

Western University
Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism

THEOCRIT 9501A 001 GF19
Writing Aloud: Theories of Sound and Silence

Term/Session	Fall 2019
Time	Fridays 9:30-12:30pm
Location	StvH 3165 (unless otherwise notified)
Professor	Christof Migone, cmigone@uwo.ca
Office Hours	VAC room 214, Thursdays 12-2pm, or by appointment
OWL	https://owl.uwo.ca/portal/site/061cdc7a-740b-4d50-ae5a-f62d73780a2c

Course Description

Here form is content, content is form. You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read—or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not about something; it is that something itself.

- *Samuel Beckett* (writing about James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*)

I write before my self by apprehension, with no comprehension, the night vibrates, I see with my ears, I advance into the bosom of the world, hands in front, capturing the music with my palms, until something breathes under the pen's beak. (I've just written these lines eyelids closed as usual, because the day and its huge light keeps us from seeing what is germinating.)

- *Hélène Cixous*

One by one.

The sounds. The sounds that move at a time

stops. Starts again. Exceptions

stops and starts again

all but exceptions.

Stop. Start. Starts.

Contractions. Noise. Semblance of noise.

Broken speech. One to one. At a time.

Cracked tongue. Broken tongue.

Pidgeon. Semblance of speech.

Swallows. Inhales. Stutter. Starts. Stops before starts.

About to. Then stops. Exhale

swallowed to a sudden arrest.

- *Theresa Hak Kyung Cha*

There is no silence. Your mind makes noise.

- *Bruce Nauman*

A course tracking the sonic *in* and *through* writing as it is invoked and deployed by writers, artists, and theorists. The sonic functions as an amplification of the word in its role as a wager of presence. The word and its rhythmic materiality; its negotiations between the formal and the formless; its exponential xeno-embodiments; its lawfulness and its unruliness; its precision and its poetic slippages—all examined through the filter of the *sonic* word (including the unspoken, or as Beckett put it, the *unword*—its attendant specter) and in particular how it functions as a

paradigmatic manifestation of the pervasiveness, persistence and proliferation of the performative. Silence as experienced by John Cage, passivity as activated by Maurice Blanchot, nonperformance as articulated by Fred Moten will all come into play via the expanded notion of the *sonic* that will be explored in this course. Noise, voice, orality, glossolalia, listening, mutism, mistranslations, stutterance, soundfulness, non-cochlear sound (Kim-Cohen), parasitology (Serres), syncope (Clément)—an incipient list of known terms and neologisms that exemplify the range of connected divagations the course will attempt to trace. Daniella Cascella in *En Abîme: Listening, Reading, Writing* considers "writing as *the other side* of sound. Instead of looking for answers it echoes questions with questions, riddles with riddles, it adds complexity to complexity. Writing sound traces the shifting in the tuning of my words, of my questions, of sounds drifting." Questions will undoubtedly abound, and we will be posing them aloud: How does one approach a writing that includes sound within its core constituency? What does such a writing sound like? What are the social and sensorial stakes of such sonophilia theories and practices?

Grading

Short Response Paper	10% due October 7 (3-5 pages, or approx. 1200 words)
Presentation	25% November 29 in the Artlab
Final Research Paper	40% due December 18 (15-20 pages, or approx. 5000 words)
Attendance/Participation	25%

Short Response Paper

- A brief analysis of one or more of the assigned readings.

Presentation

- Presentations will take place in the Artlab in the Visual Arts Building within the context of an exhibition primarily focused on sound art. A brief written synopsis (1-2 pages) and audiovisual documentation may be required in cases where the presentation takes place outside of class time, or is otherwise difficult to fully experience in person. Content of the presentation may include material that will end up in the final research paper but must be adapted for the exhibition context.

Final Research Paper

- The major component of the course must be a text containing original research that relates to the course content. Hybrid forms of writing are welcome. Topics do not need to be approved by the instructor but you are encouraged to discuss your ideas as they coalesce around a topic.

