ELSR: Earplug Listening Social Report

Sound Studies ca01 - 100 points

Goal: While wearing earplugs, engage in social contexts for at least 90 minutes; prepare questions for discussion.

Due date: Discussion question posted due before Noon, Mon, September 16; class discussion Weds, September 18

What is due: One non-duplicative discussion question posted on the Google Doc (see the course email for the link)

Preparation for Team and Large Group Discussion

Steps

- 1. Read the texts (Kim, Kobayashi, Oliveros, Renel) in the Canvas module ELSR readings before inserting your earplugs and venturing forth. Ponder and decide whether or not to tell people about your earplugs.
- 2. Wearing your earplugs (no noise-cancelling earbuds or headphones!), explore *more than two* distinct social contexts for at least 30 minutes to an hour each (e.g. visit a lecture course, eat dinner in a public place, stroll through a store or market, spend time with friends, etc.). One context *must* be with or proximate to a group of people you do not know. Seek variety. Avoid predictable activities like loud concerts or watching a film. Stay away from traffic and other risky areas! Make sure to heed current social distancing protocols.
- 3. After exploring more than two distinct social contexts, read "Speech Sounds" in the Canvas module ELSR readings.
- 4. Write one question for those who also wore earplugs for this assignment. Root your question in *two* of the readings, e.g.

According to Kim, her "learning process was greatly shaped by indirect modes of communication" (page 1) while throughout "Speech Sounds" lack of listening (or patience with listening) shapes modes of communication that are indirect AND direct (pp. 89, 90 and *passim*; pp. 1 and 2 in the pdf). Did you alter your learning process in any manner when you had your earplugs in?

Post your question in the Google Doc. Do not ask a duplicative question! Prepare to discuss all of the questions in class.

Tips and Ideas for formulating your questions

- How did you communicate with people? How did people react to you?
- Did your (lack of) hearing affect where you went or decisions you made? What else did it affect?
- What was it like after you took out your earplugs?
- Did your experience reinforce or contradict any statements and ideas in the readings?
- Do Kobayashi's classifications make sense?
- What specifically in Octavia Butler's story "Speech Sounds" offers parallels or insights into your experience?
- Would you recommend earplug listening to your friends why or why not?

If you are absent from the class discussion: Take the Writing Response Option (WRO). Write a two- to three-page prose Report (double-spaced, 12 pt font size, Times New Roman, right-justified) connecting what you heard to the *all* of the readings (Butler, Kim, Kobayashi, Oliveros, Renel) listed above. Do not cite with footnotes or compile a bibliography; instead integrate the readings elegantly, e.g. "As Oliveros suggests in "Sonic Images," I found the question of...."

Use the Response Rubric.pdf on Bb as a guide. I am not interested in word count; I would rather read a captivating page of prose than slog through 3 pages of otiose, filler-laden paragraphs. This is not an essay! Tell me your story.

Format the prose Report's header as follows (single spaced, 12 pt font size, Times New Roman or similar, left-justified):

Firstname Lastname - Earplug Listening Social Report
Sound Studies Current Semester Year

Sound Studies Fall 2024

The WRO prose Report is due the night before the next class meeting (this supersedes the WRO deadline in the syllabus). Save your Report as ca01 First name Last name.file extension (.doc, docx or .pdf - no .txt or .pages) and email to instructor.

Grading

- -10 question duplicates a questions already posted or WRO not correctly named and/or formatted (includes wrong file type)
- -15 question posted after the deadline but before the start of the next class
- -25 question does not connect two readings
- -50 question does not connect any readings or no question submitted (what!?!)
- -50 no participation in seminar discussion (or no WRO)

Questions? Email the instructor: cdelaur1@jhu.edu

Sound Studies - ELSR Debrief

source: earlier iterations and from SS w04 ELSR v4 Spring 2024.odt;

bring: binder clip!

set up: laptop display to NEVER fall asleep; it will disconnect HDMI

cue up: readings

cue up: ca01 Earplug Listening Social Report.pdf

cue up: Google Doc with this week's discussion questions

cue up: Audition with sound files:

- Kits Beach Soundwalk Hildegard Westerkamp_1989.mp3
- Sounds of My City Tony Schwartz 1956.mp3 at 15'40"

Agenda

ELSR debrief questions 20 minutes

ELSR Debrief ~50 minutes (good length)

Break at 11:07 to 11:15 ~10 min
Kits Beach Soundwalk ~15 mins
ELSR debrief continued 30 min
More Listening & discussion Noon-ish
for next week 2 minutes

ELSR Debrief: Wearing Earplugs

ASK round-robin: Where did you wear your earplugs?

