize ideas from a source, you must put the ideas into your own words, and you must cite the source, using the APA or MLA format. (For assistance with documentation, I recommend Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*.) The exception to this rule is information termed *general knowledge*—information that is widely known and stated in a number of sources. Determining what is general knowledge can be complicated, so the wise course is, "When in doubt, cite."

Be especially careful when using the Internet for research. Not all Internet sources are equally reliable; some are just plain wrong. Also, since you can download text, it becomes very easy to inadvertently plagiarize. If you use an Internet source, you must cite the exact URL in your paper and include with it the last date that you successfully accessed the site.

Writing Center

Students who are in need of intensive help with grammar, structure or mechanics in their writing should make use of the services of Writing Center, located in Robinson A116 (703-993-1200). The services of the Writing Center are available by appointment, online and, occasionally, on a walk-in basis.

The Collaborative Learning Hub

Located in Johnson Center 311 (703-993-3141), the lab offers in-person one-on-one support for the Adobe Creative Suite, Microsoft Office, Blackboard, and a variety of other software. Dual monitor PCs make the lab ideal for collaborating on group projects, Macs are also available; as well as a digital recording space, collaborative tables, and a SMART Board. Free workshops are also available (Adobe and Microsoft) through Training and Certification; visit ittraining.gmu.edu to see the schedule of workshops and to sign up.