**Topics in Aesthetic and Cultural Theory: Film Sound**

**Special Subject: The Sounds of Struggle**

FMST 635H/4 or FMST835H/4, Winter 2013 (3 credits)

Place and Time: FB 250; Thursdays, 18.00-22.00

Instructor: Kay Dickinson

Office Hours: Tuesdays 10.30-12.30 and Thursdays 3-5, FB 315-1

Please email in advance for an appointment: kay.dickinson@concordia.ca

What are sound and cinema’s positions within how “the global” is understood? This course’s objective is to fathom how sound and cinema spring from, inhabit, represent, catalyze and respond to the movements of global capital and the political struggle it ignites. Topics will include: the global market; deregulation and privatization; sonic torture and warfare; employment precarity; environmental protest; voicing dissent and alternatives; appropriation and the dialectic; student uprisings; and the notion of the commons. Methodologically, the course is driven by the belief that one of the most exciting aspects of studying sound’s associations with cinema is the potential this interaction creates for drawing different disciplinary traditions into alignment. By bringing disparate, sometimes divergent theoretical writings into dialogue, both sound studies and film studies can thereby benefit from an invigoration of their canons, epistemological conventions and even modes of perception. Taking this principle one step further, most weeks, “The Sounds of Struggle” introduces one key reading that lies outside the typical boundaries of both sound and film studies. In this way, the course aims to encourage MA students to fulfil one of the main criteria of graduate research: to look beyond their subject area for scholarship that will expand its current scope.

**Course Commitments**

Keeping up-to-date with your reading is an essential requirement this course and you will be assessed, in part, on how you respond to the set texts (see below). You can download these from the moodle page for this course and you are expected to bring them along to class in whatever format is most convenient for you.

**Assignments**

**Contribution to Class Discussion (20%):** Each week, before noon on the Tuesday prior to class, you are required to post a response to the coming class’ set texts on the designated moodle forum. In order to pass this course, you must contribute eight out of a possible eleven posts on time. For each teaching session, one or two students will assemble a set of thought-provoking questions that will prompt productive class discussion. Their inspiration for this should be their colleagues’ moodle posts, gathering up pertinent issues or shared problems. The goal here is to encourage a synthesis and grounding of the diverse set readings, so you may wish to bring along a suitable clip for everyone to explore.

**Mid-Term Paper (35%):** The first assignment asks you to undertake an in-depth analysis of any movie of your choosing (but not one screened in class) engaging the ideas expressed in just one of the following non-film studies texts:

* Jacques Attali’s “Sacrificing”
* David Harvey’s “Accumulation by Dispossession”
* Franco Berardi’s “The Precarious Soul”
* Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s “1837: Of the Refrain”

Please pay particular attention to sound. You are free to focus your argument on any dimension of the film, from its formal structure to its production or dissemination. This piece is due in by noon on Monday February 25th and should run at around 8 pages.

**Final Assignment (45%):** Address the following question in whatever manner suits you best (you will probably want to home in on a more specific angle of your own choosing):

* What role might cinema and sound play in political struggle?

Your response could, for instance, take the form of an art work, a piece of fiction, a protest, a manifesto, the re-editing of a movie or, of course, a standard essay. However, your submission must rigorously engage with the intellectual themes of the course. You should therefore coordinate well in advance with your instructor to insure that what you’re planning is of comparable ambition to that of your colleagues. If your assignment comes in the form of an essay, it should be 15-20 pages long. This work should be presented no later than 2pm on Friday April 19th.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**WEEK ONE: An Introduction to the Themes and Expectations of the Course**

**PART ONE: THE ISSUES**

**WEEK TWO: Sound, Cinema and the Global Market**

**Screening:**

*My Name is Khan* (Karan Johar, India, 2010)

**Readings:**

* Gopal, Sangita and Sujata Moorti. “Introduction: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance.” In *Global Bollywood: Travels of Hindi Song and Dance*, edited by Sangita Gopal and Sujata Moorti, 1-62. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
* Attali, Jacques. “Sacrificing.” In *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, translated by Brian Massumi, 24-45. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985.
* Rai, Amit S. Extract from *Untimely Bollywood: Globalization and India’s New Media Assemblage*, 11-20 Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

**WEEK THREE: Deregulating and Privatizing… via the Audio-Visual**

**Screening:**

*Ultimate Risk* (Adim Williams, Nigeria, 2006)

**Readings:**

* Adesokan, Akin. “Issues in the New Nigerian Cinema.” *Black Camera* 1 (2006): 6-11.
* Harvey, David. “Accumulation by Dispossession.” In *The New Imperialism*, 136-182. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
* Larkin, Brian. “Extravagant Aesthetics: Instability and the Excessive World of Nigerian Film.” In *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*, 168-216. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

**WEEK FOUR: Sonic Torture and the Spectacle of War**

**Screening:**

*Buried* (Rodrigo Cortés, Spain/USA, 2010)

**Readings:**

# Mirzoeff, Nicholas. “The Banality of Images.” In *Watching Babylon: the War in Iraq and Global Visual Culture*,67-116. New York: Routledge, 2005.

* Cusick, Suzanne.“Music as Torture, Music as Weapon.” *TRANS Revista Transcultural de Musica*, 2006. http://www.sibetrans.com/trans/a152/music-as-torture-music-as-weapon
* Goodman, Steve. “1933: Abusing the Military-Entertainment Complex” and “1884: Dark Precursor.” In *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear (Technologies of Lived Abstraction)*, 31-34 and 69-73. Boston: MIT Press, 2010.

