Course Description:

How can we know the world by its sounds? How is what we can know through attending to sound different from what we can know through the intrinsically objectifying sense of sight? How can understanding a place's acoustical ecology contribute to understanding the role various kinds of music-making play in creating or sustaining that ecology? How can such an understanding influence our own expressive uses of sound there?

This course will provide several answers. Drawing from the insights of acoustemology, sound studies and the new scholarship on auditory culture as well as from traditional scholarship on music, we will focus on how we can hear place, history, sociality, culture and contemporary political tensions in the characteristic sounds of Florence. The course's work will include listening, reading, fieldwork assignments, collective "field trips" and attendance at several live musical events. It will culminate in a collaborative web-based project aimed at producing an interactive acoustical "map" of contemporary Florence.

Required texts and tools:

1. **Access to a digital audio recorder** (This could be your cell phone, mp3 player, or laptop, or it could be a digital recorder that you purchase specifically for this course).
2. **Readings and audio files from Blackboard site** (to include excerpts from the writings of such people as Murray Shaefer (soundscapes), Steven Feld (acoustemology) Adam Krims (sound and urban geography), Bruce Smith (historical acoustemology), Christopher Small (thick description of musical performances), as well as material by or about such locally important historical figures as Francesco Landini (contemporary of Dante and Petrarch), Guillaume Dufay (who composed music for the dedication of the Duomo's dome), Vincenzo Galilei (father of the astronomer, and a prominent 16th-century music theorist), Bartolomeo Cristofori (18th-century inventor of the piano), Luciano Berio (20th-century composer of acoustical and electronic musics), and local government ordinances about Florence's acoustical environment.

Course Requirements:

1. **Attendance, completion of all assignments, and participation** at all class meetings. 25%
2. **Auditory journal** (a set of field recordings, preserved on CD, plus written reflections on each field-recording exercise; see below for detailed instructions) 25%
3. **Two quizzes, 22 Feb and 19 April** 20%
4. **Contribution toward final project** (audio files and text) 30%

Academic Courtesy and Integrity. We are so small a community that it hardly seems right even to bring these things up, but: please do your work in a timely way, and please do it yourself, in conformity with the university's policy on academic integrity. Thank you.
Auditory Journal. 25%

12 times in the course of our 13-week semester, I want you to listen acutely to specific sounds of the city, to write one-page descriptions of those sounds, and to record samples that I will ask you to share with the group at the beginning of class. Some of the material to which I'll draw your auditory attention will be directly related to class material; some may not seem to be, but it's my intention that your individual "fieldwork" recordings will complement the material we have collectively prepared for class. Your auditory journals should, too, provide at least some of the "sound bank" and text on which we can draw as we design our website.

You'll see that in some cases, especially in the first part of the semester, I want you to have done a particular exercise by a particular date, more or less as part of your preparation for the next class. Please do these assignments on time, so that our class time on those specific days can really reflect your experience of Florence's acoustic environment.

Finally, I ask that you return to each journal entry after each class, and add to it any new ideas you've had as a result of our class. Use this as a place to tell yourself what you learned that day—about sound, and about Florence.

Two quizzes, 22 Feb and 19 Apr. 20%

These are really meant as instruments by which you can be sure, yourselves, that you will return from your semester abroad "knowing new stuff," although it's also true that I am mindful that Italian students typically memorize large amounts of "stuff" and therefore often seem, in one way, to know more than American students.

I will invite you to join me in designing these quizzes. You should keep a list somewhere of terms, factoids, audio files, etc that you want to remember, that you think you ought to remember after you've gone from here. At the class meeting before each quiz, I will ask you to submit these items to the group. We'll spend 15<20 minutes agreeing on a list of items on which you'll be tested, and on the appointed day I will test you.

Contribution toward the final project. 30%

Instead of either a final exam or a set of final 'term' papers/projects, I propose that we create a collective final project that is an acoustemology of Florence made of audio (and possibly video) files with descriptive text. My hope is that this material will become a website that all of us can revisit and enjoy long after we've gone home. I have arranged for our research assistant in New York, ethnomusicology doctoral student Sonia Gaind, to be available as a sound engineer/producer for us beginning the week of April 26. Sonia (and I) will use ProTools to manipulate audio files that you provide, and I will hire someone to create a website that can receive these files.

