

ENGL 6815/7815 (17315/17316)  
Special Topics in Composition and Rhetoric  
**Rhetoric and Sound Studies**

Thursdays | 2:40 – 5:40 p.m. | Peck 327

Professor: Dr. Eric Detweiler  
Office: Peck Hall 376  
Email: [eric.detweiler@mtsu.edu](mailto:eric.detweiler@mtsu.edu)  
Phone: 615.898.2585

Office Hours:  
Mondays, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. & 2:25 – 3:25 p.m.  
Wednesdays, 12:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  
& by appointment

**Course Description**

The past decade has seen a boom in sound-focused research by rhetoric and writing scholars as well as the rise of the interdisciplinary field of sound studies. These simultaneous events have enriched and expanded rhetorical scholarship, leading to the establishment of new conferences, courses, and subfields as well as fresh attention to longstanding rhetorical concepts like delivery and orality. Given the centuries rhetoricians have spent studying the persuasive power of aural and oral discourse, the field is positioned to make substantial contributions to the study of sound within and across disciplines.

In this course, students will study the intersection of rhetoric and sound studies. Students will read and listen to scholarship from these fields and on their resonances, producing written scholarship about sound as well as scholarship created using sonic media.

**Course Objectives**

- Introduce students to emerging methods, theories, and debates about rhetoric and sound,
- apply longstanding rhetorical approaches to the study of sound,
- teach students to create scholarship using sonic media, and
- help graduate teaching assistants develop new strategies for incorporating sound and audio technologies into their pedagogical and professional practices.

**Course Texts**

*Required*

Ceraso, Steph. *Sounding Composition: Multimodal Pedagogies for Embodied Listening*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2018.

Danforth, Courtney S., Kyle D. Stedman, and Michael J. Faris, editors. *Soundwriting Pedagogies*. Computers and Composition Digital P, 2018,  
<https://ccdigitalpress.org/book/soundwriting/>.

Hawk, Byron. *Resounding the Rhetorical: Composition as a Quasi-Object*. U of Pittsburgh P, 2018.

Lingold, Mary Caton, Darren Mueller, and Whitney Trettien, editors. *Digital Sound Studies*. Duke UP, 2018.

Selected articles available online and/or as PDFs.

### Optional

Novak, David, and Matt Sakakeeny, editors. *Keywords in Sound*. Duke UP, 2015.

Sterne, Jonathan, editor. *The Sound Studies Reader*. Routledge, 2012.

### Coursework

I will provide more detailed guidelines for the one-pagers, keywords project, and final project during the first few weeks of class.

- Slack Posts (20%): I've set up a [Slack](#) team for this course. I'll walk you through Slack in class. The main thing you'll use Slack for is posting informal written responses to course readings. A post will be due by 2:40 p.m. the Wednesday before most class meetings (this gives me a day to read over and consider the posts before class). To get full credit, you must have at least 8 posts of at least 250 words apiece by the end of the course. Each student will also select one week for which they will be the class's resident superposter. For that week, instead of your usual post, you'll need to create a multi-page document (uploaded to the appropriate Slack channel as a PDF or Word document) in which you summarize and overview all of the week's assigned readings. Think of it as a combination annotated bibliography/book review that will help you and your classmates recollect the substance of your assigned week's readings as you all work on your final projects. It counts as one of your eight required posts.
- One-Pagers (3 papers, 10% apiece): Three one-page papers in which you summarize a reading we've encountered in class, then use it to analyze an artifact you'll choose during the first weeks of class. These papers must be single-spaced, no more than a single page, and use a font between 10-12 points. We will look at some examples in class. Each one-pager may be revised and resubmitted up to two additional times after the initial submission. You will read these aloud in class on the day they're due—or, alternatively, play an audio recording of you reading them. In part, these are meant to help prepare you for your final project. That is, you can borrow liberally from the one-pagers as you're composing your final.
- Keywords in Rhetoric and Sound (20%): An audio essay of 8-10 minutes in which you identify and discuss a keyword related to rhetoric and sound. This assignment is modeled on the collection *Keywords in Sound*, which we'll read chapters from over the course of the semester. However, you must come up with your own keyword—one that's not covered in the collection itself.
- Final Project (30%): You have two options for your final project in this class. Both will be accompanied by a short (~500 words) piece of reflective writing in which you introduce, contextualize, and reflect on your project. The two options are as follows:

