

## **Expressive Culture: Sounds Technology and Music in the 20th and 21st Century**

Instructor: Jaime Oliver La Rosa

Office Hours: Wednesday 2:00-3:15 or by appointment. / Office: Waverly Building, Room No. 266F

Email: [jo57@nyu.edu](mailto:jo57@nyu.edu) / Office Phone: *pending*

### **Recitation Instructors:**

Samuel Zerín

Section 001 (M 9:30-10:45am, Silver 218) / Section 002 (M 11:00-12:15pm, Silver 218)

Office Hour: W 9:30-10:45 / Office Hour Location: 268 Waverly

Email: [sez233@nyu.edu](mailto:sez233@nyu.edu)

Catherine Provenzano

Section 003 (R 2:00-3:15pm, Silver 320) / Section 004 (R 3:30-4:45pm, Silver 320)

Office Hour: *pending* / Office Hour Location: 268 Waverly

Email: [cap445@nyu.edu](mailto:cap445@nyu.edu)

### **Course Description:**

Think about your favorite music, musician, or song, and then think about the technologies that make them and your listening possible: microphones, recording studios, CDs, mp3 files, musical instruments, speakers, iPods, etc. Are these technologies essential to this music? Are they circumstantial? In this class we will explore music produced in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and its relation to technology, as a means to develop critical listening strategies.

Some musical practices are overtly technological and use screens, speakers, computers, and other gadgets as central aspects of their music. Other musical practices seem, at least at first sight, non-technological, but as we will see in class, these musics provide us with interesting spaces for discussion.

The primary materials for this class are music recordings and readings. The repertoire of music we will listen to will comprise mostly two sets of music: (1) experimental electronic and computer music, and (2) a diverse range of popular music. Furthermore, we will attempt to explore the intersections and interactions between

them. We will listen to the music examples to get our initial, gut reactions; then, we will use primary source readings to contextualize these works; and finally, we will use analytical readings to learn about the many ways we can think about them.

I hope that through these materials we will be able to better approach the following questions: What is music? What is sound? What is noise? What is music technology? Is music inherently technological? Is technology expressive?

***Concert Reports, Short Papers, and Quizzes:***

Short papers (2-4 pages) should help you to obtain experience for writing your concert reports and final papers. We do not expect you to provide a set of directionless unconnected observations, but rather to construct arguments that support a clearly defined thesis or central point.

You will be required to go to two concerts and write a report (3-5 pages) on each of them that applies some of the ideas developed in class. You will be able to choose from a set of independent NYC venues: The Stone, The Kitchen, Le Poisson Rouge, and Roulette. Tickets vary in price, but you should expect to spend at least \$10 for each concert.

Quizzes are necessary to check that you have been reading and listening to the assigned materials, but they also serve as lists of bullet/talking points, vocabulary, and insights that can help you in class discussions and study sessions.

Your final paper (5-7 pages) will be your opportunity to show us that you can choose a work of music, ideally one that you care about, and engage critically with it. We will require you to present your tentative subject for us to approve it, and we will work with you in shaping your paper, suggesting concepts that might apply or sources that might be helpful.

***Required Materials: Texts, Audio and Video:***

There is no textbook for this course. Instead, a collection of reading materials will be available as PDFs through New York University's Classes system. Bibliographic information for the required readings are given below in the class schedule. Audio examples will also be available on NYU Classes as mp3 files. We will sometimes also use websites and online videos.

***Participation:***

Participation in lectures and sections is not only part of your grade, but it allows you to contribute to the development of the class. If something interests you and you contribute, chances are you will have better explored, and perhaps even guided, the design and development of the class. This class will be what you make of it.

## ***Attendance, due dates and quizzes:***

Attendance at all lectures and sections is mandatory, and due dates for your assignments are not flexible. You should not expect an extension for a paper or a make-up quiz unless you provide us with a written, detailed request, subject to the professor's approval, in advance of the due date. Similarly, an absence will bring down your attendance score unless you provide appropriate reasons for your inability to attend (i.e. a note from your doctor.). Computer meltdowns are not an appropriate excuse. Backing up hard drives is a necessary, regular task for anyone who's work depends on a computer.

### ***Grading distribution:***

+ Concert Reports / Short Papers 30%

+ Quizzes 25%

+ Attendance and Participation 20%

+ Final Paper 25%

### ***Integrity of Scholarship:***

It is extremely important that you learn to properly engage with the work and ideas of other people by appropriately crediting their ideas as they impact your own. This means that you should reference them in the body of the text and include proper citations and bibliographical references. Any case of academic dishonesty will be reported immediately and may result in disciplinary action. This policy is taken extremely seriously by all of our faculty.

For more information on NYU's policies regarding academic integrity, please see this website: <http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html>

### ***Status of the Recitation Instructors:***

The recitation instructors for this course are brilliant graduate students who will soon be professors themselves. The recitation sessions that they lead are a central part of this course. Their evaluations of your written work and classroom participation will constitute the bulk of your grade. More importantly, they are on hand to answer your questions, help you learn how to become better writers, thinkers, composers, and performers, and to make sure that your experience this semester is rich and positive. I trust that you will work closely with them, learn from them, and treat them with respect.

### ***Etiquette:***

*Carrying on conversations during lectures and recitation sections is distracting and disrespectful, so please*

refrain from talking when lectures and sections are in progress (this also holds for when video and audio examples are being played). We require you to concentrate on the issues being discussed and engage with them. If you want a good class, then you must make it good. Questions, comments, insights, etc. are more than welcome during lectures; just raise your hand and make your comments available to the entire class, not just the person sitting next to you. In recitation sections, of course, you should routinely contribute to discussions.

*Please do not use your computer or telephone during lectures or sections, not even discretely. Furthermore, turn your cellphones off so that they don't interrupt the lectures and discussions.*

***Status of This Syllabus:***

This syllabus is a working document. As the semester progresses, we may make changes to reflect the needs of the group and the schedules of guest lecturers. Updated versions of the syllabus will be posted on the NYU Classes site and mentioned in class.