

Music, Sound, and the Environment Topics, Fall 2025

Week 1	Topics in Course	What We DID
	1 intro stuff	
	intro stuff	Groupwork in class on sound walking within Crane
2	Soundwalk #1	
	Representing Nature #1	Lecture on how composers have evoked the environment, from antiquity to Romanticism to mid-20th century (covered “the pastoral,” Vivaldi, Enlightenment ideas, Romanticism and the sublime, Beethoven, Mahler, Strauss, Amy Beach, Jean Sibelius, William Grant Still). Passed some scores around class. Assigned reading: Denise von Glahn, Excerpt from <i>The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape</i> (about Niagara Falls). Listening: Anthony Heinrich, “The War of the Elements and Thundering of Niagara, Capriccio” (1845) and Michael Daugherty, “Niagara Falls” (1997)
3	Representing Nature #2	Finished our discussion of Niagara Falls representation in music. I lectured on the meaning of “nature,” and how nature was often gendered in the 1800s (summary from Denise Glahn, <i>Music and the Skillful Listener: American women compose the natural world</i>). In-class listening: Libby Larsen’s <i>downwind from roses in maine</i> (2008), see handout. Groupwork on Julia Wolfe’s <i>Anthracite Fields</i> (2015).
	Representing Nature #3	Finished discussion of <i>Anthracite Fields</i> . <i>In-class short lecture on Pauline Oliveros</i> Assigned reading: Glahn, Denise. Excerpt on Pauline Oliveros from <i>Music and the Skillful Listener: American Women Compose the Natural World</i> Listening: Pauline Oliveros, “Alien Bog” (1967) In-class “performance” of Oliveros, Sonic Meditations “Environmental Dialogue” and “Rock Piece”
4	Indigenous listening #1	In-class reading: excerpts from Robin Wall Kimmerer, <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> , and an excerpt from Dylan Robinson, <i>Hungry Listening</i> , discussion of animacy Listening: several Raven Chacon works, including “Maneuvering the Apostles.” Homework: Images of animals and plants (naming) in Potsdam
	Indigenous listening #2	Assigned reading: Short excerpt from Hamill, Chad S. (čnaq'ymi). “Coyote Made the Rivers: Indigenous Ecology and the Sacred Continuum in the Interior Northwest.” Listening: Interview with Tanya Tagaq; Woody Guthrie “Roll on Columbia” In-class work: Lecture on dam projects in the Pacific Northwest; discussion of Hamill article in-class
5	Indigenous listening #3	In-class work: Groupwork on 2 websites (“Weaving Musical Spaces of Indigenous Resistance for Environmental Justice” and “Indigenous Song Keepers Reveal Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Music” —we all added a point and a link.
	Interspecies music #1	Assigned reading: Part 1 of Emily Doolittle, “Crickets in the Concert Hall: A History of Animals in Western Music,” Listening: 3 excerpts about bird song: Clement Janequin, Heinrich Biber, and Olivier Messiaen. In-class work: Showed some traditional relationships between humans and animals, bestiaries, played a bit of Ralph Vaughan Williams “The Lark Ascending” and Ottorino Respighi’s <i>The Pines of Rome</i> , also visited a website about Messiaen.
6	Interspecies music #2	In-class: Finished up our discussion of Doolittle and animal sounds. Histories of bird song recordings Introduction of “zoo-musicology.” Mentioned additional examples of animal musics: sled dog musics, elephant orchestra, human/animal encounters via social media Listening: Ravel, <i>L'Enfant et les sortilèges</i> , Einojuhani Rautavaara, <i>Cantus Arcticus</i> , cats and dogs of TikTok Homework: Animal sounds of Potsdam.
	Interspecies music #3	Assigned reading: Robert C. Cook, “Heterospecific Song and Ecological Politics: Whale Song and Crumb’s <i>Vox balanae</i> .” Listening: George Crumb, <i>Vox balanae</i> (1972), John Williams, <i>Jaws</i> (1975) In-class work: passed around Crumb scores to look at his musical practices, listened to actual whale song, discussion of reading and listening
7	River Sounds #1	In-Class: Is a River Alive? Discussion from Robert Macfarlane’s <i>Is A River Alive?</i> Listening: <i>Song of the Cedars</i> (2022), Giuliana Furci, Robert Macfarlane, César Rodríguez-Garavito, and Cosmo Sheldrake
	River Sounds #2	In Class: Work on river pieces: 1. Xian Xinghai, Yellow River Piano Concerto 2. Florence Price, Mississippi River Suite 3. Ann Southam, Rivers 4. Ferde Grofé, Mississippi Suite 5. Bedřich Smetana, “Vltava” (The Moldau) 6. Errollyn Wallen, Mighty River 7. Charles Ives, “The New River” 8. Robert Schumann, Rhenish Symphony 9. Tobias Picker, “Old and Lost Rivers” 10. Modest Mussorgsky, Khovanshchina: Dawn on the Moscow River 11. Toru Takemitsu, “Riverrun” 12. Charley Patton, “High water everywhere” 13. Aaron Copland, “At the River” 14. Eve Beglarian, BRIM: The River Project 15. Blind Lemon Jefferson, “Rising high water blues”

