



MUSIC 9542B  
MUSIC AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
WINTER 2023

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Class: Fridays 9:30–12:30, TC 340

**Course Description**

The first published reference to ‘ecomusicology’ was in 1972 and signalled the broadening of music research to include environmental sounds. The work of R. Murray Schafer and the World Soundscape Project is associated with this early period. Ecomusicology continued in this guise for many years, at the edge of the discipline, but by 2006 (one year after the Kyoto Protocol came into effect) “music and nature” conferences began to appear. The first international conference was held in 2012. This marked the arrival of an intensified engagement with nature—transdisciplinary rather than subdisciplinary, and informed by decades of climate science, ecocriticism, and research in the social sciences and humanities. In contrast to the early focus on environmental sounds, ecomusicology today considers sound, music, and culture through the lens of environmental crisis.

The “environment” is everyone’s concern, which is reflected in the range of topics this course will treat. We’ll start at the beginning with acoustic ecology and the environmental movement of the 1960s. Along the way, we will discuss aesthetic questions (sound versus music), philosophical questions (nature versus culture), sociological questions (the function of music), and ethical questions (the sustainability of music). We will consider these in connection with the Inūpiat of northern Alaska, Björk, John Cage, John Luther Adams, Glenn Gould, Tanya Tagaq, Beethoven, soundscapes you create, and the playlist of the Voyager 1 spacecraft, which at this moment is 23,822,965,887 billion kilometers (and counting) away from the Earth.

[Full outline to come]

## READINGS (draft schedule)

### Class 1 (1/13): **Setting the -cene**

- Crutzen, Paul J. "Geology of Mankind." *Nature* 415, no. 6867 (2002): 23. ☁
- Sykes, Jim. "The Anthropocene and Music Studies." *Ethnomusicology Review* 22, no. 1 (2020): 4–21. ☁
- Titon, Jeff Todd. "The Nature of Ecomusicology." *Música e Cultura* 8, no. 1 (2013): 8–18. ☁
- Wallace-Wells, David. *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*. New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2019. ☁

### Class 2 (1/20): **Acoustemology**

- Feld, Steven. "From Ethnomusicology to Echo-muse-ecology: Reading R. Murray Schafer in the Papua New Guinea Rainforest." *Soundscape Newsletter* 8 (1994): 9–13.
- Schafer, R. Murray. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994.
- Wrightson, Kendall. "An Introduction to Acoustic Ecology." *Soundscape: The Journal of Acoustic Ecology* 1, no. 1 (2000): 10–13.

### Class 3 (1/27): **Gaia**

- Latour, Bruno. *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2017.
- Lovelock, James. *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Rehding, Alexander. "Ecomusicology between Apocalypse and Nostalgia." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 2 (2011): 409–14.
- Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Revised edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.

### Class 4 (2/3): **Silence/Noise**

- Gann, Kyle. *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33"*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.
- Schuster, Joshua. *The Ecology of Modernism: American Environments and Avant-Garde Poetics*. Modern and Contemporary Poetics. Tuscaloosa: The University Alabama Press, 2015.
- Windsor, W. Luke. "Nature and Culture, Noise and Music." In *Current Directions in Ecomusicology: Music, Culture, Nature*, edited by Aaron S. Allen and Kevin Dawe, 166–75. New York: Routledge, 2016.

### Class 5 (2/10): **Other Worlds**

- Law, John. "What's Wrong with a One-World World?" *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 16, no. 1 (2015): 126–39.
- Sakakibara, Chie. "'No Whale, No Music': Inupiaq Drumming and Global Warming." *Polar Record* 45, no. 4 (2009): 289–303.
- Chatwin, Bruce. *The Songlines*. New York: Penguin Books, 1988.

### Class 6 (2/17): **Ideas of North**

- Adams, John Luther. *Silences so Deep: Music, Solitude, Alaska*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020.
- Davidson, Peter. *The Idea of North*. London, UK: Reaktion, 2005.
- Gould, Glenn. *The Idea of North, Solitude Trilogy. Three Sound Documentaries*. Toronto: CBC Records, PSCD 2003–3, 1992. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TwIbUdbVqQE>
- Herzogenrath, Bernd, ed. *The Farthest Place: The Music of John Luther Adams*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2012.

*Reading Week (2/24): No class*

**Class 7 (3/3): Posthuman/Planetary**

- Ballard, Susan. *Art and Nature in the Anthropocene: Planetary Aesthetics*. New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Gremaud, Ann-Sofie N. "From within the Porous Body: Modes of Engagement in Björk's *Biophilia* Album." In *Artistic Visions of the Anthropocene North: Climate Change and Nature in Art*, edited by Gry Hedin and Ann-Sofie N. Gremaud, 128–53. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

**Class 8 (3/10): Sustainability**

- Allen, Aaron. "Fatto di Fiemme': Stradivari's Violins and the Musical Trees of the Paneveggio." In *Invaluable Trees: Cultures of Nature, 1660-1830*, edited by Laura Auricchio, Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook and Giulia Pacini, 301–16. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012.
- Lafontant di Niscia, Attilio. "Unveiling the Dark Side of Tonewoods: A Case Study about the Musical Instrument Demand for the Venezuelan Youth Orchestra El Sistema." *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 18, no. 3 (2019): 259–88.

**Class 9 (3/17): Dematerialization**

- Chayka, Kyle. *The Longing for Less: Living with Minimalism*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020.
- Devine, Kyle. *Decomposed: The Political Ecology of Music*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2019.
- Meis, Morgan. "Timothy Morton's Hyper-Pandemic." *The New Yorker*, June 8, 2021.

**Class 10 (3/24): Action**

- Morton, Timothy. *Being Ecological*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2018.
- Siperstein, Stephen, Shane Hall, and Stephanie LeMenager, eds. *Teaching Climate Change in the Humanities*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

**Class 11 (3/31): A Postmortem Playlist**

- Chua, Daniel K. L., and Alexander Rehding. *Alien Listening: Voyager's Golden Record and Music from Earth*. New York: Zone Books, 2021.
- Hart, Heidi. *Music and the Environment in Dystopian Narrative: Sounding the Disaster*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.
- NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, *Voyager* website,  
<http://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov/spacecraft/goldenrec.html>.