

HIS 601
Research Seminar: Sonic & Visual History
Monday, 4:25-7:15
SBS S309
Prof. Eric Zolov

This research seminar explores the interconnected realms of sound and visual history. We will spend the first part of the course exploring the vibrant, interdisciplinary field of Sound Studies, whose influence has recently begun to spill over into History. How can sound be interrogated as historical text? How can historians *find* sound (methodologically), *interpret* history through sound (epistemologically), and integrate sound texts and soundscapes into our analysis of the past? We will then shift to the field of Visual Studies. Here we will focus in particular on certain modern genres of visual culture, such as photography, posters, and cartoons, with an eye toward linking the interpretative lens of visual culture with that of sonic culture. We will read and discuss various foundational texts of sound and visual studies, as well as selected chapters, articles, and other readings that demonstrate the important dialogue transpiring between historians and scholars of Sound and Visual Studies. These discussions will lay the foundation for students to develop a research topic of their choosing, with the goal of a final paper suitable for scholarly publication in an appropriate journal. The latter third of the course will thus focus on research and writing strategies, presentations of rough drafts, and peer review. This course is open to doctoral students working on any topic in any world area, time period, or affiliated field with History.

Course Requirements: Engaged participation is expected at every session. On the days we discuss readings, you must come prepared to class ready to discuss and raise questions regarding the assigned readings. On the days we discuss individual research, you are expected to come prepared to present on your own work and constructively engage with that of other students. I expect a high level of professionalism for all written work. This includes attention to spelling/grammar and the proper citation of footnotes using Chicago Manual of Style (CMS). For a refresher on how to cite using CMS, see the History Department website [here](#).

Grading:

Participation (25%): Informed participation in discussions, regular attendance, constructive feedback to peers.

Sonic Text Essay (25%): 5-7 page essay on a sonic text that integrates theoretical discussion from class readings. Note: This assignment may be used toward the final research paper.

Visual Text (25%): 5-7 page essay on a visual text (ideally, located in relationship to the sonic text writing) that integrates theoretical discussion from class readings. Note: This assignment may be used toward the final research paper.

Final Research Paper (25%): 25-35 page essay (including notes) formatted appropriately for submission to a relevant academic journal.

Student Accessibility Support Center: If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact [Student Accessibility Support Center](#), ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, Room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Student Accessibility Support Center. [Procedures and information](#).

Academic Integrity: Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty is required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty please refer to the [academic judiciary website](#).

Critical Incident Management: Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the [Office of University Community Standards](#) any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. Further information about most academic matters can be found in the [Undergraduate Bulletin](#), the [Undergraduate Class Schedule](#), and the [Faculty- Employee Handbook](#).

Readings: A readings packet covering assigned readings is available for purchase from the FedEx location in the basement of Melville Library.

Week I (Aug. 23): Introduction

Raymond Williams, "Structures of Feeling" in *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 128-35.

Week II (Aug. 30): Sound Studies - I (Theoretical Perspectives)

Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice" in Jonathan Sterne, ed., *The Sound Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 504-10.

R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1977), "Introduction," pp. 3-12.

Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. by Brian Massumi, Foreword by Fredric Jameson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), "Foreword" and Chap. 1, ("Listening"), pp. vii-20.

Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), "Hello!," pp. 1-30.

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Michele Hilmes, "Postscript: Sound Representation" in Alejandra Bronfman and Andrew Grant Wood, eds., *Media, Sound & Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), pp. 122-26.

Week III (Sept. 6): NO CLASS (Labor Day)

Week IV (Sept 13): Sound Studies - II (Case Studies)

Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the 19th-Century French Countryside*, trans. by Martin Thom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998; 1994), "Foreword," "Preface," and Chap. 4 ("The Auditory Markers of the Village").

Eric Drott, *Music and the Elusive Revolution: Cultural Politics and Political Culture in France, 1968-1981* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), Chap. 1 ("Music and May '68"), pp. 21-69.

Ross Brown, "The Eleventh of the Eleventh of the Eleventh: The Theater of Memorial Silence" in Karin Bijsterveld, ed., *Soundscapes of the Urban Past: Staged Sound as Mediated Cultural Heritage* (Berlin: Verlag, 2013), pp. 209-20.

Christine Ehrick, "Radio Transvestism and the Gendered Soundscape in Buenos Aires, 1930s-1940s" in Alejandra Bronfman and Andrew Grant Wood, eds., *Media, Sound & Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), pp. 18-34.

Week V (Sept 20): Sound Texts Workshop

Note: Students must circulate a draft of their paper to the entire class (including the professor) by 6pm Sunday before class. All papers must have an original title, page numbers, and properly formatted footnotes (not endnotes).

Week VI (Sept. 27): Individual Meetings

Week VII (Oct. 4): Visual Studies - I (Theoretical Perspectives)

Susan Sontag, "Posters: Advertisement, Art, Political Artifact, Commodity" in Dugald Stermer, *The Art of Revolution* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970). [Original print version is oversized; access online version [here](#).]

Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste and Juan Poblete, eds., *Redrawing the Nation: National Identity in Latin/o American Comics* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), "Introduction," pp. 1-16.

Allan Sekula, "Reading an Archive: Photography Between Labour and Capital" in Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, eds., *Visual Culture: A Reader* (London: Sage, 2007; 1999), pp. 181-92.

Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse" in Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, eds., *Visual Culture: A Reader* (London: Sage, 2007; 1999), pp. 370-78.

John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972), Chap. 7, pp. 129-54.

Week VIII (Oct. 11): NO CLASS (Fall Break)

Week IX (Oct. 18): Visual Studies - II (Case Studies)

Willem Melching, "Clash of the Icons: The Iconoclasm of the Image of the United States" in A. James McAdams and Anthony P. Monta, *Global 1968: Cultural Revolutions in Europe and Latin America* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), pp. 322-40.

Deborah Poole, "Landscape and the Imperial Subject: U.S. Images of the Andes, 1859-1930" in Gilbert Joseph, Catherine LeGrand, and Ricardo Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 107-138.

Isabella Cosse, *Mafalda: A Social and Political History of Latin America's Global Comic* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), Chap. 1 ("Marks of Origin: Middle Class, Modernization, and Authoritarianism"), pp. 12-53.

Mraz, *History and Modern Media: A Personal Journal* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2021), Chap. 2 ("Seeing Photographs Historically: A View From Mexico)," pp. 61-116.

Jessica Stites Mor, "Rendering Armed Struggle: OSPAAAL, Cuban Poster Art, and South-South Solidarity at the United Nations," *Anuario de Historia de América Latina* 56 (2019): 42-65. [See also the version posted on BB to access color images included in the article]

Week X (Oct. 25): Visual Texts Workshop

Note: Students must circulate a draft of their paper to the entire class (including the professor) by 6pm Sunday before class. All papers must have an original title, page numbers, and properly formatted footnotes (not endnotes).

Week XI (Nov 1): Individual Meetings

Note: Students must send to the professor in advance of the scheduled meeting a proposed research title and abstract, preliminary secondary source bibliography (journal articles and books), indication of research strategy (archival/other primary sources), a list of 3-5 appropriate journals for potential submission.

Week XII (Nov. 8): TBD

Week XIII (Nov. 15): Research Paper Workshop

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Note: Students must circulate a draft of their paper to the entire class (including the professor) by 6pm Sunday before class. All papers must have an original title, page numbers, and properly formatted footnotes (not endnotes).

Week XIV (Nov. 22): Presentations - I

Week XV (Nov. 29): Presentations - II

Week XVI (Dec 6): Last Class