1. For MA students, a paper the length of a short conference presentation (2750-3250 words) related to the theme of the course. For PhD students, a paper the length of a short article (5000+ words) related to the theme of the course.

**or**

2. A piece of audio scholarship, roughly equivalent in scope and effort to option #1. This option will be more open-ended, which you can take as both an opportunity and a word of caution.

### **Grading Scale**

A: 90-100	C+: 77-79	D: 63-66
B+: 87-89	C: 73-76	D-: 60-62
B: 83-86	C-: 70-72	F: 59 and under
B-: 80-82	D+: 67-69	

### **Attendance**

You are allowed to miss a maximum of two days of class. If you anticipate missing more for any reason, you are responsible for letting me know in advance, preferably via a face-to-face conversation during office hours. In rare cases, I am willing to make alternate arrangements involving additional coursework, but that is not guaranteed.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Middle Tennessee State University is committed to campus access in accordance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Any student interested in reasonable accommodations can consult the [Disability & Access Center \(DAC\) website](#) and/or contact the DAC for assistance at (615) 898-2783 or [dacemail@mtsu.edu](mailto:dacemail@mtsu.edu).

If I can provide or assist with any accommodations related specifically to this course, let me know. I would be glad to help.

## Course Calendar

With the exception of *Digital Sound Studies*, *Resounding the Rhetorical*, and *Sounding Composition*, all readings will be available as PDFs or open-access webtexts.

You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings on the day they're listed on the calendar. Bring copies of the readings with you to class. I am fine with print or digital versions. All assignments are ***bold and italicized*** and listed on the day they are due. You will submit them via Slack.

Guide to Calendar Abbreviations:

*DSS* = *Digital Sound Studies*

*KiS* = *Keywords in Sound*

*SP* = *Soundwriting Pedagogies*

*SSR* = *Sound Studies Reader*

<b>Jan. 17</b>	<p><u><i>Intro, Syllabus, Conferences</i></u></p> <p>Required:</p> <p>Joshua Gunn et al. – “Auscultating Again: Rhetoric and Sound Studies”</p> <p>Jonathan Sterne – “Sonic Imaginations”</p> <p>Optional:</p> <p>Sharon Crowley – “Rhetoric is Not Composition”</p> <p>Jeffrey Walker – “What Difference a Definition Makes, or, William Dean Howells and the Sophist’s Shoes”</p> <p>Suggested Listening:</p> <p><a href="#">Abigail Lambke – Arranging Delivery, Delivering Arrangement: An Ecological Sonic Rhetoric of Podcasting</a></p> <p><a href="#">“Sounding Out! Podcast #27: An Interview with Jonathan Sterne”</a></p>
<b>Jan. 24</b>	<p><u><i>Where Do Sound and Rhetoric Meet?</i></u></p> <p>James E. Porter – “Recovering Delivery for Digital Rhetoric”</p> <p>Cynthia L. Selfe – “The Movement of Air, The Breath of Meaning: Aurality and Multimodal Composing”</p> <p>Adam J. Banks – “Groove”</p> <p>Mary Caton Lingold, Darren Mueller, and Whitney Trettien – Introduction (<i>DSS</i>)</p> <p>Jonathan W. Stone – “Rhetorical Folkness: Reanimating Walter J. Ong in the Pursuit of Digital Humanity” (<i>DSS</i>)</p> <p>Jonathan W. Stone – <a href="#">“Listening to the Sonic Archive: Rhetoric, Representation, and Race in the Lomax Prison Recordings”</a></p> <p>in class: introduction to Audacity</p> <p>Suggested Listening:</p> <p><a href="#">choir! choir! choir! sings “In the Air Tonight”</a></p> <p><a href="#">DJ Spooky at TEDxAustin</a></p>

