



MUSIC 9523
LISTENING IN/TO THE ANTHROPOCENE
FALL 2023

Instructor: Kevin Mooney
Office hours: By appointment

Email: kmooney@uwo.ca

Course Description

At an academic conference in 2000, Nobel Prize winning chemist Paul Crutzen challenged his colleagues to “stop using the word Holocene. We’re not in the Holocene anymore. We’re in the... the... the... (searching for the right word) the Anthropocene!” We’re in an epoch where, for the first time ever, human activity is the main cause of geologic change. It is a paradoxical epoch in which human achievement is unraveling the possibility of continued human existence.

The Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) was formed in 2009 to weigh the evidence supporting the assertion of this new epoch. One of its tasks was to identify a physical site that would mark, stratigraphically, its onset. On July 11, 2023, the AWG chose Crawford Lake, Ontario from a list of international sites as the best geologic placeholder for the Anthropocene. The announcement coincided with wildfires, flooding, tornados, and other severe weather events in Canada.

It's clear that we're living in a time of accelerating environmental change. It's clear that the modern view of Nature as something to be feared, idealized, controlled, capitalized, 'sustainably developed', as something external to us, rests on an incomprehension of our embeddedness in the world. The Anthropocene is, in part, a call to action urging us to rethink our way of being in the world.

In the world of the music, where Nature has always been at hand, many of us are rethinking our sonic selves in response to that call. What is the nature of listening in the Anthropocene? What do we hear? Where is the line between musical and environmental sound? Are there endangered sounds? Can music evoke geologic time? Is there musical waste or overconsumption? What can musicians do to sound the alarm! We will address these and other questions in this course.

Course Materials

Course readings and links to audio and video resources will be provided by the instructor.

Course Learning Outcomes

Students will gain an understanding of contemporary literature relating music to the Anthropocene.
Students will be able to interpret relevant texts and formulate viewpoints on environmental themes.
Students will be able to describe sounds and music from an ecomusicological perspective.
Students will develop research skills to explore cross disciplinary relationships.
Students will learn how concepts or models from other fields can inform the study of music.
Students will learn to communicate relationships between music, culture, and the environment.

Requirements

Assigned readings, class participation, soundscape project, final project proposal and bibliography, final project.

Evaluation

Participation (20%)
Soundscape project (20%)
Proposal and bibliography (10%)
Final project (50%)

Participation

I expect you to come to class prepared to make informed contributions. You should also be ready to respond to discussion questions distributed in advance. Should you miss more than one class without prior approval, you will forfeit this portion of your grade.

Soundscape (4 minutes and 33 seconds + 3-5-page paper)

When asked about his composition *4'33"* (1952), John Cage said that he “hoped to have led other people to feel that the sounds of their environment constitute a music which is more interesting than the music which they would hear if they went into a concert hall.” You will create a soundscape, *4'33"* in duration, that frames anthropogenic sounds in a place of your choosing. You will write a short paper reflecting on the relation of these sounds to their environment, what they signify, the human entanglements they evoke. Due Oct. 23–30.

Proposal and bibliography

Submit a final project proposal to me by email by Nov. 6–Nov. 13. This should include a brief (1-page) overview of your planned project and a working bibliography (5–10 sources).

Field-to-Media Project (4000–6000 words)

Your final project, a 10-minute media project with transcript (4000-6000 words) and bibliography, should be submitted by email as a properly formatted Word document by midnight, December 8.

Enrolment Statement

Enrolment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Don Wright Faculty of Music, as well as any student who has obtained special permission from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student’s home program.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

Note especially that plagiarism is a major scholastic offence. Students are expected to write all assignments in their own words. If you take an idea from another author, you must acknowledge this by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing.

Statement on Health and Wellness

Students who are in emotional or mental distress should refer to [Health and Wellness](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Statement on Accommodation for Medical Illness

The Graduate Program in Music recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by illness or injury. To ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's course grade shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the office of the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies), not to the course instructor. Students with special learning needs or other circumstances are asked to inform the instructor as soon as possible so that necessary accommodations can be considered.

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, either recently or in the past, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca or call 519-661-3568.

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Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples, who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London.

READINGS

Class 1 (9/11): **Eaarth**

- Adams, John Luther. "Music in the Anthropocene." *Slate*, February 24, 2015. ↻
- Chung, Emily. "Canada's Crawford Lake Chosen as 'Golden Spike' to Mark Proposed New Epoch." CBC News, July 11, 2023. ↻
- Cohen, K. M., S. C. Finney, and P. L. Gibbard. "The ICS International Chronostratigraphic Chart." *J. -X.*, June 2023. ↻
- Crutzen, Paul J., and Eugene F. Stoermer. "The 'Anthropocene.'" In *The Future of Nature: Documents of Global Change*, edited by Libby Robin, Sörlin Sverker, and Paul Warde, 483–90. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. ↻
- Crutzen, Paul J., and Christian Schwägerl. "Living in the Anthropocene: Toward a New Global Ethos." Yale E360, 2011. ↻
- McKibben, Bill. *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*. New York: Times Books, 2010. ↻

Class 2 (9/18): **Four Theses**

- Ballard, Susan. *Art and Nature in the Anthropocene: Planetary Aesthetics*. Routledge Advances in Art and Visual Studies. New York: Routledge, 2021. ↻
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "The Climate of History: Four Theses." *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (2009): 197–222. ↻
- Merchant, Carolyn. *The Anthropocene and the Humanities: From Climate Change to a New Age of Sustainability*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020. ↻