**WEEK FIVE: Performing “Precarity”**

**Screening:**

*Swept Away* (Guy Ritchie, UK, 2002)

**Readings:**

* Berardi, Franco “Bifo”. “The Precarious Soul.” In *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*, 184-205. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009.
* Standing, Guy. Extracts from *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury, 2010.
* Dickinson, Kay. “Pop Stars Who Can’t Act and the Limits of Celebrity ‘Flexibility.’” In *Off Key: When Film and Music Won’t Work Together*, 155-188. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

**WEEK SIX: Eco-stic Visions**

**Screening:**

*Princess Mononoke* (Hayao Miyazaki, Japan, 1997)

**Readings:**

* Serres, Michel. “The Natural Contract.” In *The Natural Contract*, translated by Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson, 27-50. Chicago: University of Michigan Press, 2003.
* Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. “1837: Of the Refrain” in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi, 310-350. London: Athlone Press, 1996.
* Cubitt, Sean. “Drawing Animals: Zoomorphism in *Princess Mononoke*.” In *EcoMedia*, 25-42. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005.

**WEEK SEVEN: Reading Week**

**PART TWO: TACTICS**

**WEEK EIGHT: Voicing Dissent**

**Screening:**

*Surname Viet, Given Name Nam* (Trinh T. Minh-ha, USA, 1989)

**Readings:**

* Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, 271-31. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988.
* Lawrence, Amy. “Women’s Voices in Third World Cinema.” In *Sound Theory, Sound Practice*, edited by Rick Altman, 178-190. New York: Routledge, 1992.

**WEEK NINE: Class Cancelled Because of SCMS Conference**

**WEEK TEN: Looking for Sonic Loopholes**

**Screening:**

*Stormy Weather* (Andrew L. Stone, 1943)

**Readings:**

* Fanon, Frantz. “The Fact of Blackness.” In *Black Skin, White Masks*, 109-140. London: Pluto Press, 1986.

# Moten, Fred. “Resistance of the Object: Aunt Hester’s Scream.” *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, 1-24. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2003.

* Dyer, Richard. “Singing Prettily: Lena Horne in Hollywood.” In *In the Space of the Song: The Uses of Song in Film*, 114-144. New York: Routledge, 2012

**WEEK ELEVEN: Echoes and Glitches: The Politics of Appropriation**

**Screening:**

*The Wiz* (Sidney Lumet, USA, 1978)

**Readings:**

* Bhabha, Homi K. “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse.” *October* 28, Spring (1984): 125 -133.
* Smith, Suzanne. ““Money (That’s What I Want)”: Black Capitalism and Black Freedom in Detroit.” In *Dancing the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit*, 54-93. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
* Freeman, Elizabeth. “Temporal Drag and the Specters of Feminism.” In *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, 59-94. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

**WEEK TWELVE: Education/Activism**

**Screening:**

*British Sounds* (Dziga Vertov Group, UK/France, 1970)

**Readings:**

* MacBean, James Roy. “See You at Mao: Godard’s Revolutionary British Sounds.” *F*[*ilm Quarterly*](http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublication?journalCode=filmquarterly) [24, No. 2, Winter (1970-1)](http://www.jstor.org/stable/i251891): 15-23.
* McClanahan, Annie. “The Living Indebted: Student Militancy and the Financialization of Debt.” ***Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*** 20, No. 1, Fall/Winter (2011): 57-77.
* Ultra-Red. *10 Preliminary Theses on Militant Sound Investigation*. New York: Printed Matter, Inc. 2008.
* Vidya Ashram. “The Global Autonomous University.” In *Towards a Global Autonomous University*, edited by Edu-factory Collective, 165-170. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2009. (also available via www.edu-factory.org)

**WEEK THIRTEEN: Politicizing Audio-Visual Dialectics**

**Screening:**

*The* *Hour of the Furnaces* (Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, Argentina, 1968)

**Readings:**

* Solanas, Fernando and Octavio Getino “Towards a Third Cinema.” (1969) available via: http://slash.autonomedia.org/node/4669.
* Eisenstein, Sergei. “An Unexpected Juncture” in *Eisenstein Writings Volume 1: 1922-1934*, translated by Richard Taylor, 115-122. London: BFI Publishing, 1988.
* Eisenstein, Sergei, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigori Alexandrov. "A Statement." In *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, edited by Elizabeth Weis and John Belton, 83-5. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
* Pudovkin, Vsevolod. "Asynchronism as a Principle of Sound Film." In *Film Sound: Theory and Practice*, edited by Elizabeth Weis and John Belton, 86-91. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

**WEEK FOURTEEN: A Film-Sound Commons**

**Screening:**

*The Three Disappearances of Soad Hosni* (Rania Stefan, Egypt, 2011)

**Readings:**

* Siefkes, Christian. “The Commons of the Future: Building Blocks for a Commons-Based Society.” In *The Commoner* (2009) available via: www.commoner.org.uk
* Grainge, Paul. “Selling Spectacular Sound: Dolby and the Unheard History of Technical Trademarks.” In *Lowering the Boom: Critical Studies in Film Sound*, edited by Jay Beck and Tony Grajeda, 251-268. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.
* Marx, Karl. “Private Property and Communism. Various Stages of Development of Communist Views. Crude, Equalitarian Communism and Communism as Socialism Coinciding with Humaneness.” In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, translated by Martin Milligan, 98-114. New York: International Publishers, 1971.