

**8N:145 Radio Essays**

Fall 2008

10:55A - 12:10P TTh

312 EPB

Prof. Porter

305A EPB

Hours: T: 9-10 + 12:30-2:30 &amp; appt.

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**DESCRIPTION**

This course will explore the radio essay as a form of writing that emerges out of two related though different traditions—radio sound art and oral performance. We'll discuss such sound artists (storytellers and dramatists) as David Sedaris, Sarah Vowell, Bailey White, Sandra Tsing Loh, David Rakoff, Orson Welles, Tom Stoppard, Anthony Minghella, and David Mamet and look at such documentary artists as Glenn Gould, David Isay, and the Kitchen Sisters. We'll examine the prevailing national venues for essayists and documentarians: NPR commentaries, *This American Life* narratives, as well as Third Coast Audio Festival and Soundprint. Throughout the term we will work closely with electronic media and audio editing tools on Macs with Pro Tools. In certain cases, selected stories and interviews that you produce may be streamed or broadcast on Iowa Public Radio. Our aim is to learn how to produce voiceovers, record interviews, capture nonverbal sounds and music, and integrate these media with spoken texts. Three radio projects will be assigned during the semester: narrative, dramatic, and short documentary radio essay. (You will be required to complete two out of three). Most of our studio recording and audio editing will take place in the media studio in 303 EPB.

**TEXTS**David Sedaris, *Naked*Sarah Vowell, *Take the Cannoli*Anthony Minghella, *Minghella Plays: 2: Cigarettes and Chocolate* etc.Tom Stoppard, *Tom Stoppard: Plays 2* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994)Sourcebooks, *The War of the Worlds With Audio CD: from H.G. Wells to Orson Welles*Steven Roback, *Pro Tools 7 for Macintosh and Windows**Available at Prairie Lights.***SCHEDULE**Week 1

T 8/26

**INTRODUCTION: WRITING WITH SOUND**

Background, Overview, Resources

R 8/28

Listening Exercise

Sound Walk (see handout for details)

Week 2

T 9/2

**VOICE AND SOUNDMAKING**

Barry Truax, "Voice and Soundmaking" (PDF) ▲

Susan Douglas, "The Zen of Listening" (PDF) ▲

Murray Schaefer, "Listening" (PDF) ▲

Sound Walk assignment due

- R 9/4            **SOUND STORIES: NPR + THIS AMERICAN LIFE**  
Bailey White, selections from *Mama Makes Up Her Mind* (PDF) ▲  
David Sedaris, “A Plague of Tics” and “Cyclops”  
Project #1 Assignment—*Narrative*
- Week 3  
T 9/9            Sarah Vowell, “Shooting Dad”  
and “Take the Cannoli”  
David Rakoff, “Christmas Freud” (PDF) ▲
- R 9/11            Sarah Vowell, “Michigan and Wacker”  
Sandra Tsing Loh, “Mr. Loh's Not Afraid to Be Naked” ▲
- Week 4  
T 9/16            Workshop: **first drafts** of project #1 due: to be read aloud  
Editing prose for spoken language
- R 9/18            Workshop first drafts of project #1
- Week 5  
T 9/23            **THE RADIOPHONIC MIX:** music, sound, and spoken language  
Radiophonic samples: Ira Glass, Ken Nordine, and Tom Waits  
In-class demo: studio voiceover and recording session
- R 9/25            **HOW TO TELL A STORY IN PRO TOOLS**  
Workshop and demo: editing audio in Pro Tools
- Week 6  
T 9/30            **First Cut due**  
In-class editing workshop: project #1
- R 10/2            In-class editing workshop continued
- Week 7  
T 10/7            **RADIO DRAMA**  
A Short and Spicy History with Sound bites  
Project #2 Assignment—*Drama*
- R 10/9            Orson Welles and the Mercury Theater (*War of the Worlds*)  
**Final Cut of Project #1 due**
- Week 8  
T 10/16            Tom Stoppard, *The Dissolution of Dominic Boot* and ‘M’ is for *Moon Among Other Things*  
Anthony Minghella, *Cigarettes and Chocolate* and *Hang Up*
- R 10/18            David Mammet, *The Water Engine*

