

Glasgow School of Art Course Specification
Course Title: Sound Culture

Please note that this course specification is correct on the date of publication but may be subject to amendment prior to the start of the 2026-27 Academic Year.

Course Code:	HECOS Code:	Academic Session:
PELC223		2026-27

1. Course Title:
Sound Culture

2. Date of Approval:	3. Lead School:	4. Other Schools:
PACAAG April 2022	School of Innovation and Technology	This course is available to students on PGT programmes which include a Stage 2 elective.

5. Credits:	6. SCQF Level:	7. Course Leader:
20	11	Ronan Breslin

8. Associated Programmes:
This course is available to students on PGT programmes which include a Stage 2 elective.

9. When Taught:
Stage 2, Stage 2, Taught online only

10. Course Aims:
The overarching aims of the cross-school electives are to: • Encourage interdisciplinary, critical reflexivity from within an open set of choices; • Foster deep investigative approaches to new or unfamiliar areas of practice and theory; • Cultivate self-directed leadership and initiative-taking in both applied and abstract modes of practice/ study not necessarily associated with a student's particular creative specialism; • Enable flexible, ethical exploration and connection of diverse knowledge and understanding within a specialist programme of study. This course aims to: • Provide an introduction to key developments in Sound Theory; • Provide students with the appropriate critical skills with which to analyse audio and audiovisual texts in different forms and across different contexts; • Investigate the historical and contemporary conventions/uses of sound in a variety of medium-specific and genre-specific contexts and identify ways that these techniques can be implemented in the students' practice;

- Explore theories of spectatorship, affect and embodiment in relation to theories of listening and apply these to individual audio and/or audiovisual texts;
- Explore the ethics of listening and playing sound back to an audience;
- Equip students with basic practical recording and audio manipulation skills.

11. Intended Learning Outcomes of Course:

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of theories of sound and the historical and cultural context for their development;
- Apply the appropriate critical language and produce accurate and nuanced readings of sound in individual audio and/or audio-visual texts;
- Demonstrate an awareness of how sound shapes the perceiver's experience of space and how this experience might impact on ideas of politics, identity and emotion;
- Demonstrate an awareness of the ethical implications of listening.

12. Indicative Content:

This course provides an introduction to the emerging field of Sound Studies. Drawing on a range of interdisciplinary approaches to studying sound culture such as media studies, art history, musicology, acoustic anthropology, and aural history it will investigate the historical, material, cultural and technological aspects of sound. A key concern will be to explore how the experience of sound in lived space relates to sound's affective properties across a variety of mediated forms.

This course will be organised around the following indicative topics (in relation to film, television, radio, sound installation, music and architecture:

- What is Sound Culture?
- Sound and the Self
- Sound and the Environment
- Sound and the City
- Sound Walk & field recording site visit (with ProTools induction)
- Assignment briefing and formative feedback on assignment
- Silence (film screening and review session)
- Sound and Politics
- Sound and Technology
- Sound and Space
- Sound and Emotion
- Recap and Assignment Review session

A sound walk and field recording site visit takes place in Week 5 followed by practical induction to digital audio workstations (focusing on ProTools).

13. Description of Summative Assessment Methods:

Assessment Method	Description of Assessment Method	Weight %	Submission week (assignments)
Essay	3500 words, on a relevant topic negotiated with the course tutor	100%	Week 11, Stage 2
Or			

Practical Submission	Practical submission (short film, sound piece etc.) that addresses or relates to material explored throughout the course. This must be agreed in advance with the course tutor and accompanied by a 1000 word positioning statement.	100%	Week 11, Stage 2
13.1 Please describe the Summative Assessment arrangements:			
The students choose either to complete a 3500 word essay, or to create a practical submission (either a sound piece or a short film with accompanying sound) with an accompanying 1000 word positioning statement. Students on this course will be assessed on their ability to: • Demonstrate a critical knowledge of theories of sound in the arts and the historical and cultural context for their development; • Apply the appropriate critical language and produce accurate and nuanced readings of sound in individual audio and/or audiovisual texts; • And/or produce a piece of practical work that addresses and responds to some of the key concepts explored on the course (see above).			

14. Description of Formative Assessment Methods:	
• Peer reviewed homework tasks (all students) and reading respondents (one per reading, approx. four per class) • Peer review preparation Engagement with formative assessment is a mandatory requirement.	
14.1 Please describe the Formative Assessment arrangements:	
There is a homework task set every week. These are shared verbally in the seminar for peer discussion and review, and submitted in an online form for peer review. Each set reading or listening or viewing is assigned a respondent, who will share a short 100 word response in the seminar. It is compulsory that these are also submitted in an online form for sharing with peers in the class. Task for Week 5: Students submit a project concept outline (approx. 250 words) with indicative bibliography. These are submitted online for class review. The students will also receive feedback from the tutor in addition to their peers, recorded in the same online form.	

15. Learning and Teaching Methods:	
Formal Contact Hours	Notional Learning Hours
20	200
15.1 Description of Teaching and Learning Methods:	
• Sound Walk and field recording site visit (1 hour) • Film screening and review - 2 hours This course offered over 10 weeks, 2 hours a week. Delivered on Wednesdays or Fridays	

16. Pre-requisites:
None

17. Can this course be taken by Exchange/Study Abroad students?	Yes
18. Are all the students on the course taught wholly by distance learning?	Yes
19. Does this course represent a work placement or a year of study abroad?	No
20. Is this course collaborative with any other institutions?	No
20.1 If yes, then please enter the names of the other teaching institutions:	
N/A	

21. Additional Relevant Information:

22. Indicative Bibliography:
• Attali, J., 1985. <i>Noise: The Political Economy of Music</i>. Translated from French by B. Massumi Minnesota: University of Minnesota. • Birtwistle, A., 2010. <i>Cinesonica: Sounding Film and Video</i>. Manchester: Manchester University Press. • Bull, M., Back, L. eds., 2003. <i>The Auditory Culture Reader</i>. Oxford: Berg. • Chion, M., 1994. <i>Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen</i>. Translated from French by C. Gorbman New York: Columbia University Press. • Erlmann, V. ed., 2004. <i>Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity</i>. Oxford: Berg. • Eshun, K., 1998. <i>More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction</i>. London: Quartet Books. • Ihde, D., 2007. <i>Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound</i> (2nd ed.). New York: State Univ. of NY Press • Kahn, D., 1999. <i>Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts</i>. Cambridge: MIT Press. • Kerins, M., 2011. <i>Beyond Dolby (Stereo): Cinema in the Digital Sound Age</i>. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011). • LaBelle, B., 2006. <i>Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art</i>. New York: Continuum, 2006. • LaBelle, B., 2010. <i>Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life</i>. New York: Continuum. • Pinch, T., Bijsterveld, K. eds., 2012. <i>The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press. • Schafer, R. M., 1977. <i>The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World</i>. Merrimac: Destiny Books. • Smith, M. M., ed., 2004. <i>Hearing History: A Reader</i>, Athens: The University of Georgia Press. • Sterne, J. ed., 2012. <i>The Sound Studies Reader</i>. London: Routledge. • Street, S., 2012. <i>The Poetry of Radio: The Colour of Sound</i>. London: Routledge. • Suárez, J. A., 2008. Structural Film: Noise. In: K. Beckman, J. Ma, eds., 2008, <i>Still Moving: Between Cinema and Photography</i>. Durham: Duke University Press. pp. 62 – 89. • Thompson, E., 2004. <i>The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933</i>. Cambridge: MIT Press.