ASK for show of hands: How many of you told people you were wearing earplugs?

Why?

How did they react?

Were they friends or strangers (did it matter?)

ASK for show of hands: Who tried lip reading? (any other methods of communication?

ASK Did anyone hear an inner voice aka interior monologue

(speaking or sounding?) **SWITCH** to Google doc MAKE SURE to insert reminder to revisit this sheet! (or add the closing questions to the end!) **TELL THEM** we review what happened to get in the habit of remembering sound **Seminar leader discussion** with A____, D__ **Closing questions ASK:** Would you want to wear earplugs more often? Why or Why not? Was this exercise an "impairment?" Which circumstances would make it not an impairment? What are your hearing impairments? Did you get an visual cue about them? After this assignment, do you have any, could you list them? **ASK** how did this exercise make you feel about solitude?

IF NEEDED TELL Mahler tie his tie story

MENTION Mantle Hood and bimusicality

ASK How is the ELSR analogous to the path of the artist?

from SS week 02 discussion points and comments Fall 2021.txt, with additions Spring 2024;

- 1. (re) discovery
- of what we are listening to
- corporeal knowledge, intersecting the visual with what we hear
- 2. "unlearning" can free us artists from the fear, free us from the expectations of what is acceptable in music
- 3. Appreciation for negative space uses of (not sound) silence and missing elements of sound
- 4. Appreciation for the sounds we hear in our heads (CD we listen presently as well as to the past "transtemporally")
- 5. ELSR is analogous to the loneliness experienced by every artist

Listening: Kits Beach Soundwalk

wind still (yet she is in the studio, yes?)

- "What is the most interesting sound you have heard recently?
- "get rid of the city" illustrates power of the city with 3 dynamic levels
- 4, count 'em 4 dreams!
- Concret-PH II resembles barnacles (connection of EA to natural world)
- studio as a refuge for listening
- n.b. mentions Tomaitis (I had forgotten this mention,)

Course Email

Fall 2024

after the ELSR

Hello everyone,

Please read in the Canvas module Soundwalking:

- Soundwalking Hildegard Westerkamp_2001.pdf (9 narrow column pages, big type, I apologize for the awkward format!)
- I Have Never Seen A Sound R Murray Schafer 2006.pdf (6 pages)

and two (or more) of the following:

- from How Early America Sounded Richard Cullen Rath_2003.pdf (1 page)
- Aural Postcards Fran Tonkiss.pdf (7 pages)
- Sonic Images Pauline Oliveros 1972.pdf (2 pages; redux from w03)
- Three Levels of Listening Tim Cordell.pdf (7 pages)

Then formulate and post one discussion question connecting two (or more) soundwalk
readings before Noon, Monday, September 24 at https://

You can listen again to Kits Beach Soundwalk at:

Lastly this weekend is the High Zero Festival, one of the major festivals (worldwide!) for improvised and experimental acoustic and electronic music. See https://highzero.org/ for a schedule and more information.

Looking forward!

CD

ps Street Music (1976):

"On Sunday, September 26 1976 at 8 am, I fired a rifle into the air several times on the corner of Cedar and Nassau streets in the Wall Street district of New York.

The shots were recorded on several stereo audiotape recorders with various miking configurations. The tapes are intended to be played back both at normal speed and at slower speeds to reveal sound echo patterns and reverberations in the deserted streets" (Viola 1995, 48).

Viola, Bill. 1995. *Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House: Writings 1973-1994*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. ### end postscript ###

