

**MUSC2270 Topics in Digital Media Research and Production: Exploring Technologically Mediated Performance Practice through the Lens of Jacques Attali's 1977 Text 'Noise: The Political Economy of Music'.**

MEME @ Brown University Music Department | Spring 2015  
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**Description**

This course configures Attali's notions of 'representing', 'repeating', and 'composing' as theoretical catalysts for the development of contemporary creative practice. The course is structured around seminars, collaborative ensemble work, and individual projects. We negotiate Attali's text in its entirety and realize appropriate responses in a variety of formats, including: performance, installation/intervention, audio/video documentation. Additional short readings and presentations enrich critical discussion and practical activity. MUSC 2#### is intended to follow on from various MEME courses such as 1210, 1240F, 1240G, 2220, 2230, 2280. Enrolment is restricted to fourteen. Permission of instructor is required.

**Assessment**

- 30% practical responses to three of Attali's most significant chapters (in class presentation/ensemble performance);
- 20% reading assignments and contribution to <http://hubbub.pm> (an open-ended online forum and internationally accessible archive for creative practice);
- 50% final portfolio of creative work. Specifics are negotiated with the instructor. All participants must contribute to both mid-term/final class concerts.

**Schedule (tentative)**

Week 1	<b>Course introduction/overview</b>
Week 2	<b>Listening: music is both a mirror and a prophecy</b>  '...the only thing common to all music is that it gives structure to noise...'  'Our musical process of structuring noise is also our political process for structuring community' (Attali).  <b>Essential Reading</b> Attali, J. (1977) <i>Noise: The Political Economy of Music</i> . University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3-20.
Week 3	<b>Exploring practical responses to <i>Listening</i></b>  <b>Essential reading</b> Hegarty, P. (2007) <i>Noise/Music A History</i> . New York: Continuum, pp. 2-19.

<p>Week 4</p>	<p><b>Sacrificing: music as ritual murder</b></p> <p>'Noise is violence, i.e., murder. Music is a channelization of noise and a simulacrum of sacrifice, a sublimation to create order and political integration. Therefore music is ritual murder' (Attali).</p> <p><b>Essential Reading</b> Attali, J. (1977) <i>Noise: The Political Economy of Music</i>. University of Minnesota Press, pp 21-45.</p>
<p>Week 5</p>	<p><b>Exploring practical responses to <i>Sacrificing</i></b></p> <p><b>Essential Reading:</b> Goodman, S. (2010) <i>Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear</i>. Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, pp. 5-25.</p>
<p>Week 6</p>	<p><b>Representing: music as commodity and spectacle</b></p> <p>'The artist was born, at the same time that his work went on sale... freeing the musician from the shackles of aristocratic control, opening the way for the birth of inspiration' (Attali).</p> <p><b>Essential Reading</b> Attali, J. (1977) <i>Noise: The Political Economy of Music</i>. University of Minnesota Press, pp 46-86.</p>
<p>Week 7</p>	<p><b>Exploring practical responses to <i>Representing</i></b></p> <p><b>Essential Reading</b> Krauss, R., E. (1986) <i>The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths</i>. Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology press, pp. 151-171.</p>
<p>Week 8</p>	<p><b>Repeating: repetitive mass production</b></p> <p>Recording introduces 'the individualized stockpiling of music . . . on a huge scale'. Spectacle is replaced by artificial pseudo-events (Attali).</p> <p><b>Essential Reading</b> Attali, J. (1977) <i>Noise: The Political Economy of Music</i>. University of Minnesota Press, pp 87-132.</p>
<p>Week 9</p>	<p><b>Exploring practical responses to <i>Repeating</i></b></p> <p><b>Essential Reading</b> 'Trying to make it real: live performance, simulation, and the discourse of authenticity in rock culture'. In: Auslander, P. (2008) <i>Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture</i>. New York:Routledge, pp. 73-97.</p>