Attendance/Participation

- The class will primarily be held in a seminar style and as such, discussion by those in attendance is paramount. The level of discussion is expected to be thoughtful, timely, informed, focused, sensitive, and respectful.

Important Information Regarding Assignments:

- Late penalty is 2% per day, including weekends.
- Extensions will be granted only with medical certification or under other extenuating circumstances.
- Written assignments must be submitted by email as a Microsoft Word file.
- All written assignments should be double-spaced, and in a 12-point font. The first page should include the following information: your name, essay title, and the date.
- All written assignments should follow the Chicago or MLA style guides. They should use footnotes (not endnotes) and contain a bibliography.

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, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.
- Students should be conscientious at all times (i.e. in both written and oral contexts) to explicitly note the borrowing of words and concepts from other sources.

Mental Health:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Schedule (subject to change)

All readings are to be found on the OWL site for the course

SEPT 6 - Week 1 - Introduction

- Intro
- Jean-François Lyotard, “Music, Mute” in *Postmodern Fables*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, 217-233.

SEPT 13 - Week 2 - Noisily Eventful

- Michel Serres, “La Belle Noiseuse” in *Genesis*, trans. Geneviève James and James Nielson, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995, 1-26.
- Yve Lomax, “A difficult beginning” and “A twittering noise” in *Sounding the Event*, London, UK: J.B. Tauris, 2005, 1-37.
- Lisa Robertson, “Disquiet” in *Nilling*, Toronto, ON: Bookthug, 2012, 55-70.

SEPT 20 - Week 3 - Bodily Grain

- Roland Barthes, “Music’s Body” in *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard, University of California Press, 1991 [1982], 243-312.
- Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictée*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001 [1982], 1-59.
- Michel de Certeau, “Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias”, *Representations*, Volume 0, Issue 56, Special Issue: The New Erudition (Autumn, 1996), 29-47.

SEPT 27 - Week 4 - Writing Sound

- Salomé Voegelin, “Sound Words and Sonic Fictions: Writing the Ephemeral” in *The Routledge Companion to Sounding Art*, eds. Marcel Cobussen et al. New York, NY, 2017, 61-70.
- Daniella Cascella, *En Abîme: Listening, Reading, Writing*, Alresford, UK: Zero Books, 2012, 71-116.
- Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva*, trans. Stefan Tobler, New York: New Directions, 2012 [1973], 3-35.

OCT 4 - Week 5 - Utter Passivity

- Herman Melville, “Bartleby the Scrivener” in *Billy Budd and Other Stories*, New York: Penguin, 1986 [1853], 3-46.
- Gilles Deleuze, “Bartelby; or, The Formula” and “He Stuttered” in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, 68-90 and 107-114.
- Elizabeth Hardwick, “Bartleby in Manhattan” in *The Collected Essays of Elizabeth Hardwick*, New York, NY: NYRB, 2017, 323-334 [PDF: 284-293].
- Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock, Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1995, 1-35.

OCT 11 - Week 6 - Somatic Speech

- Hélène Cixous, “Without end, no, State of drawingness, no, rather: The Executioner’s taking off” and “Writing blind: conversation with the donkey” in *Stigmata*, New York, NY: Routledge, 1998, 16-29 and 115-125.
- Octavia Butler, “Speech Sounds” in *Bloodchild*, New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2005, [1983], 87-110.
- Julietta Singh, “The Inarticulate Trace” in *No Archive Will Restore You*, Punctum Books, 2018, 57-80.

OCT 18 - Week 7 - Still Soundless

- Susan Sontag, “The Aesthetics of Silence” in *Styles of Radical Will*, New York, NY: Picador, 2002, 3-34.
- Lisa Schwartz, “Understanding Silence: Meaning and Interpretation” in *On Silence*, ed. Claire MacDonald, Performance Research Vol. 4 No. 3 Winter 1999, 8-11.
- Samuel Beckett, “Fizzles” in *The Complete Short Prose 1929-1989*, New York, NY: Grove, 1995, 224-246.
- Samuel Beckett, “Worstward Ho” in *Nohow On*, New York, NY: Grove, 1996 [1983], 89-116.
- Heinrich Böll, “Murke’s Collected Silences” in *The Stories of Heinrich Böll*, trans. Leila Vennewitz, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987, 495-514.

