

## MUSC 1240G Topics in New Media Theory and Production: Post-vernacular Composition/'Pop Music' gone Feral

MEME @ Brown University Music Department | Spring 2014

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Office Hours: Orwig 313, TBA

Location: Steinert 205

### Description

This seminar explores the fertile creative territory found around the more adventurous edges of 'popular' musics. Drawing from both experimental and popular backgrounds, the focus is on non-notated contemporary composition, but participants are not restricted to traditional conceptualizations of the recording studio or the production of 'fixed' works. The idea of post-vernacular is utilized to challenge the view that vernacular or 'popular' musics are only oriented towards commercialism and mass popularity i.e. this seminar seeks to extend and build-upon the inherently experimental dimensions of much vernacular musical practice. Developing a comprehensive theoretical and practical knowledge of studio craft, specifically targeted towards creative recording and production techniques, is one objective. However, the main goal is to arrive at an idiosyncratic definition of post-vernacular composition, through practical exploration. Participants will respond to a number of increasingly open-ended assignments, and will complete a final portfolio. Permission of instructor is required. **T/Th 2:30-3:50 p.m.**

### Assessment

- 30% assignments 1 and 2 each worth 5%; assignments 3 and 4 each worth 10%;
- 20% in-class participation and contribution to <http://hubbub.pm> (an open-ended online forum and internationally accessible archive for creative practice);
- 50% final portfolio of creative work. The specifics of this are negotiated immediately after spring break, but the expectation is that each participant will produce a four track EP of total length 12-16 minutes.

### Schedule (tentative)

Jan 23 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>Course introduction/overview</b>
Jan 28 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Digital Musicianship[?]</b> Lecture: an introduction to audio culture and digital musicianship. <i>Entrance questionnaire due for completion.</i>
Jan 30 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Editing with Pro Tools software</b> Lecture/demonstration of Pro Tools software <i>Set assignment 1: autobiographic audio challenge</i>  Essential reading: 'New technologies, new musicians', in Hugill A. (2008) <i>The Digital Musician</i> . New York: Routledge, pp. 1-14.  Suggested reading: 'Music and the New Audio Culture', in Cox, C. and Warner D. (2004) <i>Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music</i> . New York: Continuum, pp. xiii – xvi.

Feb 4 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Hearing/listening.</b> (Lecture on the work of R. Murray Schafer/Dennis Smalley).
Feb 6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Group feedback/critique session on assignment 1</b>  ***Assignment 1 due today***  Essential reading: Smalley, Denis. 'The Listening Imagination: Listening in the Electroacoustic Era'. <a href="http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07494469600640071#UshM4WRdVMM">[http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07494469600640071#UshM4WRdVMM]</a> .  Suggested reading: 'Stockhausen vs. the "Technocrats"', in Cox, C. and Warner D. (2004) <i>Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music</i> . New York: Continuum, pp. xiii – xvi.
Feb 11 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Practical workshop: making close/dry stereo recordings</b> Capture sound sources in line with each of Smalley's 'indicative fields' i.e. gesture, utterance, behavior, energy and motion, object/substance, environment, vision.
Feb 13 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Popular music[?]</b> Lecture introducing ideas from Raymond Williams' 'Popular' and Theodore Adorno's 'On Popular Music'. Also: Bennett Hogg's conceptualization of 'post-vernacular' and Hugill's 'Listening Across the Divide'.  <i>Set assignment 2: listening across the divide</i>  Essential reading: 'Critical Engagement' in Hugill, A. (2008) <i>The Digital Musician</i> . New York: Routledge pp. 163 – 186.  Suggested reading: 'Popular music and mass culture – Adorno's theory', in Middleton, R. (1990) <i>Studying Popular Music</i> . Buckingham: Open University Press, pp. 34-63.
Feb 18 <sup>th</sup>	<b>NO CLASS</b> (as per university schedule)
Feb 20 <sup>th</sup>	<b>In-class presentations on assignment 2: listening across the divide</b>  ***Assignment 2 due***  Essential reading: 'Introduction – "An Orchid in the Land of technology"' in Auslander, P. (2008) <i>Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture</i> . New York: Routledge, pp. 1-10.
Feb 25 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Plunderphonics: appropriation and reuse in DJ and sampling culture</b> Lecture on John Oswald, 'Amen break' the emergence of drum and bass, etc...).

