

SYE 250 03 – Acoustic Ecology/Acoustic Communication  
Syllabus

**Sophomore Roundtable Seminar**  
**Acoustic Ecology/Acoustic Communication**  
SYE 250 03

3 credits  
Friday 9:00 – 11:50 AM  
Location: T-40 Room 2

Instructor: Steven M. Miller  
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www: <http://music.csf.edu/steven.html>

**Course Description:**

This course—through listening, reading, discussion, lectures, and individual creative & research projects—will investigate the changing relationships between humans and their surrounding sonic environments

The primary focus for the first half of the course will be to gain a clearer understanding of the effects of the sonic environment on the human species, as individuals and as larger societies, and to understand the ways in which humans are responsible for the drastic changes in the sonic environment, primarily since the advent of electronic and electroacoustic media technology. By understanding the processes of acoustic communication and the ecology of the acoustic environment, we will be in a better position to make optimum use of the remaining beneficial acoustic environments, and to possibly re-think the present course of audio technology and its uses.

The second half of the course will consist of individual and group creative and research projects documenting the local sonic environment. The projects will be accompanied by a substantial essay that documents the project and relates it to the wider field of activity in Acoustic Ecology and Acoustic Communication.

The semester will culminate in public presentations of all projects.

**Course Abstract:**

The radical transformations of the acoustic environment over the last 50-75 years in many ways parallel that of the natural biological environment. Through the development and introduction of industrial and electronic media technology, humans have altered the natural balances of sonic elements in the environment. These balances that existed prior to the industrial and electronic revolutions are in various cases endangered or extinct, and the introduction of audio technology has radically altered the way we encounter, identify and interact with our sonic surroundings.

We will examine some of the ways that we take these changes for granted, and how they are altering our very bodies, as well as our relationships to each other and our environment. We will seek to understand the principles of optimally functioning acoustic environments and the principles of good acoustic design. We will put this knowledge to work in support of creative and research initiatives that provide documentation of the changing soundscape and/or explore beneficial uses of electroacoustic technology for creative purposes.

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**Required Texts:**

- 1) Barry Truax. Acoustic Communication, 2nd Edition. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 2001.
- 2) R. Murray Schaffer. The Soundscape. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994.
- 3) Steve Peters. Here-ings; A Sonic Geohistory. Albuquerque: La Alameda Press, 2002.
- 4) David Dunn. Why Do Wales and Children Sing? Santa Fe: EarthEar, 1999.
- 5) Articles on reserve in library

**Online resources:**

The following websites will be critical resources for course-related information:

- 1) World Forum for Acoustic Ecology: <http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/wfae/home/>
- 2) Acoustic Ecology Institute: <http://www.acousticecology.org/>

Each student will be required to join the WFAE email discussion list for the duration of the semester. Follow the directions on the 'Online Discussion' link on the WFAE site.

**Expectations Concerning Student Work:**

- 1) All students will be expected to actively participate in class discussions, complete all written assignments and projects on time, complete all reading assignments prior to the associated discussion sessions, and attend all classes. Excessive absences will negatively impact the student's semester grade.
- 2) All students will be responsible for completing assigned readings, papers and projects. While acknowledging and allowing for exceptional circumstances, students are strongly encouraged to complete assignments in a timely manner. Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the due date. Late assignments will receive half-credit
- 3) There will be a midterm project, midterm exam, and a final semester project with paper and public presentation. Any student who fails to turn in a midterm paper, midterm exam, or final project will automatically earn a semester grade of 'F'.
- 4) As this is a seminar, significant importance will be placed on active and appropriate student participation in all facets of the course. Students will be expected to arrive at each class on time, well prepared and able to make important and productive contributions.

**Projects:**

There will be two major projects for the semester. Please consult the project descriptions and semester schedule for details and due dates.

- 1) Midterm:
  - Critical essay
  - Exam
- 2) Final:
  - Project
  - Paper
  - Public presentation

**Grading:**

Participation	10%
Midterm essay & exam	40%

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<u>Final Projects, etc.</u>	<u>50%</u>
Final Grade	100%

**Americans With Disabilities Act:**

The College of Santa Fe makes every effort to provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act. Students may receive the accommodations if they contact their professor and register with at the Center for Academic Excellence with the Disabilities Service Coordinator, Donna Collins, 473-6552.

**Note: All reasonable attempts will be made to adhere to the schedule & information in this syllabus. However, the instructor reserves the right to make accommodations & adaptations based on class progress, special opportunities, as well as occurrences outside the instructor's control.**