OCT 25 - Week 8 - Silencing Silence

- John Cage, “Experimental Music”, “Experimental Music: Doctrine”, and “Composition as Process” in *Silence*, Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1961, 7-56.
- G. Douglas Barrett. “Introduction” and “The Limits of Performing Cage: Ultra-red’s SILENT/LISTEN” in *After Sound: Toward a Critical Music*, London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2016, 1-38.
- Lucia Farinati and Claudia Firth. Selections from *The Force of Listening*. Berlin: Errant Bodies Press, 2017, 4-39 and 56-73.

NOV 1 - Week 9 - Operation Theoperatricks

- Fred Moten, “Resistance of the Object: Adrian Piper’s Theatricality” in *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, 233-254.
- Adrian Piper, Selections from *Out of Order, Out of Sight Volume I: Selected Writings in Meta-Art 1968-1992*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996, 27-55.
- Fred Moten, “Liner Notes for *Lick Piece*” in *Black and Blur*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017, 134-146.
- Wayne Kostenbaum, “The Queen’s Throat: Or, How to Sing” in *The Queen’s Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*, New York: Vintage/Random House, 1993, 154-175.
- Michel Leiris, “Opera: Music in Action” in *Brisées: Broken Branches*, trans. Lydia Davis, San Francisco: North Point Press, 1989 [1966], 260-266.

READING WEEK

NOV 15 - Week 10 - [TUNING SPECULATION AT ARRAY in TORONTO, NOV 15-17]

<https://www.theoculture.net/tuning-speculation-7-non/>

NOV 22 - Week 11 - Hear Here

- Andra McCartney, “Soundwalking at Night” in *Soundscape*, Volume 2 Number 1, July 2001, 25-27.
- Steve Peters, *Here*Ings: a sonic geohistory*, Albuquerque, NM: La Alameda Press, 2002.
- Brandon LaBelle, “I Am Sitting in a Room: Vocal Intensities” in *Background Noise*, London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2015, 99-107 and 123-132.
- Liz Kotz, “Max Neuhaus: Sound into Space” in *Max Neuhaus: Times Square, Time Piece Beacon*, eds. Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly, New York: Dia Art Foundation, 2009, 92-111.
- Lely, John and James Saunders. *Word Events: Perspectives on Verbal Notation*. New York, NY: Continuum, 2012. Selections:
 - Annea Lockwood, *From the River Archive* (1973), 248-250
 - Max Neuhaus, *LISTEN* (1966), 284-287
 - Pauline Oliveros, *Ear Piece* (1998), 288-294
 - Yoko Ono, RECORD OF 13 CONCERT PIECE PERFORMANCES, 295-303
 - Mieko (Chieko) Shiomi, *Event Scores* (1963-1964), 341-343
 - La Monte Young, *1960 Works*, 423-437

NOV 29 - Week 12 - ARTLAB Presentations [LAST CLASS]

[Alternate 1] - Breathing Words

- Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi, “I Can’t Breathe” and “Voice Sound Noise” in *Breathe: Chaos and Poetry*, South Pasadena, CA: 2018, 15-32.
- Ashon T. Crawley, “Introduction” and “Coda” in *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility*, New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2017, 1-31 and 251-269.
- Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Islands of Decolonial Love*, Winnipeg, MG: ARP Books, 2015, [selections].
- Nicole Brossard, *Fences in Breathing*, trans. Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood, Toronto: Coach House Books, 2009 [selections].

[Alternate 2] – Lists of Listens

- Ariana Reines, “Watson + Bell” in *Telephone*, New York City, NY: Wonder, 2018, 1-62.

- Avital Ronell, selections in *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech*, Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.
- Vivian Darroch-Lozowski, *Voice of Hearing*, Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 1984, 9-65.
- Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell, New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2007, 1-46.