Feb 27 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Musicking/liveness/controllerism</b> Lecture/demonstration relating Christopher Small's ideas of musicking to real-time composition and controllerism using Ableton Live.</p> <p>Essential reading: Oswald, John (1985) Plunderphonics, or Audio Piracy as a Compositional Prerogative [<a href="http://www.plunderphonics.com/xhtml/xplunder.html">http://www.plunderphonics.com/xhtml/xplunder.html</a>].</p> <p>Suggested reading: Vandemast-Bell, P. (2013) Rethinking Live Electronic Music: A DJ Perspective. Contemporary Music Review, Volume 32, Issue 2-03. [Available here: <a href="http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/07494467.2013.775817#.UsiJi2RdVMM">http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/07494467.2013.775817#.UsiJi2RdVMM</a>]</p>
March 4 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>An introduction to technical ear training</b> Lecture demonstration</p>
March 6 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Group feedback/critique session on assignment 3</b></p> <p>***Assignment 3 due***</p> <p>Essential reading: Corey, J. (2010) Audio Production and Critical Listening: Technical Ear Training pp. ix -15 [you should read the first chapter as indicated, but should also download and practice regularly with the ear training software available here: <a href="http://www.taylorandfrancis.com/cw/corey-9780240812953/p/resources/">http://www.taylorandfrancis.com/cw/corey-9780240812953/p/resources/</a>]</p> <p>Suggested reading: Tinge, P. (2013) Daft Punk; Peter Franco &amp; Mick Guzauski: Recording Random Access Memories, available here: <a href="http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/jul13/articles/daft-punk.htm">http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/jul13/articles/daft-punk.htm</a></p>
March 11 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Recording acoustic drum kit</b> Lecture on technique with audio examples</p>
March 13 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Recording acoustic drum kit</b> Practical session (**class time will need to be extended this week**)</p> <p>Essential reading: Robjohns, H. (2003) 'Recording Drums', available: <a href="http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/feb03/articles/drummiking.asp">http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/feb03/articles/drummiking.asp</a></p> <p>Suggested reading: Seymour, M. (2010) Engineer's Guide To Tuning and Damping Drums, available: <a href="http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/aug10/articles/drum-tuning.htm">http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/aug10/articles/drum-tuning.htm</a></p>
March 18 <sup>th</sup>	<p><b>Processing acoustic drum kit</b> Lecture on technique with audio examples</p>

<p>March 20<sup>th</sup></p>	<p><b>Editing/processing acoustic drum kit</b>  Practical workshop on processing drum kit and incorporating into a mix.</p> <p>Essential reading: Danielsen, A. (2010) 'Musical Rhythm in the Age of Digital Reproduction', in Popular Music / Volume 31 / Issue 03 / October 2012, pp 491-492 Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Suggested reading: White, P. (2001) 'Mixing Multitracked Drums', available: <a href="http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/feb01/articles/drummix.asp">http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/feb01/articles/drummix.asp</a></p>
<p>March 25<sup>th</sup></p> <p>March 27<sup>th</sup></p>	<p>Spring recess/no class</p> <p>Spring recess/no class</p> <p>As well as finishing assignment 4, I suggest that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continue Corey's ear training exercises (equalization/compression);</li> <li>• think seriously about what you want to do for your final portfolio;</li> <li>• visit SEAMUS festival at Wesleyan University (<a href="http://seamus.conference.wesleyan.edu/">http://seamus.conference.wesleyan.edu/</a>).</li> </ul>
<p>April 1<sup>st</sup></p> <p>April 3<sup>rd</sup></p>	<p><b>Group feedback/critique session on assignment 4</b></p> <p>***Assignment 4 due***</p> <p><b>Situationism and its affect on punk and popular culture</b>  Lecture relating Situationist Manifesto to punk and popular culture</p> <p>Essential reading: Situationist Manifesto, available: <a href="http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/manifesto.html">http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/manifesto.html</a></p> <p>Suggested reading: Graham, D. (2009) 'Rock/music writings'. Primary Information, pp. 63 -88 [Essential watching: 'The Birth of Rough Trade Records', available: <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddfEqcY-QZk">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddfEqcY-QZk</a>]</p>
<p>April 8<sup>th</sup></p> <p>April 10<sup>th</sup></p>	<p><b>Improvisation and the recording studio</b>  Lecture/demonstration on a variety of approaches, including a case study on Bennett Hogg.</p> <p><b>Proposal/presentation session for final portfolio</b></p> <p>Essential reading: Hogg, B. (2009) 'Sound Objects, Found Objects - Free Improvisation and Electroacoustics', available: <a href="http://www.bennethogg.co.uk/?page_id=30">http://www.bennethogg.co.uk/?page_id=30</a>.</p> <p>Suggested reading: Ostertag, B. (2002) 'Human Bodies, Computer Music', in Leonardo Music Journal Vol. 12, Pages 11-14, available here: <a href="http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/096112102762295070">http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/096112102762295070</a></p>