Week 9

T 10/23

Drama Workshop  
Project #3 Assignment—*radio documentary*  
Drama treatment due

R 3/25

**RADIO DOCUMENTARY**  
A Short and Not-So Spicy History  
How to analyze a radio doc

Week 10

T 10/30

Sample analysis: *American RadioWorks* (“Intelligent Designs on Evolution”) ▲  
student presentation

R 11/1

Sample analysis: *Sound-Portraits* (“My Lobotomy”) ▲  
student presentation

Week 11

T 11/4

Sample analysis: *Kitchen Sisters* (“Waiting for Joe DiMaggio”) ▲  
student presentation

R 11/6

Sample analysis: Glenn Gould (“The Idea of North” from *Solitude Trilogy*) ▲  
student presentation

**Final Cut of Project #2 due**

**Radio doc treatment due**

Week 12

T 11/11

**THE ART OF INTERVIEWING**  
Guest speaker, Ben Kiefer (WSUI)

R 11/13

Mock Interviews

Week 13

T 11/18

**HOW TO MAKE A RADIO DOC IN PRO TOOLS**

R 11/20

Radio doc Workshop

Week 14

T 11/25

**Thanksgiving Holiday**

R 11/27

**Thanksgiving Holiday**

Week 15

T 12/2

Radio doc Workshop

R 12/4

Radio doc Workshop

Week 16

T 12/9

Radio doc Workshop

R 12/11

**Final Cut of Project #3 due**

(▲ refers to an audio or PDF file which will be available for listening or reading on ICON and will be part of our scheduled discussions.)

### **ASSIGNMENTS & APPROXIMATE GRADING**

- short presentation on a sound artist 10%
- 2 of 3 assigned radio projects 60%
- active participation and collaborative work 30%
- You have two free absences. Beyond that, your final grade will drop one half-letter grade for each absence, unless you contact me promptly with a valid excuse and arrange for a make-up assignment.
- This course uses plus-minus grading.

### **WRITTEN ESSAYS**

Although submitted radio essay projects will ultimately take the form of a digital audio file, I will be collecting final drafts of the written version of your project to review.

There will be no final exam.

Stay tuned for fuller details about required assignments.

### **The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Policies and Procedures**

**Administrative Home** The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall or see the Academic Handbook.

[www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic\\_handbook/index.shtml](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/index.shtml)

**Academic Fraud** Plagiarism and any other activities when students present work that is not their own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is reported to the departmental DEO and to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Services who enforces the appropriate consequences. [www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic\\_handbook/ix.shtml](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml)

**Making a Suggestion or a Complaint** Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor and the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident.

[www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic\\_handbook/ix.shtml#5](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/ix.shtml#5)

**Accommodations for Disabilities** A student seeking academic accommodations should register with Student Disability Services and meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. For more information, visit this site: [www.uiowa.edu/~sds/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/)

**Understanding Sexual Harassment** Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Visit [www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu](http://www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu) for definitions, assistance, and the full University policy.

**Reacting Safely to Severe Weather** In severe weather, the class members should seek shelter in the innermost part of the building, if possible at the lowest level, staying clear of windows and free-standing expanses. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. ([Operations Manual](#) 16.14. i.)

**Important University of Iowa Deadlines for Off-Cycle Courses** (Note: Use only for off-cycle courses. To find the deadlines for a particular course, visit this Registrar site and type in the course number and title:

[www.registrar.uiowa.edu/more/coursedeadlines.aspx](http://www.registrar.uiowa.edu/more/coursedeadlines.aspx)) Since this course begins or ends at a time different from other courses, please be aware of these deadlines: *Last day to add or drop without a W is Monday, September 8.*