<b>Jan. 31</b>	<p>Meet in John Bragg Media and Entertainment Building for a tour of the <a href="#">Center for Popular Music</a>.</p> <p><u><i>History of Rhetoric and Sound</i></u>          Courtney S. Danforth and Kyle D. Stedman – Introduction (SP)          Jason Palmeri and Ben McCorkle – “English via the Airwaves’: Recovering 1930s Radio Pedagogies” (SP)          David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny – Introduction (KiS)          Mark M. Smith – “Echo” (KiS)          Emily Thompson – “Sound, Modernity and History” (SSR)          Rebecca Dowd Geoffroy-Schwinden – “Historical Approaches to Historical Acoustemologies: Replication and Reenactment” (DSS)</p> <p><u><i>Plus a Couple Miscellaneous Readings</i></u>          Jacques Attali – “Noise: The Political Economy of Music” (SSR)          Michel Chion – “The Three Listening Modes” (SSR)</p> <p>Suggested Listening:  <a href="#">“Archiving the Underground: The Hiphop Archive at Harvard”</a></p>
<b>Feb. 7</b>	<p><u><i>Voice</i></u>          Amanda Weidman – “Voice” (KiS)          Jacques Derrida – “The Voice that Keeps Silence” (SSR)          Adriana Cavarero – “Multiple Voices” (SSR)          Trisha N. Campbell – “Composing the Artist-Medium” (SP)          Erin Anderson – <a href="#">“Toward a Resonant Material Vocality for Digital Composition”</a></p> <p>Suggested Listening:  <a href="#">Jacques Derrida on Echo and Narcissus</a></p>
<b>Feb. 14</b>	<p><b><i>One-Pager 1</i></b></p> <p><u><i>Bodies and Materiality</i></u>          Diana Coole and Samantha Frost – “Introducing the New Materialisms”          Deborah Kapchan – “Body” (KiS)          Mara Mills – “Deafness” (KiS)          Jennifer J. Buckner and Kirsten Daley – “Do You Hear What I Hear? A Hearing Teacher and a Deaf Student Negotiate Sound” (SP)          Michele Hilmes – “The New Materiality of Radio: Sound on Screens”</p> <p>Suggesting Listening:  <a href="#">Touch the Sound</a></p>
<b>Feb. 21</b>	<p>Steph Ceraso – <i>Sounding Composition</i></p> <p>Suggested Listening:  <a href="#">“Sensational Sounds: Steph Ceraso on Sonic Composition and Pedagogy”</a></p>
<b>Feb. 28</b>	<p><u><i>Music</i></u>          Matt Sakakeeny – “Music” (KiS)</p>