Week 1	Topics in Course	What We DID
8	No Class	Working on Creative Projects
9	River Sounds #3	River Sounds & Music and Disaster. Finish student discussion of river pieces. Listening: Bessie Smith, "Backwater Blues" (1927), William Grant Still, <i>The American Scene</i> (1957)
	Listening to the plant world #1	Guest lecture: Dr. Jerod Sommerfeldt (demo of plant music, playtronica). Assigned reading: Patrão, Carlo. "Botanical Rhythms: A Field Guide to Plant Music." Sounding Out: Sound Studies Blog. Listening: Some pieces discussed included Cactus Workestra, Child of Tree, Annea Lockwood Piano and Plants, leaf music, MIDI Sprout. In-class work: Discussed bioacoustics, music for plants, avant-garde musics. We also looked up "Music for Plants" on Apple music (weirdness), gave additional resources on Cage, "Child of Tree" and Annea Lockwood.
10	No Class	Working on Creative Projects
	Noise #1	In-class work: Class free-write on noise; discussion of boundaries of noise, noise music. "Oxford entry on Noise." Discussion of Futurist Manifesto, noise complaints, composers working with "noise" such as Varèse, noise music.
11	Noise #2	Assigned reading: Blog post to read: "The Noisiest City on Earth? or, What Can the 2012 Manhattan Noise Complaint Maps Really Tell Us?" In-class work: introduction to "sound studies." Surveyed books on sound studies, historical sound studies (Stoeber, Civil War sounds, my own article on Paris Commune, and others). Discussion of blog post, and Who has the right to be noisy in what spaces? Discussion of Manhattan noise complaints, and "noise" in relation to gender, race, and gentrification. Additional resource: Xochitl Gonzalez, "Why Do Rich People Love Quiet?"
	No Class	Finishing Creative Projects
12	Musical Responses to Disaster #1	In-class work: Finish noise: discussion of noise pollution and environmental justice. Listening: Terence Blanchard, <i>A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)</i> (2007); Laurie Anderson, <i>Landfall</i> (2018) In-class work: discussion of hurricanes, music & natural disaster, and Blanchard piece.
	Musical Responses to Disaster #2	Sharing on Creative Projects. Assigned reading: Diane Oliva. "Sonic Decency: Music in the Aftermath of Guatemala's 1773 Santa Marta Earthquake." In-class work: "touring" Antigua, Guatemala; discussion of article; connections between music & "natural disaster"
13	Musical Responses to Disaster #3	In-class: finish Oliva, also discuss Alex Ross's New Yorker review of " <i>Become Ocean</i> ." Listening: John Luther Adams. "Become Ocean" (2013); Jay Needham and Douglas Quin, <i>Resonant Evidence</i> (2012-2015)
	Music and Climate Change #1:	Assigned reading: Gibson, Chris. "A sound track to ecological crisis: tracing guitars all the way back to the tree." In-class work: discussion, additional examples of materials and scarcity
14	No CLASS:	Work on final projects
15	Music and Climate Change #2: Music industry—festivals and activism, Environmental Activism amongst popular musicians	Link to David Ingram, <i>The Jukebox in the Garden : Ecocriticism and American Popular Music Since 1960</i> . Discussed music festivals, touring, resource footprint of various musical materials and access such as records, streaming, etc. Discussed activism, such as "Music Declares Emergency." Did some group-work on finding additional sources on these issues.
	Presentations and wrap-up	