



MUSIC 9542B  
MUSIC AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
WINTER 2023

Instructor: Kevin Mooney  
Office hours: By appointment (TC 215)

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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 a 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. Soundscape studies continues today, but “music and nature” topics have diversified and now attract researchers from across the music disciplines. The first international ecomusicology conference was held in 2012. This marked the arrival of an intensified engagement with music and nature, informed by decades of climate science, ecocriticism, sound studies, and research in the social sciences and humanities. In contrast to the early focus on environmental sounds, ecomusicology today considers sound, music, nature, and culture through the inescapable lens of environmental crisis.

The “environment” is everyone’s concern, which is reflected in the range of topics this course will address. 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 things 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.

## Course Materials

Course readings and links to audio and video resources will be provided by the instructor.

## Course Learning Outcomes

Students will gain an understanding of contemporary literature relating music to the physical environment. Students will be able to interpret relevant texts and formulate viewpoints on environmental themes. Students will be able to describe sounds and music from an ecomusicological perspective. Students will learn how concepts or models from other fields can inform the study of music. Students will learn to communicate effectively, orally and in writing, about the interrelationships between music, culture, and the environment. Students will be able to employ research skills to explore interdisciplinary relationships.

## Requirements

Assigned readings, class participation, soundscape project, paper proposal and bibliography, final paper.

## Evaluation

Participation (20%)

Soundscape (20%)

Proposal and bibliography (10%)

Final paper (50%)

### Participation

This course requires a lot of reading! You should come to class prepared to make informed contributions. You should also be ready to respond to discussion questions distributed in advance. Should you miss more than one class without prior approval, you will forfeit this portion of your grade.

### Soundscape (4 minutes and 33 seconds + 3-5-page paper)

When asked about his composition *4'33"* (1952), John Cage said that he “hoped to have led other people to feel that the sounds of their environment constitute a music which is more interesting than the music which they would hear if they went into a concert hall.” You will create a soundscape, *4'33"* in duration, that frames environmental sounds in a place of your choosing. You will write a short paper reflecting on the relation of these sounds to their environment, what they signify, the human entanglements they evoke. Due Feb. 3–17.

### Proposal and bibliography

Submit a final paper proposal to me by email by Feb. 17–March 3. This should include a brief (1-page) overview of your planned project and a provisional bibliography (5–10 sources).

### Final Paper (4000–6000 words)

Your final paper, 10–15 pages in length (excluding bibliography), should be submitted by email as a properly formatted Word document by midnight, March 31.

## Enrolment Statement

Enrolment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the Don Wright Faculty of Music, as well as any student who has obtained special permission from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student’s home program.

## Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, as found here:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf)

Note especially that plagiarism is a major scholastic offence. Students are expected to write all assignments in their own words. If you take an idea from another author, you must acknowledge this by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing.

### **Statement on Health and Wellness**

Students who are in emotional or mental distress should refer to [Health and Wellness](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### **Statement on Accommodation for Medical Illness**

The Graduate Program in Music recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by illness or injury. To ensure fairness and consistency for all students, academic accommodation for work representing 10% or more of the student's course grade shall be granted only in those cases where there is documentation indicating that the student was seriously affected and could not reasonably be expected to meet his/her academic responsibilities. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the office of the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies), not to the course instructor.

Students with special learning needs or other circumstances are asked to inform the instructor as soon as possible so that necessary accommodations can be considered.

### **Accessible Education Western (AEW)**

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

### **Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence**

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, either recently or in the past, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca) or call 519-661-3568.

## READINGS

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

- Allen, Aaron S, Rebecca Dirksen, Tyler Kinnear, Mark Pedelty, and Chiao-Wen Chiang. "Ecomusicology: Tributaries and Distributaries of an Integrative Field." *Music Research Annual* 3 (2022): 1–36. ☁
- Crutzen, Paul J. "Geology of Mankind." *Nature* 415, no. 6867 (2002): 23. ☁
- Kolbert, Elizabeth. "A Vast Experiment: The Climate Crisis from A to Z." *The New Yorker*, November 28, 2022, 33–47. ☁
- Titon, Jeff Todd. "The Nature of Ecomusicology." *Música e Cultura* 8, no. 1 (2013): 8–18. ☁
- Zhong, Raymond. "For Planet Earth, This Might Be the Start of a New Age." *The New York Times*, December 17, 2022. ☁

### 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): 4–6. ☁
- 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=TwlBUdbVqQE>
- 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 S. "'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, 301–15. 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.
- Galloway, Kate. "On the Ethics of Extraction in Environmental Sound Art." *MUSICultures* 49 (2022): 111–34.
- 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>.