ELSR sample discussion questions

• •
F: As someone with a voice which can be described as "boomy," while wearing earplugs I found myself extremely self-conscious about the volume level of my voice. This resulted in my reducing my speaking voice to the point that the person to whom I was speaking could hardly hear my words. I was reminded of the story of Tamsin Parker as described by William Renel:
"For example, in 2018, Tamsin Parker - a disabled woman with learning disabilities - was forcefully removed from the British Film Institute on her birthday for laughing loudly at the film. Here, it was the auditory experience of other cinema-goers, who heckled and applauded as Tamsin was removed, that were prioritized in the way the sonic environment was socially produced and maintained. Tamsin's laughter and subsequent crying can be understood as a socio-political sounding of oppression, 'an acoustic politics of the voice' (Kanngieser 2011, 2 - this is a bonus reading check it!!!)."
Valerie Rye, the protagonist and narrator of Olivia Butler's "Speech Sounds," also feels compelled to hide her voice for fear of social exile. She explains to the children she meets at the end of the story that it is ok to speak only "as long as no one's around." What are examples of ways in which our own sensory capabilities affect our sense of self and how do
those effects alter the way we present ourselves in public? #D#A#R
N: Christine Sun Kim notes her "learning process was greatly shaped by indirect modes of
communication" (p. 1). While exploring social contexts with Earplugs, I tended to use (and had to
learn) a combination of the oral method and the writing method to communicate with my friends and
strangers (Welfare of Those with Hearing Impairment, p. 2.) Similarly, I also tended to mime feelings or
thoughts to those who I am closer with, this could be considered a form of sign language, another method Dr. Kobayashi mentions (Ibid).
Perhaps the most frustrating part of this exercise was feeling like my thoughts weren't being
understood by my peers. Similarly, I felt "unheard" or accidentally ignored during this exercise. In
Speech Sounds by Octavia Butler, the main character, Rye, explains that conflicts escalate quickly in
this dystopian society since people can't understand or communicate with each other (p. 89) Did you
experience any conflict during the ELSR Exercise? If so, how did you communicate your thoughts to
the other party? #X#F
D: (this is really long; I'm sorry in advance)
In "The Gender of Sound," Carson indicates two points of assumption in two men's distinct
accounts of "confronting the female voice," each from a perspective outside of such females'
interactions: Alkaios of Lesbos hearing adjacent beauty contests being one, Ernest Hemingway

hearing Gertrude Stein speaking to her "maidservant" the other (p. 122, or 5 on PDF). Both men concluded from the unfamiliar content of what they heard (in addition to their educated backgrounds) that the women in question were essentially too vulgar or repulsive to be *tolerated* in close proximity, let alone be taken seriously (or in Hemingway's case, simply friends).

Butler's *Speech Sounds* contains a similar narrative to those of Alkaios and Hemingway, but character Valerie Rye's case of assumption involves three contextual shifts. First, Rye has been far removed from her educated background due to the plague which rendered her illiterate and shattered civilization globally. Second, the result of that plague issued a hostile social hierarchy much more directly linked to survival (or imminent danger). Third, though not involved in the bus fights, Rye was close enough for her safety to be compromised.

These contextual shifts significantly inhibited Rye's ability to make assumptions and pass judgements (beyond cognition) in that a mistake in judgment or too explicit an expression of it could threaten her life, such as when she began to receive harassing and "obscene gestures" from one of the men from the bus (p. 95, or 4 on PDF).

Consequently, Butler describes Rye's experiences almost exclusively through observations, like when "a woman shook the driver's shoulder and grunted as she gestured toward the fighting," and stepwise logical inferences, like when "[The Ford driver's] use of his left hand interested Rye... Left-handed people tended to be less impaired," therefore, "more reasonable and comprehending, less driven by frustration, confusion, and anger" (p. 90 and 91-2, respectively, or 2-3 on PDF).

In my personal experience using earplugs in public, I found my case of assumption to be much less dangerous than that of Rye and much more open-minded and welcoming than those of Alkaios and Hemingway. In terms of how quickly my observations turned into assumptions, I consciously strove to mitigate arriving at any conclusions until each interaction concluded itself and only jotted down observations from time to time to review later.

Nevertheless, my experiences at a local restaurant and shopping mall both led me to assume a homogeneity of American English-language storytelling and response. Specifically, from the speakers' inflections and cadences (as the words were unintelligible through the earplugs) paired with the resulting response sounds from the rest of the groups I observed, I found that (at least this region of) American English anecdotal delivery is not only very homogenous (at least in public) but also embedded with social cues on how positively/negatively to respond and with what magnitude. Ironically, such observations would likely add validity to the connotative works of Gertrude Stein. All of that being said, did you find any homogeneity in the sounds of human interaction? Was it spontaneous, tempered, dismissive, maybe strategic? Did the changes in your own communication style cause you to draw conclusions differently? #N #T #F #A #R