Some of the material (both audio and text) that you gather for your Auditory Journal may turn out to be directly useful to this project. Nonetheless, I encourage you to keep your ears 'tuned,' so to speak, for any interesting and characteristically Florentine sound you hear. Also, I encourage you to keep your digital recorder and a notebook close to hand, so you can record in both digital and written form what you've heard that is interesting, and why. (This could be, I dunno, the sounds of the train station; or the sound of a Tenax DJ's beat from half a kilometer away; or the sound of people humming along
to Aida at the Teatro Comunale; or, surely?, the unforgettable sound of the Scoppio del Carro.) I have set aside time in the second half of the semester for us to sift through our materials, and to discuss the kinds of things that really ought to be part of any representation of Florence's soundscape.

Detailed instructions will doubtless follow once Sonia and I have ProTools, which is backordered at the NYU Bookstore. Meantime, your mission is to listen, to think, and to record.
Schedule of Classes

1 Feb  Toward an acoustemology of Florence

8 Feb  Hearing history and time/space/power

15 Feb  San Miniato and vs. Piazzale Michelangelo

22 Feb  Noise pollution and the state
***quiz today, on terms/concepts we will have chosen as crucial***

1 Mar  Greatest hits of the Italian Renaissance

8 Mar  Architettura sonora
***Field trip! Class begins at 10 am sharp at New Sonic Garden at Castello del Bisarno. Details on transportation to follow.***

SPRING BREAK

22 Mar  Language and Voice

29 Mar  Language, Song and Opera: the Florentine tradition
***Guest lecturer/performer Elena Cecchi Fedi***

5 Apr  Soundscapes of Tourism and Immigration

12 Apr  Inventing the pianoforte
***Field trip! Class begins at 10 am sharp at the Accademia Bartolomeo Cristofori, via Camaldoli, 7/r. Details on transportation to follow.***

19 Apr  La vita musical dell'alta borghesia (or, "concert life" in Florence)
***quiz today, on terms/concepts we will have chosen as crucial***

26 Apr  Tempo Reale/Real Time (creating new music in Florence)
***Field trip! Class begins at 10 am sharp at Tempo Reale, via Pisana, 77. Details on transportation to follow***

***proposed audio files for our website due to sonia.gaind@nyu.edu TODAY***

3 May  our acoustemologies
[Why and how have we chosen the sounds to be included in an acoustemology of Florence? Each of us should come prepared with our auditory journals, and with ideas for the proposed text of our collective website.]
Assignments (except for the first one, all assignments [reading, listening, field visit, etc] should be done before the meeting of the class under which they are listed. All reading and listening assignments will be available at the Course Documents section of our Blackboard site.

for 1 February,

To review and reflect on the ideas I presented in our first class, you should read

- Bruce R. Smith, "Tuning into London c1600," ACR 127-135
- Murray Schaefer, "Glossary of Soundscape Terms," from The Soundscape. Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World (Destiny Books, 1993; first published 1978), 271-75 [I apologize now for having, myself, cut off some words on the RH margins when I was scanning this item: I think you'll still be able to understand the definitions, though.]

And, of course, you should do the first exercise in your Auditory Journal, being sure to bring your audio files to class on 8 February.

for 8 February, "Hearing history and time/space/power"

Please read

- Kate Colleran, "Scampanata at the widows' windows: a case-study of sound and ritual insult in cinquecento Florence," Urban History 36.3 (2009), 359-378

Consider re-reading Bruce Smith, "Tuning into London c1600," too. Or reading him along with these people.

As you read, think about 1) the problem of "hearing" history--that is, of hearing sounds that no longer vibrate in the air; 2) the related problem of writing (non-linguistic) sound in (silent) language; 3) the extent to which sound can articulate--that is, either 'speak' or 'mark the boundaries of'--time, or space, or public/private, or gender. Be thinking, too, about the bells you hear in the city, and about whether you've heard anyone using sound to shame someone else.

And please do the second exercise for your Auditory Journal.
for 15 February, "San Miniato and vs. Piazzale Michelangelo"

Please, by no later than Saturday, 12 February, read

- *The Rule of St. Benedict*, at least pp. 1-27, although you may want to read the whole thing, which will be in Course Documents

Please, also by then, listen to

- the Vespers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, available as audio files in the Course Documents folder for this week. [There will also be a score for Second Vespers at Christmas,

And please do the third exercise for your Auditory Journal, which involves attending Vespers at San Miniato al Monte either Saturday, Sunday or Monday evening at 5:30 pm.