April 15 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Noise</b> Lecture relating practitioners such as Merzbo, Lightening Bolt, and Ryoji Ikeda to the thinking of Jaques Attali and Paul Hegarty.
April 17 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Final portfolio critique of work in progress 1</b> Mixing techniques etc  Essential reading: Russolo, L. (1913) 'The Art of Noise', available here: <a href="http://www.artype.de/Sammlung/pdf/russolo_noise.pdf">http://www.artype.de/Sammlung/pdf/russolo_noise.pdf</a>  Suggested reading: Hegarty, P. (2007) 'Noise Music: A History', pp. ix – 37
April 22 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Collage/assemblage</b> Lecture/demonstration on a variety of approaches, including a case study on Gwilly Edmondez.
April 24 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Final portfolio critique: work in progress 2</b> Mixing techniques etc

April 29th/May 1<sup>st</sup>/May 6<sup>th</sup> = reading period.

### **Assignment 1: autobiographic audio challenge (5% of course mark)**

\*\*\*IN PREPERATION FOR LATER PROJECTS I SUGGEST YOU USE PRO TOOLS SOFTWARE TO COMPLETE THIS ASSIGNMENT\*\*\*

Using audio samples of one second or less and sourcing your audio materials entirely from your own CD/digital music collection, create a composition of exactly one minute and post it to <http://hubbub.pm>.

You may only use one sample from each song or composition and may only use each sample once.

In undertaking this assignment you should think about what Andrew Hugill in 'The Digital Musician' considers to be the most vital hallmarks of a digital musician (below). The process of creating this work should mean that you improve your skills in each of these categories:

- aural awareness (an ability to hear and listen both widely and accurately, linked to an understanding of how sound behaves in space and time);
- cultural knowledge (an understanding of one's place within a local and global culture coupled with an ability to make critical judgments and a knowledge of recent cultural developments);
- musical abilities (the ability to make music in various ways – performance, improvisation, composition, etc. – using new technologies);
- technical skills (skill in recording, producing, processing, manipulating and disseminating music and sound using digital technologies).

\*\*\*DUE FEBRUARY 6<sup>th</sup>\*\*\*

## **Assignment 2: listening across the divide (5% of course mark)**

Working in pairs, devise a five-minute presentation that considers the idea of 'post-vernacular' in relation to any single item from Andrew Hugill's list for 'listening across the divide' i.e. the reading this week. A written summary of your presentation must also be uploaded to <http://hubbub.pm> in the form of a blog post.

Laurie Anderson Big Science Warner 2KNM  
Aphex Twin Selected Ambient Works Vol. 2 Warp 21 Richard James, aka Aphex Twin.  
The Beatles 'White Album': Revolution #9  
Glenn Branca The Ascension Acute 9EIPG  
Wendy Carlos Brandenburg Concerto No. 3  
The Chemical Brothers Surrender Virgin Records XDUSTCD4  
Einsturzende Neubaten Strategies Against Architecture Mute STUMM14  
Faust The Faust Tapes Recommended RER F2CD  
Lou Reed Metal Machine Music BMG ND 90670  
Raymond Scott The Pygmy Taxi Corporation Basta Records  
Sonic Youth Goodbye 20th Century SYR 4  
DJ Spooky Songs of A Dead Dreamer Asphodel ASP0961  
Frank Zappa Jazz from Hell Rykodisc RCD 10549

**\*\*\*DUE FEBRUARY 20<sup>th</sup>\*\*\***

## **Assignment 3: electroacoustic music project (10% of course mark)**

Bearing in mind Smalley's indicative fields, and other ideas/artists discussed in class, compose a 3-5 minute electroacoustic work that incorporates a selection of the studio recordings made in class on February the 11th. This should be posted to <http://hubbub.pm> and a short blog post detailing your process and methods should be included.

**\*\*\*DUE MARCH 6<sup>th</sup>\*\*\***

## **Assignment 4: drum mix and reinterpretation + plunder (10% of course mark)**

This assignment has two elements:

- A short recording (1-3 minutes in length) of a high quality live drum performance with appropriate processing – you should consider the quality of the overall performance, groove, microphone choice, gating, compression, EQ, and should aim for a detailed/contemporary sound.
- A creative remix of the above material (3-5 minutes in length) – this should be a substantial re-interpretation of the *live* performance, and **MUST** feature (in addition) at least one example of audio material plundered from a commercially available source.

Both elements should be posted to <http://hubbub.pm> and a short blog post detailing your process and methods should be included.

