

Sophister Module Description Template 2023-24

Full Name: Noise and Power in Literature

Short Name: Noise and Power in Literature

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ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught MT/HT: MT

Year JS/SS: SS

Module Content:

Noise can broadly be defined as unwanted sound, particularly as sound that interrupts communication. In its most extreme form, noise can do physical damage and can therefore be used as an instrument of aggression, even of torture and warfare. Jacques Attali and others have drawn attention to the circumstance that noise always has a political dimension: it is an essential privilege of authorities to make and suppress noise, and to structure it by deciding what form of noise is admissible at what point in space and time.

Noise seems to be the nemesis of language, scrambling every message and annihilating information. But on the other hand, some literary texts and plays attempt to integrate noise into themselves, instead of suppressing it. Noise permeates the “voice” of these texts in one form or another, often staging or mimicking a return of repressed forms of violence at the heart of society. The seminar will engage with literary and theoretical texts that stage and reflect on the political dimensions of noise, following the transformations of its theory and practice in the course of history.

Learning Outcomes:

- Read selected literary texts from several literary epochs (Shakespeare, Stephen Crane, Samuel Beckett, Don DeLillo and others).
- Think about the relation between noise and literature.
- Read some theoretical texts on the political dimension of noise (Giambattista Vico, Elias Canetti, Jacques Attali, Henri Lefebvre and others).

Learning Aims:

- To gain a better understanding of the political dimension of noise and its processing in literary works.

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 1
- Name/Type of Component(s): 1 final essay
- Word Count of Component(s): 5000

- Percentage Value of Component(s): 100%

Preliminary Reading List:

- Jacques Attali, *Noise*
- Samuel Beckett, *The Unnameable*
- John Cage, “The Future of Music”
- Elias Canetti, “Rhythm”
- Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*
- Don DeLillo, *White Noise*
- Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Excerpt)
- Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare* (Excerpt)
- Friedrich Kittler, “The God of the Ears”
- Bart Kosko, *Noise* (Excerpt)
- Henri Lefebvre, “The Rhythmanalyst”
- William H. McNeill, *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History* (Excerpt)
- William Shakespeare, *King Lear*
- M. P. Shiel, “The House of Sounds”
- Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (Excerpt)
- David Toop, *Sinister Resonance*
- Giambattista Vico, *The New Science* (Excerpt)

Please note:

- **Curricular information is subject to change.**
- **Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.**