

Title of lecture: MPhil – Sound Studies in Popular Music**Response from: Kariann Goldschmitt (25th July 2015)**

I am happy to see that the response to the course was positive. While only four students chose to write a paper, there was high participation from other students in the MPhil cohort as well as a few more advanced graduate students. Many of the students said that they appreciated the broad range of readings and my enthusiasm and knowledge as a course leader. Despite this broad consensus about the value of the course to the MPhil program, a few students raised a few issues that get to the heart of an emerging interdisciplinary field like Sound Studies. Given that Sound Studies is a rapidly growing trend in musicology, ethnomusicology, and popular music studies, there is still very little agreement about core questions, methods and approaches. I had attempted to frame the problems of widespread methodological disagreement through the preliminary readings of the main survey texts (*Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* and *The Sound Studies Reader*) prior to the first meeting; however, seminar discussions often returned to the challenges of discerning whether or not a scholarly approach to the issues was sound when we dealt with a text that was especially experimental or unconventional. Despite that discomfort, I believe the constant question around methods is a core part of what any emerging field is and I will attempt to highlight that fact more in the future.

I was happy to see some practical suggestions for ways to improve the course. Given the breadth of the course material and course readings, many of the respondents complained about the two-hour length of the seminar, often stating that they would have liked more time every week to discuss the issues. This was an evident problem from early on in the term and, in my experience, two hours is insufficient for a seminar of this breadth. Thus, I agree with their observation. While we had attempted to be more flexible about scheduling, adding an extra half hour or hour to meetings proved to be imperfect due to student scheduling. If given the opportunity to teach such a seminar again in that length of time, I would reduce the reading list about one third to allow for more in-depth time. Another student requested more lecturing and overview. About half-way into the seminar, I began to provide more general overviews about material due to student requests and that is something that I can easily extend to the entire seminar. Some students gave syllabus suggestions (Jacques Attali's *Noise*) and I believe that stems from a desire to study the longer chronology of interdisciplinary works in sound studies about popular music. Even as I gave the students an opportunity to suggest readings at the beginning of the term, this student perhaps noted Attali's absence only when the course was nearly done. I will take all of these suggestions and criticisms to heart if given an opportunity to teach the same material again.