

SCORES FOR LIVING: PERFORMANCE, PLACE, AND SENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY (Spring 2021)

CA 826: New Approaches in Performance Studies

SA 887: Special Topics in Sociology & Anthropology

SA 474: Cultures, Politics, Performance: Conversations with Performance Studies

Instructors:

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Meeting Time and Method of Delivery:

Tuesdays, 5:30-9:20 pm Pacific Standard Time, via Zoom (check the course [Canvas](#) page for weekly Zoom links)

Course Description:

Performance, as an object of study and a method of critical research and analysis, has increasingly become a way to bridge scholarly inquiry across the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Among other things, this has meant paying attention to how the body and the senses produce knowledge and ways of being in the world. In this practice-based course, co-taught by performance studies scholars in Anthropology and Contemporary Arts, we will explore the theoretical and methodological intersections among performance studies and two emerging fields in anthropology: multisensory ethnography, which explores relationships between embodied sensory experience and historical, cultural, and political contexts; and multimodal ethnography, which engages media in conducting fieldwork, and in analyzing and communicating ethnographic work.

As both performance studies and ethnography speak meaningfully to our relationships with place, and how we embody and are entangled with different material spaces, we will take as our primary objects of study our immediate sensory environments. Given the current circumstances of our global pandemic, these environments will be multiple and varied, and potentially very radically circumscribed. Nevertheless, while we will be connecting with each other remotely from many different parts of the world, we will attempt to grapple with some of the following questions:

- How do we engage meaningfully with our relationships to place while acknowledging the situated histories of those places—for example, that in Vancouver and British Columbia we occupy unceded Indigenous territories?
- How do the neighbourhoods we live and play in, or the institutions we work at, perform on and for us? And how do we perform in and with them?
- How might paying ethnographic attention to the everyday micro-performances of our environments—the “sensescapes” of sound, smell, sight, taste, and touch we experience as part of the social choreography of living—speak otherwise to official narratives of urban branding, or help to reveal sedimented layers of history and belonging?
- What kinds of “otherwise” sets of instructions, or scores, for living might we craft through our respective research practices or objects of study that might account for the sensoria often excluded from the conventional western scheme of five senses, hierarchically ordered?

We will take up these concerns by engaging with a range of sensory studies (texts, films, material archives) exemplary of researchers' sensuous, performative, and often practice-based entanglements with the multiple and overlapping worlds they embody, including the scholarly, the artistic, the activist, and the community-engaged. We will also use two methods that derive from (and also cross over) anthropology and performance—namely, keeping an ethnographic diary/field notebook and developing and working with improvisatory scores—in order to “make sense” of our place-based investigations. These methods will, in turn, seed students' final projects.

Texts:

Required and recommended readings will be made available on Canvas as online pdfs.

Course Requirements:

Canvas Discussion Contributions	10%
Multisensory Ethnographic Diary – 6 entries	30%
Project Proposal	10%
Project Reading List and Shared Score	10%
Final Project	40%

Assignment Instructions:

1. Canvas Discussion Contributions (10%)

In order to help facilitate robust in-class conversation and peer-to-peer dialogue on the weekly readings, we are asking everyone to post a short comment or question or thought bubble related to the scheduled readings on the relevant Canvas Discussion thread by midnight of the day before each class.

Ten such posts over the course of the 13 weeks of the class will earn you 10 marks. Nine will earn you 9 marks, and so on.

2. Multisensory Ethnographic Diary (30%)

See detailed instructions on pp. 4-5.

3. Project Proposal (10%)

We envision your final projects as emanating from a cumulative research process that ideally intersects with the ethnographic fieldwork you will have conducted in the first half of the course (see below). To that end, we are asking everyone to develop a project proposal that includes an abstract (no more than 300 words) detailing your focus of study, the methods and form you will employ to undertake and present this study, and any considerations regarding ethics approval that your project may entail (to be discussed in class). Append, as well, a bibliography of 4-6 resources that you anticipate consulting during the course of your research and a schedule of how and when you will undertake your research.

Bring a draft of your proposal to class on **March 2** (Week 7). In groups you will workshop these proposals, refining them by answering outstanding questions, responding to peer critiques regarding conceptual focus and practical feasibility, etc.

