

## The Soundscape Report

This semester you are required to make a report on a soundscape that you encounter. You should spend about 30 minutes in an environment where you often (or at least occasionally) find yourself in everyday life, but where you have very little control of the sounds you hear: walking along the street, taking a subway ride, sitting in a park, etc. **Be safe and follow social distancing guidelines. The inside of your apartment will work just fine, if you like.** Try not to do anything to drastically alter the sonic environment of the place: don't put on or play music, don't talk beyond the necessities of politeness, but also don't try to be unnaturally silent; try your best not to influence how anyone else is making or not making sound.

Follow the directions of Pauline Oliveros's *Poetics of Environmental Sound*:

Track "the sounds you hear (heard) and how you feel (felt) about them. Include internal as well as external sounds. You are part of the environment. Explore the limits of audibility: (highest, lowest, loudest, softest, simplest, most complex, nearest, most distant, longest, shortest sound)"

Write up what you hear in a report, which should be approximately 3-4 pages (900-1100 words), formatted as following: twelve-point Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, double spaced. Reflect on how the sounds of the environment shape how you hear, and on the forces that shape the sonic environment. This is due on the beginning of class on **Thursday, April 23**. It may be turned in up to one week late for half-credit. Feel free to turn it in early! It is worth 10% of your final grade.

This is intended to be a much looser, more open-ended assignment than the concert reports, and what you have to say will to a large extent be dependent on the environment you choose. Nevertheless, try to use some of the concepts and vocabulary we've learnt in class, though you might have to be a bit flexible with the definitions.

Some guiding questions to consider (not required, just suggestions if you need them):

- Are there any sounds you normally don't even notice? What effect does noticing them have?
- Are there sounds which you normally try to ignore or drown out? What effect does listening to them have?
- Are there any ways in which any natural sounds you hear are shaped by artificial elements?
- How much control do you have over what you hear? What can you choose to listen to or not? What forces itself on your hearing?
- How do other people around you react to the sounds they hear?
- If a tree falls in the woods and no one hears it, does it make a sound?

## Grading

- 70%: Thoughtful attempt to critical engage with an environmental soundscape; use of concrete detail in description of events, environs, and behavior.
- 20%: Clear organization of ideas and correct formal English usage: grammar, syntax, diction, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, etc.
- 10%: Use of vocabulary and concepts from class to describe the sounds you hear.

