

DMST 3900 Digital Sound Cultures

Unit Two. Contexts Assignments

Review Blog entry (5%)

One paragraph

Due by Friday, Feb 06

Our first review blog entry emphasized descriptions of sonorous objects rather than assessed, analyzed, or analogized around that sonic material. Now it is time to bring some of these other elements into the review language, balancing descriptions of sonorous objects and production strategies with accounts of some of the historical, formal and theoretical contexts with which the individual work resonates. We want to use these resonances to mix larger complexes of meaning and vibrant networks of linkages across different material.

Draw at least one concept from either Timothy Taylor or Michael Veal, and use this concept as a way to review one piece of audio introduced this unit. That is, you should discuss the audio track in a way that questions, illustrates or clarifies the concept drawn from our readings. You should anchor your account of this concept with at least one key passage quoted from the text. Incorporate comparisons to at least one other audio work also introduced this unit.

Set 2. Contextual Synthesizers: Research and Theory in a Dub-Text Style (30%)

10 minute audio mix + two dub texts (2-3 pages)

Due by Friday, Feb 13

- 1) For this unit, we'll produce a set of "cognitive dub" mixes that explore what Michael Veal calls "the mixing board as an instrument of spontaneous composition" (78). I would like us to treat the mixing desktop composition space as a studio that will allow us to dub our source texts through a series of experimental remixes in word and sound. For this assignment, you'll be creating three short text pieces of a more experimental nature within the following guidelines.

First, choose your source materials:

- 1) 2 short sections from Timothy Taylor
- 2) 2 short sections from Michael Veal
- 3) Additional textual sources (short fragments) of your choice
- 4) At least 4 audio works introduced this unit + your choice

You'll want two separate text sources to act as the main objects of your "dub versions." Choose something like "The Postcolonial Versioned as Postimperial" section in Veal (239) or "The Dub-Punk Connection" (225-7). Think of each section as the original "song" that the dub mixer deconstructed and rebuilt through a variety of production strategies. Other textual materials might provide "riddims" or simulate the effects of, say, microphone bleedthrough or incidental studio chatter. You can extend out of our required reading for these effects, too. For audio, you may bring in as many additional sources that help to illustrate and explore your areas of interest, as long as you incorporate four audio selections from our shared materials.

Does specific content matter, or is this just random? The whole point is to pick primary material that does actually interest you for its content. Choose something that you gravitate toward because of the ideas. This way, you can figure out how alternative strategies of content/idea production let you derive new and creative nuances out of that content. Plus, it enacts dub as a critical strategy of thinking.

Second, please choose five of the following strategies:

- Erasure and Fragmentation of Song Lyrics
- Collaging and Multilayering of Song Lyrics
- Spatial and Echo Effects and the Use of Reverb and Delay Devices
- Timbral/Textural Effects and the Use of Equalization and Filtering Devices

- Use of Microphone “Bleed-through” and Secondary Signals
- Inclusion of Extraneous Material and Nonmusical Sound
- Backward Sound and Tape Speed Manipulation
- Tape Splicing
- Abuse of Equipment

Now, produce two 1-2 page dub mixes of your source materials.

Finally, use these dub texts as a conceptual score for your audio mix (roughly 5 minutes per textual source). The audio works selected should illustrate the techniques you apply in your textual work. For example, if you choose “erasure & fragmentation,” then at least one of your three audio mixes should provide a good demonstration of fragmentation. You can bring in additional sources to illustrate these techniques in other audio works and musics. Here the main goal is to create an audio mix that relates to the conceptual and stylistic aspects of your written work.

- 2) Incorporating and responding to our readings and listenings from Unit Two, please write an essay of five double-spaced pages that addresses these questions. What are you learning from our readings and listenings? What kind of theoretical or cultural contexts are helping you follow threads of interaction and engagement among these writers and artists? Discuss one specific collection of writers, works and artists that illustrate this broader conceptual development.

Since Unit Two covers two writers, Veal and Taylor, you'll need to write some about both of them. To help focus the amount of primary material that you are dealing with, this writing should focus on the two sets of passages from each writer that you chose for the first, more experimental part of the assignment. You'll also want to write about those four tracks selected from our class set, plus any others that you want to bring into the mix. For the purposes of this assignment, you should strive to foreground meaningful relationships among sets of material. In your response, please incorporate quoted material from the text to focus your discussion.