

THE SOUND OF NOSTALGIA

INSTRUCTOR: Heather Mease, heather.mease@tu-dortmund.de

CLASS MEETING: Wintersemester 2022/2023, TUESDAY 12:15 - 13:45, R. 0.406

OFFICE HOUR: Tuesday 14:30 – 15:30 and by appointment for in-person & virtual meetings

OVERVIEW

How do we hear the past? What does it mean when music sounds "nostalgic"? Tape is back, vinyl has been back, and the history of recorded sound is available in its extant entirety for musicians to remix and reconfigure as they see fit. Covers, re-makes, and appropriated past styles, sounds, and images saturate pops charts, music videos, and movie theatres. But is this a bad thing? Does it suggest culture is oriented towards the past and away from the future, or can the past and present coexist to produce something unique that also connects to musical traditions? This course investigates the presence of nostalgia, both in content and form, throughout post-9/11 popular music and culture. The class will approach popular and experimental musical examples through lenses of music criticism, cultural studies, psychology, and media studies.

ASSIGNMENTS & DEADLINES

For the final project you will write an 800-word essay that analyzes and contextualizes a song, album, soundtrack (etc) or a piece of audio-visual media like a music video, film, show, video game, or advertisement within the themes and materials of this course such as nostalgia, memory, postmodernism, hauntology, and American popular culture. You may choose to explore a piece or topic we've covered more thoroughly, or you may choose something from your own media interests.

Project Proposal – **Due December 20 by midnight**

The project proposal should describe the work you'd like to explore in the final project along with a short explanation how it relates to class materials. Please also include which texts you will be using to help build your analysis within the description or as a separate bibliography. You may end up using more sources when writing the final essay (it's not required but may be necessary depending on the topic), but here your

bibliography may just include texts we've read in class thus far. These are the minimum requirements for the proposal but you may submit a more substantial draft if interested. The proposal should be a minimum of 2-4 sentences, or however long it needs to be to convey all the above information. If you are proposing a larger project or an alternative creative project, please explain how this project will be significant enough to satisfy the "module" requirements.

Project Presentations – **Jan 24** and **Jan 31**

An approximately 5-minute presentation should condense and exemplify your topic through oral description and short media clips. A slideshow presentation may be used but is not mandatory.

Final Project – **Due February 3* by midnight**

The final 800-word essay with formal bibliography is due February 3rd by midnight.

*If you plan to take the module exam (M5 Lehramt) please get in touch about handing in your work earlier.

SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 – OCT 11 **Introduction**

WEEK 2 – OCT 18 **What is nostalgia?**

READ: Clay Routledge – *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource*, Ch. 1 “A History of Nostalgia,” Ch. 2 “How We Perceive and Experience Nostalgia,” and Ch. 4 “The Affective Consequences of Nostalgia”

LISTEN: Find a song or another audio-visual piece of media that you identify as either personally nostalgic or that has a nostalgic style. Prepare to share it with the class and discuss what about it is nostalgic.

WEEK 3 – OCT 25 **Postmodernism and Nostalgia**

READ: Frederic Jameson – “Postmodernism and Consumer Society”

LISTEN: [Negativland – Dispepsi](#)

NO CLASS – NOV 1

- WEEK 4 – NOV 8 **The Promise of Nostalgia in American Culture**
 READ: Nicola Sayers – *The Promise of Nostalgia: Reminiscence, Longing and Hope in Contemporary American Culture*, Ch.1 “Nostalgia: Is it really not what it used to be?”
 Hailemariam Kebede Gelgile – “Nostalgia Marketing: Examining Music Retromania”
 LISTEN: [YouTube Music Video Playlist](#)
- WEEK 5 – NOV 15 **Hearing the Past**
 READ/LISTEN: [“Early Recordings of Early Music 1928 – 1939”](#)
 WATCH: [The Nature of Sound \(1948\)](#)
- WEEK 6 – NOV 22 **Sampling and Making a Grainy, Pixelated Present**
 READ: John Oswald – “Battered by the Borrower: The Ethics of Musical Debt”
 Joseph Schloss – *Making Beats*, Ch. 1 “It’s About Playing Records”
 WATCH: [videogamedunkey – Sonic Mania \(dunkview\)](#)
 LISTEN: [Madvillian – Madvilliany](#)
- WEEK 7 – NOV 29 **Hauntological Vibrations**
 READ: Mark Fisher – *Ghosts of My Life*, Ch. 00 “Lost Futures” and Ch. 02 “Hauntology”
 WATCH: [CCK Philosophy – “Hauntology, Lost Futures and 80s Nostalgia”](#)
- WEEK 8 – DEC 6 **Music for Non-Places: Muzak and Vaporwave**
 READ: Grafton Tanner – *Babbling Corpse*, Ch. 1 “Spectral Presence,” Ch.2 “Erasing the Human” and Ch. 3 “Lost Futures and Consumer Dreams”
 WATCH: [Ordinary Things – “What is Muzak? \(Elevator Music\),” \(2019\)](#)
 LISTEN: [Macintosh Plus – Floral Shoppe \(2011\)](#)
- WEEK 9 – DEC 13 **Never Forget! Media in Post-9/11 America**
 READ: Richard Grusin – *Premediation: Affect and Mediality After 9/11*, Ch. 1 “Remediating 9/11”

LISTEN: [William Basinski – *Disintegration Loops*](#)

WEEK 10 – DEC 20 Retromania

READ: Simon Reynolds – “Intro,” “Prologue,” and Ch. 11 “Out of Space”

LISTEN: [Greta van Fleet – *When the Curtain Falls*](#)

DUE: Final Project Proposal, due by midnight of Dec 20

BREAK – DEC 24 to JAN 6

WEEK 11 – JAN 10 Left-wing Melancholy and Memories of Utopia

READ: Enzo Traverso – *Left-wing Melancholia*, Ch. 1 “The Culture of Defeat” and Ch 2. “Marxism and Memory”

WEEK 12 – JAN 17 Music of the Future

READ: Robert Barry – *The Music of the Future*, “Third Act: 2079” and “Coda: 2016”

LISTEN: Find a song or another audio-visual piece of media that you identify as futuristic, that sounds “new” or without precedent in some capacity. Prepare to share it with the class and discuss these elements in the piece.

WEEK 13 – JAN 24 Final Presentations

WEEK 14 – JAN 31 Final Presentations cont.

FEB 3 – FINAL PAPER DUE BY MIDNIGHT