After you've gone to Vespers, please also read

- Paul Filmer, "Songtime. Sound Culture, Rhythm and Sociability," *ACR* 91-112

for 22 February, "'Noise pollution' and the state"

Review for short quiz on terms we will have chosen at the end of the last class. Quiz will be short-answer, and will take the first 20 minutes of class today.

Please read

- Karin Bijsterveld, "The Diabolical Symphony of the Mechanical Age. Technology and symbolism of Sound in European and North American Noise Abatement Campaigns, 1900-40," in *ACR* 165-189
- Schafer, "Noise," from *The Soundscape*, 181-202

And please do the fourth exercise for your Auditory Journal.

for 1 March, "Greatest Hits of the Florentine Renaissance"

Please read

- "Florence" in *Grove Music Online*, either by using the Bobst homepage (click on "Find Videos and Music"; click on "Music Research Guide"; click on "Grove Music Online (via Oxford Music Online"; click on "Grove") or give yourself a break and find the article in a folder with this date at Course Documents.

Please also listen to the audio excerpts in the same folder.
for 8 March, "Architettura Sonora"

Please read the catalogue for this firm (which is a subsidiary of B&C speakers) before our field trip to their laboratory garden.

And please do Exercise 6 for your Auditory Journal.
Auditory Journal Assignments Until Spring Break

**Exercise 1,** after class on 1 February, due 8 February. **A first soundscape.**

Spend a few hours--at least 2, but better an afternoon or an evening of your weekend--listening to the environment where you live. Which sounds define that space for you?

Write a one-page journal entry that describes those sounds, and identifies them in the analytical terms Schaefer uses (*keynote*, *soundmark*, *sound event*, *sound object* are likely terms). Would he call the environment where you live *lo-fi* or *hi-fi*?

Using your digital recorder, record the sounds that most characterize the environment where you live. Bring the recording to class, and be sure to save the audio file to your laptop for possible manipulation later in the semester.

In class on 8 February, we will spend the first 45 min or so processing the different soundscapes of the city, working with a map to locate particular clusters of *soundmarks* in particular neighborhoods. By the end of the class discussion of readings, we will have returned to these sounds, to ask how the *keynotes* and *soundmarks*, (and possibly the *sound events* and *sound objects* in our own experiences may have marked space, time, gender, class, ethnicity, economic activity, or history.

After class, add to your journal entry: what did you learn about Florence from this exercise, and our discussion?

**Exercise 2,** also due 8 February. **The Bells of Florence.**

Probably you have heard the city's bells many times already, either from La Pietra or in the centro, or from where you live. This exercise asks you to listen carefully to some bells, **twice**--once to write about them, and once to record them. Be sure to leave yourself time to do both before class ;)

Make a point of listening to the bells--really listening--at least once after you've read Niall Atkinson's conference paper "Sonic Armatures." Where are the bells you're listening to? What time of day is it, right now, as you listen? What do they seem to mean, in terms of marking time, or space, or some kind of power? Look around you to see how (if at all) other people are reacting to the bells.

Write a one-page journal entry describing as best you can the sounds of the bells, the movement of the sound through space, the meaning of the bells in terms of space, time, power, human reaction.

Record the bells, and bring the audio file to class on 8 February, being sure to save the file to your laptop first.

After class, add to your journal entry any more thoughts you have as the result of class discussion. What did you learn about Florence, about bells, about how sound can create patterns of sociality?
Exercise 3, due 15 February, San Miniato and Piazzale Michelangelo

This exercise is about sound and silence. It is also about the presence of the past, and about one of the most striking juxtapositions of acoustic tradition and acoustic modernity that you could encounter in Florence. The ancient monastic church of San Miniato al Monte (founded in the 8th century by Benedictines, the current building done 1207) is only about 400 yards from one of the city's most touristy, young-couples-in-love-y, cheezy-tourist-schlock-hawking open areas, the Piazzale Michelangelo (built in 1875). San Miniato's monks have traditionally lived under the rule of silence, breaking their silence to sing/chant the "Offices," or prayer hours, that were invented by St. Benedict (480-547, a native of Norcia in Umbria). In recent years they have taken to singing publicly one of the evening "Offices", known as "Vespers," every day at 5:30 pm in the lower chapel (beneath the main altar).

After you have done your reading and listening for this week, go to San Miniato al Monte. Plan to arrive well before 5:30 pm. If possible, you should try to keep silent for the whole day before you go; in any case, plan not to speak to anyone for several hours before.