[Alternate 3] – (Not) Seeing Sound

- Christof Migone, “Soundfulnessness” in *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Art*, eds. Jane Grant, John Matthias and David Prior, Oxford University Press, 2020 (forthcoming).
- Trinh T. Minh-Ha, “Holes in the Sound Wall” in *When the Moon Waxes Red*, New York: Routledge, 1995, 205-6.
- Seth Kim-Cohen, “Dams, Weirs, and Damn Weird Ears: Post-Ergonal Sound” in *The Routledge Companion to Sounding Art*, eds. Marcel Cobussen et al. New York, NY, 2017, 51-59.
- Sarat Maharaj, “Xeno-Epistemics: Makeshift Kit for Sounding Visual Art as Knowledge Production and the Retinal Regimes” in *Documenta 11 Catalogue*, Hatje Cantz, 2002, 71-84.

Bibliography

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- Austin, J.L. *How To Do Things With Words*. Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Banks, Joe. "Rorschach Audio: Ghost Voices and Perceptual Creativity" in *Leonardo Music Journal*, Vol. II 2001, 77-83.
- Barrett, G. Douglas. *After Sound: Toward a Critical Music*. London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Barthes, Roland. *The Responsibility of Forms*. Trans. Richard Howard. University of California Press, 1991.
- _____. *The Pleasure of the Text*. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.
- Bernstein, Charles (ed.). *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Cage, John. *Empty Words: Writings 73-78*. Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1981.
- _____. *Silence*. Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 1961.
- Campt, Tina M. *Listening to Images*. Duke University Press, 2017.
- Carson, Anne. "The Gender of Sound" in *Glass, Irony & God*. New York, NY: New Directions, 1992, 119-139.
- Cascella, Daniela. *Singed: Muted voice-transmissions, after the fire*. London, UK: Equus Press, 2017.
- _____. *F.M.R.L. - Footnotes, Mirages, Refrains and Leftovers of Writing Sound*. Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2015.
- _____. *En Abîme: Listening, Reading, Writing*. Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2012.
- Cavarero, Adriana. *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*. Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Cecchetto, David, Marc Couroux, Ted Hiebert, Eldritch Priest (The Occulture). *Ludic Dreaming: How to Listen Away from Contemporary Technoculture*. London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2017.
- Cha, Theresa Hak Kyung. *Dictée*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001 [1982].
- Cixous, Hélène. "Without End no State of Drawingness no, rather: The Executioner's Taking Off" in *Stigmata*. Routledge, 1998.
- _____. *Inside*. Trans. Carol Bakko. New York: Schocken, 1986.
- de Certeau, Michel. "Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias" in *Representations* 56, Fall 1996, 29-47.
- Clément, Catherine. *Syncopé: The Philosophy of Rapture*. Trans. Sally O'Driscoll and Deirdre M. Mahoney. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "He Stuttered" in *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*. Trans. Patrick Mensah. Stanford University Press, 1998.
- _____. *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- _____. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- Drobnick, Jim (ed.). *Aural Cultures*. Toronto: YYZ, 2004.
- Dworkin, Craig and Marjorie Perloff (eds.). *The Sound of Poetry - The Poetry of Sound*. University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Enns, Anthony. "Voices of the Dead: Transmission/Translation/Transgression" in *Culture, Theory & Critique*, 46(1) 2005, 11-27.
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- Farinati, Lucia and Claudia Firth. *The Force of Listening*. Berlin: Errant Bodies Press, 2017.
- Hegarty, Paul. *Noise/Music A History*. London: Continuum, 2007.
- Heller-Roazen, Daniel. *Echolalias: On the Forgetting of Language*. New York, NY: Zone Books, 2008.
- Jakobson, Roman. *On Language*. Eds. Linda R. Waugh and Monique Monville-Burston. Harvard University Press, 1990.
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- Kafka, Franz. "The Silence of the Sirens" in *The Complete Stories*. Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. New York: Schocken, 1971, 430-432.
- Kahn, Douglas. *Noise Water Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. MIT Press, 1999.

- Kahn, Douglas. "John Cage: Silence and Silencing", *Musical Quarterly* (1997) 81 (4): 556-59
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