

## MUSIC 620: Materiality

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Office hours: by appt. (Tu. afternoon)

Fall 2013

Th. 2-5; Conference Room

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### General description:

Under the rubric of “materiality,” we will consider various approaches to the materiality, thinginess, and objecthood of sound and music. Of interest are the ways in which materiality becomes inseparable and/or separable from affective, epistemic, and social wagers made on musical value, labor, and circulation; how, in short, “things” (sonorous and otherwise) may gather particular social worlds, or fail to do so. Relevant areas of critique include several recent “turns” (affective, ecological, performative, technological) and keywords gaining something like sacred status in the disciplines (assemblage, network, relationality, vibration).

Our general introduction to ideas and debates related to materiality asks how and under what conditions might matter, materiality, things, and objects become intelligible, perceptible, and sensible to sound and music as objects of study, or critical frame? Reciprocally, how might sound and music affect and inform the ways in which we understand and engage matter, materiality, things, and object? We will become acquainted with a set of concepts, questions, and methodologies that can help us engage critically with emerging trends in music studies and at the same time can open up new spaces where we can take our historical, anthropological, and theoretical concerns with music and sound. Our archive and attitude will be critical, cultural-historical, theoretical, and anthropological, engaging authors such as J.P. Rameau, P. Schaeffer; Heidegger, Graham Harman, and Bruno Latour; Jane Bennett, Frances Dyson, and Bill Brown; Manuel de Landa and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, among others.

### Work:

- 1) In-depth discussion of readings constitutes the main task of the seminar. For each set of readings, all students (it is a small group) will post their commentaries on the readings, with a focus on specific and salient concepts that you feel need discussion, clarification, expansion, and questioning. Comments should fall within the 350-700 word range (one to two pages, 12 point font, double space), and you can use a combination of prose and bullet points. Your commentary MUST BE posted at least 24 hours before seminar.

Starting on the third week, one seminar participant will coordinate the discussion; we will rotate this responsibility. It will be the coordinator responsibility to bring questions to the other comments as a way to guide the conversation.

Suggestions for organizing comments:

- Identify a particular concept, first paraphrasing the author(s)

- Follow this with critical commentary – how is author supporting a given argument, what motivations does s/he have to do the work s/he is doing, and state what you think of the argument and concept
- Keep in mind that critical commentary must discern between the author's frame and your own; avoid stating what you wish s/he would have said
- Keep in mind that we are traversing a wide range of temporal and spatial coordinates; avoid presentist critiques by situating the author within her/his work and discipline (this requires that you find out about authors you are not familiar with) and carry out your own commentary with these contingencies in mind
- It may be helpful sometimes to compare authors in a given set of readings, or to begin doing the work of synthesis that links readings from week to week and throughout the semester
- It may be useful sometimes to focus on a very specific statement and engage in close readings, though try at all times to link this to wider concerns

You are invited (strongly encouraged) to revise your commentaries following in-class discussions. Likewise, you are invited to comment on your colleagues' commentaries and in-class discussions after seminar meeting. Remember that one of the true pleasures of graduate seminars is that we all teach each other, something that, alas, becomes rarer as professional protocols impinge on our modes of knowledge exchange and production – seriously!

- 2) Befitting an advanced graduate seminar, we will produce an end-of-semester paper.
  - The paper will be ideally 25 pages, but no less than 20 or more than 30 pages, bibliography included
  - Try to identify along the way a particular topic that you feel can relate to your research interests. It can be a theoretical thread that you wish to first synthesize from the readings and then expand and possibly apply to sound or musical objects of a historical, ethnographic, or theoretical nature
  - By Nov. 1, you should consult with me if you have not found a way into this kind connection – it is not easy, given the material.
  - By Nov. 15, you should present a reasoned account of your topic, the relevance to your work, how you want to pursue your arguments, what case studies you wish to explore (if this is the case), and a working bibliography.
  - I encourage you to explore ways in which the readings may bear on musical, musicological, ethnographic, and/or theoretical issues.
  - The final version of the paper is due no later than one week after the last seminar meeting

**Schedule** (subject to revision; consult Canvas course site):

Part 1: Things, Fetishes, Commodities

1. 8/30  
Introductory lecture: Pythagoras, Hammers, Workers, and Sonorous Ratio(s)
2. 9/5  
Heidegger, Martin. 1971 [1950]. "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter. Harper & Row: New York, 174-182.  
Heidegger, Martin. 1993 [1951]. "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell. New York: HarperCollins, 343-364.
3. 9/12  
Brown, Bill. 2001. "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28/1: 1-22.  
Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. "Commodities and Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai. Cambridge U. Press, 3-63.
4. 9/19  
Latour, Bruno. 2004. "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30/4: 225-248.  
Latour, Bruno. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
5. 9/26  
Radano, Ronald. 2013. "The Secret Animation of Black Music" (draft).  
Pietz, William. "The Problem of the Fetish, I," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 9 (Spring 1985): 5-17. (Parts II and III appear in subsequent issues)  
Brown, Bill. 2006. "Reification, Reanimation, and the American Uncanny." *Critical Inquiry* 32/4: 175-207.  
Kopytoff, Igor. "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in Appadurai, ed. *The Social Life of Things*, 64-94.

