

'SONIC IDENTITIES IN MODERN-DAY MEXICO CITY'

WHAT'S THE IDEA?

Our sonic environments are every bit as real as the things and people that surround us. We are constantly shaped by what we hear, and in turn we shape our environment through our choices of how we listen (or not) and what we listen to. Listening to music is an expansion of this constant sonic engagement, a form of performance by which we actively create and negotiate our identities.

WHAT WILL THE COURSE BE LIKE?

We will develop this idea, so simple and so radical at the same time, in stages, through reading, discussion, lectures, and some visits to particular sites in the city. We start by locating ourselves in the web of modern global sound-culture, through sonic and musical auto-ethnographies. We then move to our more immediate environment, studying how Mexico City's particular sonic histories—ancient and recent, indigenous and colonial, official and colloquial, historical and mythical—have negotiated and still negotiate identity, power, and resistance for people in the largest city in North America. Finally, we will develop term projects exploring the soundscapes of the capital. These may take a variety of forms, from a conventional essay, to a blog, short film, sound recording, live performance, or some combination of these.

The itineraries and topics of the final part of the course will be determined collaboratively, by the current interests of the class members and by what is going on sonically in the capital at the time the course is taught.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

The course is explicitly designed for those without formal training in music (though training is certainly no hindrance). Training or no, nearly all University students have a strong connections to music, as evidenced by the near-ubiquity of the Ipod. This common passion suggests a common need for a better understanding of non-verbal sound. This field of experience, very often left to the side in academic study, has bearing on fields as diverse as anthropology, sociology, history, public policy, health sciences, and the arts.

HOW MUCH WORK WILL IT BE?

The course corresponds to a typical UC upper-division undergraduate elective. We will meet once a week for 3 hours (seminar style). Readings and other homework will require an average of 6-8 hours a week.

WHO IS THE PROFESSOR?

I have taught music history, musicology, and music performance at UCLA for sixteen years. (Before that I was a professional performer of classical music). My main passion as an undergraduate teacher and counselor lies in awakening students to the understandings that *they already possess*, and in helping them express this in an effective way.

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