Class 3 (9/25): **Water Music**

- Cirigliano II, Michael. "Hokusai and Debussy's Evocations of the Sea." The Metropolitan Museum of Art, July 22, 2014. ↻
- Davis, D. Edward. "Reviews: John Luther Adams, *Inuksuit* and *Become Ocean*." *Polygraph* 25 (2016): 175–82. ↻
- Grainyté, Vaiva. "Sun and Sea (Marina)," 2019. ↻ Excerpt from Venice Biennale 2019. ↻
- Helmreich, Stefan. "Hokusai's Great Wave Enters the Anthropocene." *Environmental Humanities* 7, no. 1 (2016): 203–17. ↻
- Morrow, Matthew Robert. "'Complex Impressions': Nature in the Music and Criticism of Claude Debussy." PhD dissertation, University of Rochester, 2011. ↻
- Ross, Alex. "Water Music." *The New Yorker*, July 1, 2013. ↻
- Stevens, Nicholas. "Review of John Luther Adams, *Become Ocean*. Cantaloupe Music B00L5VZL4S, 2014, CD and DVD." *Journal of the Society for American Music* 11, no. 3 (2017): 382–84. ↻

Class 4 (10/2): **Deep Time**

- Armitstead, Claire. "Only 980 Years to Go! Parties and Fears as 1,000-Year-Long Piece of Music Turns 20." *The Guardian*, September 22, 2020. ↻
- Neugebauer, Rainer O. *The John Cage Organ Project & the Climate Change*, 2021. ↻
- Rehding, Alexander. "Music and the Anthropocene: Taking the Long View." Public lecture given at the American Academy in Berlin, October 19, 2022. ↻
- . "Longplayers." *AMS – Musicology Now* (blog), December 14, 2015. ↻

Class 5 (10/16): **Sonic Geography**

- Gann, Kyle. *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33"*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. ↻

- Storvold, Tore, and John Richardson. "Radioactive Music: The Eerie Agency of Hildur Guðnadóttir's Music for the Television Series Chernobyl." *Music and the Moving Image* 14, no. 3 (2021): 30–45. ↻
- Watkins, Holly. *Musical Vitalities: Ventures in a Biotic Aesthetics of Music*. New Material Histories of Music. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018. ↻

Class 6 (10/23): Data

- Adams, John Luther. *The Place Where You Go to Listen: In Search of an Ecology of Music*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2009. ↻
- Xia, Rosanna. "Can Music Inspire More People to Care About Climate Change?" *Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 2023. ↻
- Ross, Alex. "Song of the Earth." In *The Farthest Place: The Music of John Luther Adams*, edited by Bernd Herzogenrath, 13–22. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2012. ↻
- Jones, Jenna, and Joseph Joyce. "Sound the Alarm: Data Sonification as a Tool for Climate Action." *Ableton*, April 17, 2023. ↻

Reading Week (10/30): No class

Class 7 (11/6): Field to Media

- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. Fortieth Anniversary Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002. ↻
- Daughtry, J. Martin. "ESC: Sonic Adventure in the Anthropocene." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 73, no. 2 (2020): 442–51. ↻
- Pedelty, Mark, Rebecca Dirksen, Tara Hatfield, Yan Pang, and Elja Roy. "Field to Media: Applied Ecomusicology in the Anthropocene." *Popular Music* 39, no. 1 (2020): 22–42. ↻
- Pedelty, M. 2018. LOUD. ↻
- Smith, Jacob. "ESC: Sonic Adventure in the Anthropocene (Introductory Essay)," 2018. ↻

Class 8 (11/13): Consuming Sound

- Davis, Heather, and Zoe Todd. "On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene." *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16, no. 4 (2017): 761–80. ↻
- Devine, Kyle. *Decomposed: The Political Ecology of Music*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2019. ↻
- Galloway, Kate. "On the Ethics of Extraction in Environmental Sound Art." *MUSICultures* 49 (2022): 111–34. ↻
- Lui, Samantha. "Why Some K-Pop Fans Are Calling for More Environmentally Friendly Practices in the Industry." *CBC*, August 12, 2023. ↻
- Robinson, Dylan. *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020. ↻

Class 9 (11/20): Schizophonic Listening

- Crosby, Alfred W. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. 30th Anniversary Edition. Westport: Praeger, 2003. ↻
- "Every Noise at Once." Accessed August 17, 2023. ↻
- Fosler-Lussier, Danielle. *Music on the Move*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020. ↻
- Schafer, R. Murray. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994. ↻

Class 10 (11/27): **Whales**

- Burt, Peter. *The Music of Tōru Takemitsu*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001. ↪
- Payne, Roger. *Among Whales*. New York: Scribner, 1995. ↪
- Rothenberg, David. *Thousand Mile Song: Whale Music in a Sea of Sound*. New York: Basic Books, 2008. ↪
- Takemitsu, Tōru. *Confronting Silence: Selected Writings*. Translated and edited by Glenn Glasow and Yoshiko Kakudo. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1995. ↪
- Von Glahn, Denise. *Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. ↪

Class 11 (12/4): **Beyond Us**

- Chua, Daniel K. L., and Alexander Rehding. *Alien Listening: Voyager's Golden Record and Music from Earth*. New York: Zone Books, 2021. ↪
- Scranton, Roy. *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene: Reflections on the End of a Civilization*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2015. ↪
- Weisman, Alan. *The World Without Us*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, 2007. ↪
- NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, *Voyager* website. ↪

LISTENING IN/TO THE ANTHROPOCENE playlist is [HERE](#)