Part 2: Object Oriented Ontology (O.O.O.)

6. 10/3  
Harman, Graham. 2009. *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*. Melbourne: Re.Press.  
Harman, Graham. 2011. *The Quadruple Object*. Zero Books.
7. 10/10  
Schaeffer, Pierre. "Concrete Music (1954)," in *The Routledge Film Music Sourcebook*, ed. James Wierzbicki, Nathan Platte, and Colin Roust. New York: Routledge, 150-153.  
Schaeffer, Pierre. 2012. *In Search of a Concrete Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press.  
LaBelle, Brandon. 2006. "Exposing the Sound Object," in *Background Noise: Perspectives in Sound Art*. New York: Continuum, 24-34.

Cox, Christoph. 2011. "Beyond Representation and Signification: Toward a Sonic Materialism." *Journal of Visual Culture* 10/2 (2011): 145-161.

### Part 3: Matter, Materiality

8. 10/17

Coole, Diana, and Samantha Frost. 2010. "Introducing the New Materialisms," in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, eds. Diana Coole and Samantha Frost. Durham: Duke University Press, 1-47.

Miller, Daniel. 2005. "Materiality: An Introduction," in *Materiality (Politics, History, and Culture)*, ed. Daniel Miller. Durham: Duke University Press, 1-50.

9. 10/23

Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Dyson, Frances. 2009. *Sounding the New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts and Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

10. 10/31 [Due to the SMT meeting, we'll arrange to hold seminar earlier in the week]

Sterne, Jonathan. 2012. *MP3: The Meaning of a Format*. Durham: Duke University Press.

### Part 4: Relations, Networks, Assemblages

11/7 AMS; seminar does not meet

11. 11/14

Bruno Latour. 2007. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1-156.

DeLanda, Manuel. 2006. *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*. New York: Continuum, Introduction and chapters 1-4.

12. 11/21

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 1998. "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4/3: 67-91.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 1992 [1986]. *From the Enemy's Point of View: Humanity and Divinity in an Amazonian Society*, trans. Catherine V. Howard. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

13. 11/26 TUESDAY: seminar meets, per University calendar.

14. LaBelle, Brandon. "Auditory Relations," in *Background Noise*, lx-xviii.

Born, Georgina. 2010. "For a Relational Musicology: Music and Interdisciplinarity, Beyond the Practice Turn." *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 135/2: 205-243.

Born, Georgina. n.d. "Social Roles of Improv." <http://vimeo.com/45146435>

11/28-11/31: Thanksgiving

15. 12/5

Presentations

**Online resources:**

ANT Resource (extensive bibliography) <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/centres/css/ant/ant.htm>

CHARISMA (Consumer Market Studies) <http://www.charisma-network.net/>

Duke U. working group on Speculative Aesthetics (good reading list by author)

<http://www.fhi.duke.edu/projects/interdisciplinary-working-groups/speculative-aesthetics>

<http://ozone-journal.org/forthcoming/> (A Journal of OOO)

Lectures on Heidegger, including “The Thing” <http://www.redassociates.com/conversations/sense-making/the-heidegger-sessions/>

Lectures on Speculative Realism and OOO, by Graham Harman

<http://xylem.aegean.gr/~modestos/mo.blog/?p=4716>

Cosmological Perspectivism in Amazonia and Elsewhere (four lectures by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro)

<http://www.haujournal.org/index.php/masterclass/issue/view/Masterclass%20Volume%201/showToc>

Blog roll:

<http://accursedshare.blogspot.com/> (political theory bent)

<http://www.inthemedievalmiddle.com/2010/11/agency-objects-and-constitution-of-life.html> (Jeffrey J. Cohen, a medievalist)

<http://www.bogost.com/blog/> (Ian Bogost);

[http://www.bogost.com/blog/speculative\\_realism\\_aggregator.shtml](http://www.bogost.com/blog/speculative_realism_aggregator.shtml), where Bogost compiles a list of other sites

<http://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/> (Levi R. Bryant)

<http://doctorzamalek2.wordpress.com/> (Graham Harman)

<http://www.bruno-latour.fr/> (Bruno Latour)

<http://ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.com/2011/05/object-oriented-ontology-graduate-class.html> (Tim Morton)

<http://www.materialworldblog.com/> (NYU anthropology)

<http://network2matter.wordpress.com/> (in Spanish, for my peeps)

<http://relationality.wordpress.com/>

<http://speculativeheresy.wordpress.com/>

<http://thingtheory2009.wordpress.com/>