1. Listen to the sound in the church, noting keynote, soundmarks, etc. How does this sound feel to you? What sounds tell you that Vespers are about to begin?
2. Listen to Vespers (possibly trying to follow, more or less, from the score I'll have posted to Course Documents.) Pay attention to who sings when, what the singing (or perhaps you'll call it "chanting") is like, how and when the style of singing changes. Imagine this as the only way you would use your voice in a day. Imagine this as the only human vocalization you would hear in a day. Imagine both in juxtaposition to the "silence" you've heard in the church. Remember your thoughts so you can include them in your one-page journal entry.
3. If your mind wanders, try to watch the singers' bodies closely. Are they making a lot of effort to sing? How do their voices interact with the architecture of the space? What would you want to ask an architect? Remember your thoughts so you can include them in your journal entry.
4. When the service is over, leave and go directly to Piazzale Michelangelo (the first gelateria you come to has great, made-on-the-premises, gelato). Listen to it--keynote, soundmarks, signals, noise, lo-fi or hi-fi--the whole Schafer works. Feel free to speak at any time.

When you get home, write a one-page journal entry about how sound and silence define these spaces. Also, maybe, how being silent feels.

If you can do so discretely, record sounds from San Miniato that are not part of Vespers (which you should not record, please, out of respect for the monks), and sounds from Piazzale Michelangelo.
Exercise 4, due 22 February, Noise, Acoustical Ecology and/or Expressive Culture

Spend another morning or afternoon somewhere out in the city, in your listening to the environment. Try to figure out what counts as noise there (and to whom), what counts as 'expressive culture' (and to whom). Take notes about your first impressions, then think through the answers to the questions below.

- What percentage of people, roughly, seem to interact with the environment by making sounds?
- What are those sounds?
- Do those interactions somehow "express" something? about whom? to whom?
- Are there people making sounds whom you can't see? (e.g., bellringers, operators of police sirens, opera singers or piano students practicing, stonemasons grinding)
- Are there people paying no attention to the sounds around them? (How do you know???)
- Are there people who seem irritated by the sounds around them? (How do you know?)
- What percentage of the people o the street are listening to personal audio devices (iPods, mp3 players)? to telephones? Compare with your sense of the percentage listening to such devices on a street in New York (near NYU, and/or near where you live).
- How many languages do you hear? What are they? How does the language spoken match up with (or not!) your perception of who looks "Italian" or not? Who's "Florentine" or not?

Write a one-page journal entry describing the acoustical ecology of the place you've observed. Be sure to mention any examples of "expressive culture" and "noise." Record some sounds that you think exemplify your description.

Exercise 5, to be done at your convenience, Music Unamplified.

Attend any musical performance you choose, as long as the music you will hear will not be electronically amplified.

Listen to **everything!** The sounds outside the venue, the sounds in the bathroom or bar before the performance begins, the sounds of people moving in their seats or snoring softly in the slow movements. The sound of the "silence" in the venue when the music is about to begin, or when the musician(s) create a moment of silence by their phrasing. Record whatever seems worth remembering or bringing to class.

If at all possible, find a recording of at least one piece/song you have heard in this live performance. Listen to it.

Write a one-page journal entry that 1) describes the relationship of the music to all the other sounds in the performance venue and 2) compares the sound of the live performance to the recorded one. In each case, consider how the act of listening made you feel, physically and emotionally.
**Exercise 6, due 8 March, Soniferous Gardens**

In preparation for our field trip to the New Sonic Garden laboratory operated by *architettura sonora* at Castello del Bisarno, go to a garden (a park) and listen. Try the Boboli Gardens, or the Cascine, or the Bobolino (out Porta Romana, bearing hard left onto Viale Nicolò Machiavelli), or Piazza d'Azeglio, or the strip of park in the Oltrarno between Ponte Vespucci and Ponte della Vittoria, or ... well, be creative! Find a greenspace, even if it's La Pietra.

Listen. What is the *keynote*? the *soundmarks*? etc? What balance is struck among sound, silence, noise, birdsong, humansong, human speech? Does it change as you walk along? How are people interacting with this acoustical environment? (Ask yourself the same questions you did in Exercise 4, to determine acoustical ecology.)

How do you think the acoustical ecology of this garden might have been achieved?

Write a one-page journal entry about this soniferous garden.

Record *keynote, soundmarks*, and other notable sounds.