Sound is everywhere—and it is a range of experience we oftentimes take for granted. With a range of readings—scholarly articles, journalism and criticism, diaries—and tours—audio walking tours, daytrips, studio visits—“Sonic London” will expose students to a new way of thinking about this range of unscrutinized experience. What does a city sound like? Why do we judge the sonic as unreliable and ephemeral when compared to the textual or visual? How does sound challenge or reinforce notions of spatiality or temporality? I’m excited to take these questions on with such a thriving city as backdrop. What is the sound of a cosmopolitan, multicultural city? How does a city’s musical forms take on a sonic signature? How does a city like London use sound to control or discipline its citizens?

This course combines lecture and discussion with group experimentation, field explorations and visits with local designers, artists, journalists and programmers. Together, we will explore the different facets of sound culture: histories and ethnographies of listening; theories of sound capture and reproduction; the political economy of recording media; the experience of the modern soundscape; sound art and sonic weaponry.