**\*\*\*DUE APRIL 1<sup>st</sup>\*\*\***

### **Final portfolio of creative work (50% of course mark)**

The specifics of this are negotiated immediately after spring break. The expectation is that each participant will produce a four track EP of total length 12-16 minutes, however alternative formats are possible. Both work-in-progress and the final versions should be posted on <http://hubbub.pm> - engagement with which is an important component of your final mark (see below). Although you should build upon techniques and ideas explored during assignments 1-4, it is expected that this portfolio will be made up of new work.

**\*\*\*DUE DATE TBC\*\*\***

### **In-class participation and contribution to The Hub (20% of course mark)**

The Hub: <http://hubbub.pm>

The Hub is a place to share and discuss creative work across disciplines. Originally conceived as an online resource for studio-based composers at universities, the Hub now aims to be both an open-ended forum and an internationally accessible archive, embracing a wide range of creative practices across numerous disciplines.

Publishing an artwork facilitates its contribution to a universal discourse; it doesn't matter who (if anyone) sees/hears it: its being there makes it discoverable and its chronological place in history will always allow it to speak to that moment as well as to future moments. Yet, traditional pedagogy often revolves around scenarios where work is created in isolation (or at best within small-group collaboration/seminars) and then submitted for internal assessment and grading, the consequence of which often being that a work is subsumed within these institutional systems until deemed 'finished' or 'complete' and even then may find no public forum for publication and dissemination.

By contrast, the Hub is a response to the question: can an art work be said to have occurred unless it has been publically presented? It promotes the regular sharing and publishing of work, both 'complete' and 'in progress', with a view to facilitating the development of informed creative practice through discussion of, and engagement with, a broad range of artistic perspectives.

While the Hub exists to informally publish and share practical work, it also reinforces the importance of articulating the conceptual framework of that work through regular blog posts that expound an idea or which critique both theory and practice from within the established discourse.

The main contributors to the Hub are currently staff and students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) at Newcastle University, Brown University, University of Glasgow, and City University London. Collaboration between these institutions is at an initial stage; in due course contributions and appropriation by artists from all four institutions will reshape and redefine the identity of the Hub.

### Essential reading:

Hugill A. (2008) *The Digital Musician*. New York: Routledge  
Cox, C. and Warner D. (2004) *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*. New York: Continuum

### Recommended reading

Attali, J. (1985) *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. University of Minnesota Press.  
Auslander, P. (2008) *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. New York: Routledge  
Bartlett, B. and Bartlett, J., (2009) *Practical Recording Techniques*, Oxford: Focal Press  
Christiane, P. (2003) *Digital Art*. London: Thames and Hudson  
Collins, N. & d'Esquivan, J. (2007) *Electronic Music*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press  
Corey, J. (2010) *Audio Production and Critical Listening: Technical Ear Training*  
Dyson, M., C., (2007) *Know What I Mean? Reflections on Hip Hop*. New York: Basic Civitas Books.  
Dodge, C. and Jerse, T. A. (1997) *Computer Music: Synthesis, Composition, and Performance*, 2nd edition. New York: Schirmer Books  
Emmerson, S. (2007) *Living Electronic Music*. Aldershot: Ashgate  
Graham, D. (2009) 'Rock/music writings'. Primary Information.  
Harrison, J. (Ed) *Organised Sound 15:3 Sound ↔ Space: New approaches to multichannel music and audio*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press  
Hegarty, P. (2007) *Noise/Music A History*. New York: Continuum  
Henriques, J. (2011) *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques and Ways of Knowing*. London: Continuum Books.  
Holmes, T. *Electronic and Experimental Music (fourth edition)*. New York: Routledge.  
Kahn, D. (2001) *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology press  
Katz, M. (2010) *Capturing Sound: How Technology has Changed Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press.  
Katz, R., (2007) *Mastering Audio: the art and the science*, Oxford: Focal Press  
Manning, P. (1993) *Electronic and Computer Music*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press,  
Middleton, R. (1990) *Studying Popular Music*. Buckingham: Open University Press, pp 34-63.  
Reynolds, S. (2009) *Bring The Noise: 20 Years of Writing About Hip Rock and Hip Hop*. Berkeley: Soft Skull Press.  
Roads, C. (1996) *The Computer Music Tutorial*. Cambridge: Massachusetts: MIT Press.  
Russ, M. (2008) *Sound Synthesis and Sampling*, 3rd edition. Oxford: Focal Press.  
Schafer, R.M. (1977) *The Soundscape*. New York: Knopf  
Sonnenschein, D. (2001) *Sound Design: The Expressive Power of Music, Voice and Sound Effects in Cinema*. California: Michael Wiese.  
Wishart, T. (2002) *On Sonic Art*, revised edition. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic