

Listening In: The History of Radio [NCOM 3246 A - Spring,Online]

15-weeks online - undergraduate seminar

New School for Public Engagement | School of Media Studies

Online Professor: Joan Schuman

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Radio not only shapes culture, it is also shaped by it. This course examines 100 years of radio technology and the culture it has made possible. Explorations include the early years of amateur broadcasts of studio music and radio drama; war correspondents and partisan talk radio; public and community broadcasting and corporate monopolies; satellite radio and online streaming services; low-power narrow-casting (LPFM) and unlicensed micro-radio. Of particular focus is a contrast of these early and ongoing developments with current competition of public media and commercial podcasting. We investigate the relationships of producers and listeners to the evolving medium, how radio voices have challenged dominant cultural modes of speaking, and radio art and broadcasting experiments (through the air and on-site). Students gain understanding of mainstream and alternative radio by listening to different production techniques, researching and comparing programming styles, and exploring selected aspects of radio history in depth.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Students investigate how listeners and producers have related to and rebelled against the medium; how broadcast experiments have engaged with culture; and how radio history impacts contemporary communications media. Students are expected to utilize academic research, critical thinking and writing skills as they relate to assigned projects.

Learning Objective #1: Explore the nonlinear trajectory of trends rather than memorizing exact historical events in radio history.

Achieved: Students critically consider how styles of radio and urgent shifts in the media landscape relate to contemporary changes in current radio programming. Continued focus is spent on audiences, programmers and media owners (including commercial and public media) across eras.

Learning Objective #2: Consider specific themes in radio history.

Achieved: Students fully engage in weekly readings and listening assignments where they respond to instructor prompts and dialogue via in-class discussions across the semester.

Independent written assignments further invite in-depth consideration of radio themes and programming style explorations across history and contemporary radio culture.

Learning Objective #3: Compare production styles historically and in the contemporary radio landscape.

Achieved by transcribing all sonic elements of early and current radio programming and compare stylistic tactics, audience impact and media communications.

Learning Objective #4: Imagining a day of programming.

Achieved through the final project, which invites students to consider audiences, programming styles and media ownership issues as they create one 30-minute block of a radio or podcast program. Consideration of audience impact and media ownership is researched in an accompanying descriptive essay.

REQUIRED BOOK

[purchase at New School B&N, other online booksellers, or available at libraries]

***Radiotext(e)*, Neil Strauss/Dave Mandl, eds. (New York, NY: Semiotext(e) #16, Vol VI, Issue 1, 1993) - ISBN: 0-936756-94-2**

1000-POINT SCALE

- **IN-CLASS DISCUSSION POSTS: 300 points:** (six weeks - Weeks 2, 4, 6; and Weeks 10, 12, 14) - 50 points each
- **RADIO LANDSCAPE: 300 points** (three class presentations - Weeks 3, 7, 13) - 100 points each
- **RESPONSE ESSAYS: 200 points** (two written essays, 100 points apiece): Due Weeks 5 and 11 [**WEDNESDAY**]
- **TRANSCRIBING RADIO - WHAT DO YOU HEAR: 100 points:**
Due Week 8 [**WEDNESDAY**].
Students compare early radio scripts and transcribe all aspects of what they hear in several contemporary short radio pieces to listen deeply on and off the page.
- **FINAL PROGRAMMING PROJECT: 100 points.**
Due Week 16 [**WEDNESDAY**]
Creative radio programming design and analysis/comparison to earlier radio programming period.

Week-by-Week Schedule

SEMESTER SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

Week 1: Orientation

Canvas Online Learning Orientation & Class Introductions

- students have access to all class materials during orientation
- class introductions begin Thursday and continue through Sunday
- read all Class Policies (in Modules) and the Syllabus; review project assignments

Week 2: Communities, Disasters, Broadcasts

- "Radio Lessons for the Internet," Martin Spinelli, *Postmodern Culture*, 1996

- Titanic: 1912 "The Book of Radio, Charles William Taussig"; "American Gets Wireless News From New York Office"; "Keep Your Mouth Shut; Big Money for You,' Was Message to Hide News"

- Hindenburg: 1937 "Herb Morrison Reporting", Hindenburg disaster, WLS, Chicago

- Hurricane Katrina: "Dome City Radio goes live in Houston," *The Village Voice*, Sarah Ferguson, Sept. 13, 2005

- Tessie Word, *Convergence*, (13 min), 2014

- interview with Tessie Word, KBOO-FM (25 min), 2014

Week 3: Radio Landscape - Networking: In-class presentations - Small Groups

- "The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication," *Brecht on Theatre*, Bertolt Brecht (1932)

- President Johnson's remarks to Congress (1967)

- "Guerrilla Broadcasting: Guerrilla Radio & Guerrilla Television," in *Steal This Book*, Abbie Hoffman (1972)

- "Winter in America: What the FCC WBAI Decision Means for Community Radio in the Trump Era," *Medium*, Ernesto Aguilar (2017)
- "Changes to Radio National Are Gutting a Cultural Treasure Trove," Siobhan McHugh, *The Conversation*, (2016)
- "Fit the Description: (Ferguson, 9-13 August 2014)," Christopher DeLaurenti (length: 31:13) (2015)
- DeLaurenti interview (9 min) (2015)

Week 4: Race & Radio

- "Focus on sources' race won't be enough to close public radio's diversity deficit," Keith Woods, *Current*, 2016
- "Back to the Future," a manifesto by Al Letson, *Transom*, 2015
- "Chicago's Vocalo reins in eclectic approach but keeps focus on younger audience," Tyler Falk, *Current*, 2016
- "The History of Blackface," Ken Padgett, *Blackface!*
- "Merry Christmas from Superman, 1945," posted Dec. 22, 2015; "Hate mongers vs. refugees and minorities," posted Nov. 19, 2015, Bob Stepno, *Newspaper Heroes on the Air*
- "Amos 'n' Andy"; "The Beulah Show"
- "Prince and Philando and Futures Untold," Stacia Brown, *Scene on Radio*, Oct. 19, 2016 -*Rise of Charm City*
- programming at Vocalo 91.1 Chicago

Week 5: Response Essay: Radio Experiments

due **WEDNESDAY** by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Radiotext(e) readings

- Rudolf Arnheim: "In Praise of Blindness" (1936), p. 20
- Kurt Weill: "Radio and the Restructuring of Musical Life" (1926), p. 26
- Velimir Khlebnikov, "The Radio of the Future" (1921), p. 32
- Rev. Dwight Frizzell and Jay Mandeville: "Early Radio Bigwigs," p. 39
- The Hound, Rob Weisberg, Lorenzo Milam, Irwin Chusid: "Lives of Great DJs," p. 47
- G. Vassilatos: "Dreams of Space," p. 56
- "The Fight for the Future of NPR," Leon Neyfakh, *Slate*, April 10, 2016
- "Today's Public Media Fight Misses the Point," Melody Kramer, *Medium*, April 11, 2016
- "The Secret History of Podcasting," Benjamin Walker, *Theory of Everything* - Oct. 21, 2015 (37:41)

Week 6: Wars on the Air

- "The Personal is Political: The Political Economy of Noncommercial Radio Broadcasting in the US," *Monthly Review*, Robert McChesney, 2015
- "Radio and the Privatization of War," intro to Gerd Horten's *Radio Goes to War* (2002)
- WWII war reporting: Edward R. Murrow (10:43); Walter Winchell (10 minutes); Dorothy Thompson (13:48); "Soldiers of the Press" (12-minutes)
- "Yemen Airstrikes Punish Militants, and Civilians," Kelly McEvers, NPR's *All Things Considered*, July 6, 2012 (7:46)
- "Diary of a Bad Year," Kelly McEvers/Jay Allison, *Transom*, 6/25/13 (56:16)

Week 7: Radio Landscape - Information Sharing: In-class presentations - Small Groups

Radiotext(e) readings:

- "Jammers, Spookers, and Scramblers: Information War in the Ether," Mark Dery, p. 253
- "United States Office of Censorship: Code of Wartime Practices for American Broadcasters," 1942, p. 229
- "Broadcasting in the Third Reich," Derrick Sington and Arthur Weidenfeld, 1942, p. 230
- "Radio Rebels: Berlin Group Makes Tiny Transmitter for Syria," Associated Press, posted on *Daily Mail*, 22 Dec. 2015
- "The Refugee Trail," *Home of the Brave*, by this podcast's producer, Scott Carrier, Nov. -Dec., (1 hour) - 2015
- Interview with Scott Carrier, *Us & Them*, posted Jan. 17, 2016 (20 min.)

Week 8: Monday, March 13-Sunday, March 19: Midterm Transcribing Assignment due WEDNESDAY by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Radiotext(e) readings

- Norman Corwin: Seems Radio is Here to Stay (1939), p. 137
- Filippo Tommaso Marinetti: Radio Sintesi (1933), p. 147
- Ezra Pound, America Was Promises (1941), p. 149
- Edward R. Murrow: Broadcast from Buchenwald (1945), p. 152
- Emperor Hirohito: Imperial Surrender Broadcast (1941-45), p. 155 Listening to Corwin; Murrow

Transcribing:

- "Glass, Not Glitter," Abby Wendle, Third Coast Audio Festival, 2012 (2:54)
- "A Secret Garden," Jo Upton and Jennifer Macey, KCRW's Radio Race, 2016 (4:16)
- "The Record," Ellie Gordon-Moershel, *Serendipity*, Oct. 6, 2016 (2:45)

Week 9: [SPRING BREAK!]

Week 10: Listener-Producer-Manager

- "People Formerly Known as the Audience," Jay Rosen, *PressThink*, 2006
- "Political Economy of Radio," Robert McChesney, *Seizing the Airwaves*, 1998
- "Ways to Get on the Air," David Ciaffardini, *Radiotext(e)*, p. 302
- "The RadioPublic approach to podcasts and the future of radio," Jake Shapiro, RadioPublic, Sept. 16, 2016
- "PRX Launches RadioPublic," Benjamin Mullin, *Poynter News*, May 19, 2016
- PRX; RadioPublic; The Heard; Radiotopia; Association of Independents in Radio

Week 11: Response Essay: Silence + Noise

due **WEDNESDAY** by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Time)

Radiotext(e) readings

- John Corbett: "Radio Dada Manifesto," p. 71
- Tetsuo Kogawa: "Free Radio in Japan," p. 90
- Steve Post: "Son of Playlist" (1974) - p. 106
- Erwin S. Strauss: "Pirate Radio Pirates," p. 123

- Marc Raboy: "Radio as an Emancipatory Cultural Practice, p. 129
- Negativeland: Teletours in Negativeland," p. 176
- *Radio Silence*, Zach Poff (2010) (9 min)
- *Chorus of Refuge*, Ann Heppermann, Jason Cady, Kara Oehler (2008) (15 min)
- *Radio Net*, Max Neuhaus (1977) (11:49)

Week 12: Sounds tell the Story

- "Radical Radio," R. Murray Schafer, *Radiotext(e)* (1987), p. 291
- "Born to Live," Studs Terkel, 1961 (55 min)
- "Los Gritos de Mexico," Felix Blume, Soundproof (17 min)
- "Out of the Blocks," Aaron Henkin & Wendel Patrick, WYPR-FM Baltimore, 2012 (7:30)
- "Signal to Noise," Paolo Pietropaolo, In the Dark/UK (13 min)

Week 13: Radio Landscape - Poetic Radio: In-class presentations - Small Groups

Radiotext(e) readings:

- "Poetry and the Microphone," George Orwell (1945), p. 165
- "The Noise of the Needle," Helen Thorington, p. 178
- "Ruminations on Radio," La Monte Young, p. 181
- "The Art of Radio," Jacki Apple, p. 307
- "Haters of Radio Art, Hear me Out," Julie Shapiro, Transom (July 22, 2015)
- Interview with Susan Stone, Third Coast Audio Festival, *Behind the Scenes*, 2003
- Interview with Ann Heppermann and Martin Johnson, *The Timbre*, Devon Taylor (Oct. 7, 2015)
- Interview with Norman Corwin, Tony Kahn, Transom, Dec. 1, 2001
- "Maria," Martin Johnson, *Short Cuts*, BBC, May 12, 2015 (5 min)
- "We've Forgotten James Powell," Nate DiMeo, *The Memory Palace*, episode #62, July 17, 2014 (3:30)
- "Ruby," Susan Stone, *New American Radio* (1986) (3:01)

Week 14: Listener Fool

- "Mental Radio," Upton Sinclair, *Radiotext(e)*, 1930, p. 321
- "Radio from Beyond the Grave," Carola Morales, *Radiotext(e)*, p. 330
- "Fictional Podcasts in a booming market, Joshua Barone, *New York Times*, 2016
- "The Fake Doc Show," *Re:sound* #44, April 1, 2006 (Length: 55 min)
- War of the Worlds: Live at FitzGerald Theater," co-hosts Jad Abumrad, Robert Krulwich, *Radiolab*, Season 4, Ep 3 - 1 hour (c. 2006)

Week 15 - prep week to work on your final project

Week 16: Final Project - Radio Programming Assignment due - WEDNESDAY by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern Time)