<p>Week 10</p>	<p><b>Composing[?]</b></p> <p>A new way of making music? The emergence of a new society?</p> <p><b>Essential Reading</b>  Attali, J. (1977) <i>Noise: The Political Economy of Music</i>. University of Minnesota Press, pp. 133-148.</p>
<p>Week 11</p>	<p><b>Exploring practical responses to <i>Composing</i></b></p> <p><b>Essential Reading</b>  ‘New technologies, new musicians’, in Hugill A. (2008) <i>The Digital Musician</i>. New York: Routledge, pp. 1-14.</p> <p>‘Music and the New Audio Culture’, in Cox, C. and Warner D. (2004) <i>Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music</i>. New York: Continuum, pp. xiii – xvi.</p>
<p>Week 12</p>	<p><b>Group feedback on final portfolios/concert preparation and critique</b></p> <p>The eyes ‘encompass a much larger environment than feet and hands’, and suggests that ‘the hierarchically organized creature that I am is in fact functioning in a hierarchy of environments, guided by a hierarchy of feedbacks’ (Koestler, 1967, p.102).</p> <p><b>Essential Reading</b>  Koestler, A. (1967) <i>The Ghost in the Machine</i>. London: Hutchinson &amp; Co Ltd, pp. 95-115.</p>
<p>Week 13</p>	<p><b>Group feedback on final portfolios/concert preparation and critique</b></p> <p><b>Essential Reading</b>  Katz, M. (2010) ‘Music in 1s and 0s’, in: <i>Capturing Sound: How Technology has Changed Music</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 146-176.</p>

## Essential reading:

Attali, J. (1977) *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. University of Minnesota Press

## Recommended reading

Auslander, P. (2008) *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. New York: Routledge

Christiane, P. (2003) *Digital Art*. London: Thames and Hudson

Collins, N. & d'Esquivan, J. (2007) *Electronic Music*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Cox, C. and Warner D. (2004) *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*. New York: Continuum

Emmerson, S. (2007) *Living Electronic Music*. Aldershot: Ashgate

Goodman, S. (2010) *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*. Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Hegarty, P. (2007) *Noise/Music A History*. New York: Continuum

Henriques, J. (2011) *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques and Ways of Knowing*. London: Continuum Books.

Holmes, T. *Electronic and Experimental Music (fourth edition)*. New York: Routledge.

Hugill A. (2008) *The Digital Musician*. New York: Routledge.

Kahn, D. (2001) *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology press

Katz, M. (2010) *Capturing Sound: How Technology has Changed Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Koestler, A. (1967) *The Ghost in the Machine*. London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd.

Krauss, R., E. (1986) *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology press.

Middleton, R. (1990) *Studying Popular Music*. Buckingham: Open University Press, pp. 34-63.

Reynolds, S. (2009) *Bring The Noise: 20 Years of Writing About Hip Rock and Hip Hop*. Berkeley: Soft Skull Press.

Schafer, R.M. (1977) *The Soundscape*. New York: Knopf

Wishart, T. (2002) *On Sonic Art*, revised edition. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic

**The Hub:** <http://hubbub.pm>

**[Currently pointing elsewhere, up by week 2, for now see: <http://hub.ncl.ac.uk/>]**

The Hub is a place to share and discuss creative work across disciplines. Originally conceived as an online resource for studio-based composers at universities, the Hub now aims to be both an open-ended forum and an internationally accessible archive, embracing a wide range of creative practices across numerous disciplines.

Publishing an artwork facilitates its contribution to a universal discourse; it doesn't matter who (if anyone) sees/hears it: its being there makes it discoverable and its chronological place in history will always allow it to speak to that moment as well as to future moments. Yet, traditional pedagogy often revolves around scenarios where work is created in isolation (or at best within small-group collaboration/seminars) and then submitted for internal assessment and grading, the consequence of which often being that a work is subsumed within these institutional systems until deemed 'finished' or 'complete' and even then may find no public forum for publication and dissemination.

By contrast, the Hub is a response to the question: can an artwork be said to have occurred unless it has been publically presented? It promotes the regular sharing and publishing of work, both 'complete' and 'in progress', with a view to facilitating the development of informed creative practice through discussion of, and engagement with, a broad range of artistic perspectives.

While the Hub exists to informally publish and share practical work, it also reinforces the importance of articulating the conceptual framework of that work through regular blog posts that expound an idea or which critique both theory and practice from within the established discourse.

The main contributors to the Hub are currently staff and students (both undergraduate and postgraduate) at Newcastle University, Brown University, University of Glasgow, and City University London. Collaboration between these institutions is at an initial stage; in due course contributions and appropriation by artists from all four institutions will reshape and redefine the identity of the Hub.