University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 491 L01: Introduction to Acoustic Communications and Acoustic Ecology

FALL 2021: September 7 to December 9 (excluding Sept. 30 and Nov. 7-13)

Lecture: TR 11-12:15

Delivery is online, via Zoom.

Class meetings are synchronous; some assignments will require time outside of class. Readings and PowerPoint slides will be accessible to students in different time zones.

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR ONLINE COURSE DELIVERY

Asynchronous & Synchronous Course Components: Please read this outline carefully to see which course components will be offered synchronously (where you are expected to participate in person or online at the usual scheduled course time) and which components will be offered asynchronously (to be completed on your own time). Synchronous sessions hosted on Zoom can be accessed on D2L by clicking on the Communications tab and selecting Zoom.

Note: If you will not be able to participate in synchronous in-class or online class sessions owing to time differences or geographical location, then consult with the instructor to see if accommodation is possible or arrange to take this course in a future term.

Instructor:	Dr. Marcia Epstein
Office:	SS 316
Email:	epstein@ucalgary.ca
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	10-11 TR online, or at the end of class: **By appointment** (*let me know the time you need*)

Course Description
Concepts, techniques and applications of the fields of Acoustic Communications (the ways in which speech and music convey meaning) and Acoustic Ecology (the effects of sound in natural and human environments). These interdisciplinary areas weave together communication theory, cognitive psychology, sociology, musicology, physical sciences, health sciences and aesthetics.

Course Hours:3 units; (3-0)
Antirequisite(s): *Credit for* **Communication and Media Studies 491** *and* **401**.12 *will not be allowed.*

In an increasingly noisy and visually oriented culture, are we losing the ability to access information about the world through hearing? What are the implications of sound for communication and learning? What is a soundscape? What is acoustemology?

Acoustic Ecology (AE) studies the effects of sound -- including speech, music, noise, and silence -- in natural and human environments, as well as its effects on health, cognition and culture. It is an interdisciplinary field which weaves together aspects of physical sciences, health sciences, communication theory, cognitive psychology, sociology, musicology and aesthetics.

The field of Acoustic Communications (AC) is concerned with the ways in which speech, sound, music and silence convey meaning.

This course will provide an introduction to selected concepts, techniques and applications from AE and AC.

Additional Information

- The weekly schedule of topics and readings, with instructions, can be found on D2L.
- Some class time on Zoom will be re-allocated to project group meetings or to assignments that require time outside of class: see Schedule on D2L.
- Because this course is about sound and listening, please let me know on the first day of classes if you have a significant hearing impairment.
- If you are in a remote time zone *outside of North America*, let me know before classes start. Some synchronous material can be recorded. However, it is preferable to attend whenever you can in order to participate in discussions.

Objectives of the Course

Participants will be expected to demonstrate the following skills upon completion of the course:

- Ability to learn and use descriptive terminology and observation techniques for environmental sound;
- Ability to perceive and describe a variety of acoustic environments;
- Demonstrable familiarity with concepts and issues presented in the course, including those related to acoustic communications and auditory culture;
- Ability to conceptualize, plan and complete individual and group assignments;
- Ability to write clearly and cogently

Readings
All readings will be from open Internet sources or my own work.

- "Epstein Readings" posted on the course site in D2L

- Articles on the website of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology (WFAE): http://ecoear.proscenia.net/wfaelibrary/library/articles/index.html
  Recommended listening:
- Sound Blogs http://soundexplorations.blogspot.ca/
- Earth Ear: http://earthear.com/acousticecology.html

Internet and electronic communication device information

- You will need access to Zoom through D2L on any device available to you. Zoom can be glitchy for everyone: it works best if participants mute the audio when not speaking. If there are technical problems, please contact *itsupport@ucalgary.ca.*
- *Phones and pagers must be turned off during class* unless you are a health care or law enforcement professional with credentials, or responsible for the care of a dependent family member.
- *Be aware that recent research shows that taking lecture notes on a keyboard produces results that are inferior to handwriting:* http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/?&WT.mc_id=SA_MB_20140604
  and
  http://pss.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/04/22/0956797614524581.abstract

Learning Technologies and Requirements

In order to complete online (or blended) courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:
- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external), and a microphone and speaker (built-in or external) or headset with microphone.

If you have technical difficulties, contact IT support services. See https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html

Assignments (see instructions below)	Due	Value
Listening Exercise 1:	28 Sept.	10%
Group Project Plan:	26 Oct.	10%
Listening Exercise 2:	25 Nov.	20%
Group presentations		
(Video with PowerPoint):	18 -30 Nov.	20%
Group project document (sources, comments):	TBA by 2 Dec.	10%
Participation		

(Discussion board posts re: discussions,
presentations; more details provided in class):   9 Dec   10%
Directed Essay: (2-4 pages, with choice of questions)   9 Dec   20%

Note: You will be graded on the results of your work. Hard work does not merit an A unless it produces outstanding results.

Instructions for Assignments

Listening Exercises 1 and 2:

> ***1. Soundwalk.*** Take a 20-minute or longer walk in a place of your choice, alone and without any devices in or over your ears (earbuds, etc.). Make a list of what you hear, what the source of each sound is (if you can identify it), and how it makes you feel (Emotions? Memories? Annoyance? Pleasure? Surprises?). Pausing with closed eyes can help clarify the sounds. **Write a report**, submit on **D2L Discussion Board** (open for sharing**). Length:** 1-2 pages, double or 1.5 spaced. **Title** your report with: Your surname – Listening 1.
>
> ***2.* Listen to a live, recorded or broadcast performance** of music or theatre (dance is good, too, if you concentrate on how the dancers work with the music). **Write a report** on what you noticed, based on the skills acquired in this course and your prior experience (raving about your favourite band or hip-hop artist is discouraged: try something new to you). Referring to material in the course readings will help (*hint!*)*.* **Post the report on D2L Dropbox** (and optionally on D2L Discussion Board for sharing).
>   **Specify:**Title of event, date, source or URL if available. **Length:** 1-2 pages, double or 1.5 spaced.
> **Title** your post with (your surname, forename) – Listening 2

Group Projects must be done in groups of 3 or 4 self-chosen members. Group formation will take place in October (see Schedule) on Zoom: Breakout rooms will be arranged by topic interest for the purpose. The D2L group formation tool can arrange 'group lockers' if needed; otherwise Google Docs can be used. Anyone unable to choose by November 5 will be automatically assigned to a group.

> *Project Plan:* This is a preliminary plan for your research project, including a statement of what you are investigating, what sources and methods you will use, how you plan to divide and carry out the work involved, and how you will ensure that work is fairly divided and that all group members do their share. Each group member should contribute at least two entries to the list of sources.
> Length: avg. 3-4 pages.

Topics will be chosen by each group in consultation with all members of the group and cleared with the instructor. Each group will choose a focus in AE (fieldwork) or AC (research), and prepare:

- a plan of research or investigation with an annotated bibliography (AC) or detailed list (AE) of preliminary sources; and
- a video presentation to the class followed by a brief written document (see below)

Topic areas for projects *(topics will develop from these general categories):*

Speech – as carrier of information, emotion, or means of identity or discrimination
Music – as communication, inspiration, remedy, relaxation, and/or addiction
Noise – as celebration, protest, territorial boundary, and/or hazard to health
Silence – as contemplation or restriction

All topics must be cleared with the instructor; specific advice will be given to each group about methodology.

Examples of topics:

AE: You may choose to describe and sound-map a place (e.g., business, neighbourhood, restaurant, rink). This usually involves a focus on environmental Noise or Music, or perhaps Silence. Comparing two or more examples can be a feasible approach; so can interviewing employees or residents about their reactions to the soundscape.

AC: Research for Speech can be focused on history (e.g., radio in WW2), sociology (e.g.. how the voice changes in gender reassignment), or biology (e.g., how birds communicate). Research for Music will focus on music as communication of information or emotion (but not the merits of your favourite band, please). Research for Silence can involve historical or biological approaches (e.g., the effects of quiet environments on stress reduction).

Topics about film soundtracks –Music and/or Speech --require at least one Film Studies student in your group; topics about Music require at least one group member with some training in music as a performer or student.

Virtual Presentation (in class): Each group will present on Zoom, explaining their topic-related findings, research methods, and using audio and visual materials that will enhance the class's understanding of the project. *Formatting options:*
Video, or Powerpoint with live narration. Powerpoints may include written commentary for slides. Sound files must be included in any case, with all items credited to sources.
Length of presentation: 15 minutes on average. Variants can be arranged.

- *Each posted project must be followed by a brief Project Document, submitted separately within 3 days to the **D2L Dropbox**. It will contain:*
  -a bibliography of all written and "clipped" sources, including audio, video, and film sources.
  -a statement from each group member of what you learned from doing the project.
- Please label your file with the surname of one group member: (COMS 491-Maftabandysak Group). The names of *all* group members must be on the first page of the document in alphabetical order by surname (for convenience: it speeds the recording of scores).

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No
All assignments and exams must normally be completed to pass the course. If you become ill, exceptions can be made by individual arrangement.

Submission of Assignments
All submissions are through D2L, either Discussion Board or D2L Dropbox. Please know which one to use (see instructions). Please *do not use email* for submitting assignments, as they can get lost in the avalanche.

Department Regulations
It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.
For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

Policy for Late Assignments

If you know that the assignment is going to be late for a good reason (Illness? Disabling stress? Pandemic home-schooling responsibilities?), *please ask for an extension before it's due, if possible.*

Late submissions *without an extension,* and those submitted after a granted extension deadline, will have 2 points deducted from their scores for each weekday late. For example, a 20-point assignment with an initial score of 18 points submitted a week late would be deducted ten points, for a total of 8/20 points.

Student Accommodations

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability

should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. If the illness is symptomatic COVID-19, let your instructor know immediately so that an extension can be arranged.

Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html

Grading & Grade Scale of the Department of Communication, Media and Film
The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, assignments will be graded using raw scores (e.g., a score out of 15 for an assignment worth 15 /100 of the final grade)

The following grade scale percentage equivalents are used in the Department.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%

1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

Note: Each assignment will be scored on a numerical point system. Letter grades will not be used until the end of term, and scores will be given final a evaluation before they're finalized.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin**. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect

Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course

section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics

If you plan to conduct any interviews with people or observations of them for your Project, see your instructor about Ethics clearance.

Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar:* https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html

Student Support Services and Resources

Please visit https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students. IT support is available at itsupport@ucalgary.ca or by calling 403-220.5555.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Some lecture material will be posted in the form of Powerpoints and written commentary, and/or links to video clips. Most will occur "live" on Zoom.

9/7 Virtual Meet-Up for explaining course plans, checking in with questions about the course, tech, how the schedule will work, and what to do when Zoom is finicky. Also for just meeting up: what's your interest in the course? What do you notice when you're listening without distractions?

9/9 Introduction of concepts; acoustics, auditory system, psychoacoustics, acoustic ecology, acoustic communications, auditory culture; speech, music, noise, silence.

9/14 Hearing and Listening; noticing and describing sound, sound and silence, how sound communicates.

> *On WFAE website*: Copeland "Ten Questions"; Wrightson "An Introduction" , Westerkamp, "Listening to the Listening"
> http://ecoear.proscenia.net/wfaelibrary/library/articles/index.html

For the remaining schedule, see D2L in September.