	<p>Alexander Weheliye – “Desiring Machines in Black Popular Music” (SSR)          Jeff Rice – “The Making of Ka-Knowledge: Digital Aurality”          Michael Burns, Timothy R. Dougherty, Ben Kuebrich, and Yanira Rodríguez – “Soundwriting and Resistance: Toward a Pedagogy for Liberation” (SP)          Sarah Elizabeth Adams – “Aristotle’s Cough: Rhetoricity, Refrain, and Rhythm in Minimalist Music”          J. David Maxson – “Burying the King Again: Buddy Bolden’s Jazz Funeral and Defleshed Memory”</p> <p>Suggested Listening:  <a href="#">Beastie Boys – “The Sounds of Science”</a>  <a href="#">Zapp – “Computer Love”</a>  <a href="#">Steve Reich – “It’s Gonna Rain”</a>  <a href="#">Jelly Roll Morton - “Buddy Bolden’s Blues”</a>  <a href="#">Second Line from <i>Treme</i></a></p>
<b>Mar. 7</b>	Spring Break
<b>Mar. 14</b>	<p><b><i>Keywords in Rhetoric and Sound</i></b></p> <p><u>Place</u>          R. Murray Schafer – “The Soundscape” (SSR)          Salomé Voegelin – excerpt from <i>Sonic Possible Worlds</i>          Andrew J. Eisenberg – “Space” (KiS)          Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter – “Ancient Acoustic Spaces” (SSR)          Patricia Fancher and Josh Mehler – “Sounding the Stories of Isla Vista: Archives, Microhistory, and Multimedia Storytelling” (SP)          Rachel Prestley and Jason Crane, “Sonic Colonizations, Sonic Coalitions: Analyzing the Aural Landscape of Standing Rock’s No-DAPL Movement”          Michelle Comstock and Mary E. Hocks – “The Sounds of Climate Change: Sonic Rhetoric in the Anthropocene, the Age of Human Impact”</p> <p>Suggested Listening:          Episode 2 of <a href="#">Ways of Hearing</a> (“Space”)</p>
<b>Mar. 21</b>	<p><b><i>One-Pager 2</i></b></p> <p><u>Projects and Methods</u>          Steph Ceraso – “Sound Practices for Digital Humanities” (DSS)          Tanya Rodrigue et al. – <a href="#">“Navigating the Soundscape, Composing With Audio”</a>          Myron M. Beasley – “Performing Zora: Critical Ethnography, Digital Sound, and Not Forgetting” (DSS)          Regina N. Bradley – “Becoming OutKasted: Archiving Contemporary Black Southernness in a Digital Age” (DSS)          Aaron Trammell, Jennifer Lynn Stoeber, and Liana Silva – “The Pleasure (Is) Principle: <i>Sounding Out!</i> and the Digitizing of Community” (DSS)</p>

	<p>W. F. Umi Hsu – “Reprogramming Sounds of Learning: Pedagogical Experiments with Critical Making and Community-Based Ethnography” (DSS)</p> <p>Suggested Listening:  <a href="#">“OutKasted Conversations #9: Imani Perry”</a>  <a href="#">“Zora Neale Hurston #KeeperOfTheDay”</a></p>
<b>Mar. 28</b>	<p><i>Technology</i></p> <p>Joshua Gunn – “Canned Laughter”  Stefan Helmreich – “Transduction” (KiS)  Patrick Feaster – “Phonography” (KiS)  Friedrich Kittler – “Gramophone” (SSR)  Tanya E. Clement – “Word. Spoken. Articulating the Voice for High Performance Sound Technologies for Access and Scholarship (HiPSTAS)” (DSS)  Tara Rodgers – “Toward a Feminist Historiography of Electronic Music” (SSR)</p> <p>Suggested Listening:  Episode 6 of <a href="#">Ways of Hearing</a> (“Noise”)</p>
<b>Apr. 4</b>	<p>Byron Hawk – <i>Resounding the Rhetorical: Composition as a Quasi-Object</i> (Introduction – Chapter 3)</p> <p>Suggested Listening:  <a href="#">“Byron Hawk on the Shape of Composition to Come”</a></p>
<b>Apr. 11</b>	<p>Byron Hawk – <i>Resounding the Rhetorical: Composition as a Quasi-Object</i> (Chapter 4 – Conclusion)</p> <p>Suggesting Listening:  <a href="#">Boyfriend feat. Big Freedia – “Marie Antoinette”</a>  <a href="#">“MOM² Live at Conundrum”</a></p>
<b>Apr. 18</b>	<b>One-Pager 3</b>
<b>May 2</b>	<p>Present/Workshop Drafts of Final Projects (3:30 – 5:30 p.m.)</p> <p><b><i>Final Project (due May 4 by 11:59 p.m.)</i></b></p>