Final revised project proposals (300-word abstract + bibliography + work schedule) should be submitted

electronically as Word attachments to both Dara and Peter by **noon on Friday, March 5th.**

4. Project Reading List and Shared Score (10%)

Weekly discussions for the second half of the course will derive from the reading lists that you are all working with for the research related to your final projects. Choose a maximum of two titles from your list and be prepared to share copies (as pdf or hyperlinked attachments) with your peers. We will work out a schedule at our March 2 class (Week 7) that will comprise the core readings everyone will complete for Weeks 8-12 (likely with two sets of student readings per week).

Additionally, in advance of the week we are to discuss your chosen readings, we are asking you to share with the class an improvisatory score that speaks to some aspect of your project/research, or to ideas you wish to explore more deeply in relation to your readings. This might be a set of physical instructions or tasks to complete; or images or sounds or objects to collect; or virtual or material sites to visit; or statements to write; or walks to take; or foods to cook and eat; or games to play; or gestures to repeat; or folks to talk to; or thoughts to think. Whatever you decide, allow for interpretation and improvisation by your peers.

We will discuss the idea of scores in more depth in Week 1 in connection with the Dumit reading. Scores should be posted to Canvas by **the Friday before your scheduled readings.**

5. Final Project (40%)

For your final project, you are encouraged to draw from the fieldwork documented in your ethnographic diaries to make a performative and multi-modal intervention into different ideas and acts of sense- and place-making: e.g., audio or still/moving image recordings that you may wish to supplement and edit into a sound or photographic or video essay/installation. Alternatively, you may wish to conduct a series of interviews with different individuals about their sensory experiences of place, combining their stories into a multi-modal performance text that might touch on any or all of the following issues: Indigenous survivance and sovereignty; genealogies of community and migration; economic gentrification; the local/global effects (and affects) of “sheltering in place”; etc. Perhaps there is a specific building or architectural site or public space whose history you would like to research further. Maybe you’d like to work with extra-cartographic mapping techniques to curate a real or imagined artistic and/or activist itinerary for a real or imagined audience.

You are not limited to the ethnographic investigations you will have conducted as part of your weekly diary prompts, nor to strict delimitations of what constitutes sensory or performative places. If you are having trouble coming up with project ideas, consider as a possible starting place an improvisatory score of the sort discussed by Joe Dumit in his essay (see Week 1 readings). Or talk to us.

Some of you will be well versed in working across different media. For others, this will be new. **DO NOT PANIC!** Our baseline assumption in developing this assignment has always been that it had to be something that could be accomplished with minimal expertise (with the two of us as the default here) and technical requirements (i.e., a smartphone).

Taking seriously the sensory, performative, and place-based methods of research that are the foundation of this course, we are interested with this project in disrupting traditional scholarly and epistemological models that tend to privilege language, asking what other kinds of embodied, creative, and practice-based research in the university might look like, and especially how such research might be transmitted as new knowledge—e.g., in multi- media/modal forms of documentation, etc.

That said, we welcome writing as one form of such documentation, and regardless of the extent to which writing figures in your final project, we are asking for all students to submit with their final projects a minimum 750-word statement reflecting on the process of undertaking your site-based and multi-modal research, including any problems encountered, assumptions you may have had to revise, and discoveries that enriched your understanding of your topic. **All written work for this assignment should be submitted electronically as Word attachments to Dara and Peter.**

Finally, we have reserved the last week of class for in-class presentations of your projects, or portions thereof: e.g., a photo essay, an installation, a sound or video work, a short performance, etc. Due to time constraints, these presentations will need to be brief and more information on exact formal parameters will be provided in class after Reading Break.

Completed final projects are due **Monday, April 19th** by noon.

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Multisensorial Ethnographic Diary Assignment

Developing a practice of keeping a diary/field notebook is key to ethnographic work in general, and to the focus on sensory embodied knowing in this course more particularly. The goal of this assignment is to delve into multisensory ethnographic theory and practice by exploring embodied entanglements in place and time, and relationships to place (land, sea, sky, weather, architecture, politics and history).

There are **six required entries** for the graded portion of this assignment. The **first five** (listed by week, as part of the syllabus, below) focus on the senses conventionally recognized by western social theory and their relationships with each other as lived experience. The **sixth entry** is a final reflective report that asks you to consider “senses +”: that is, having explored each conventional sense separately, how do you see them articulating with each other, and also what other senses might be excluded from the traditional five-sense sensorium?

Your diary is a private document always initially created for your eyes/ears/minds/bodies only.

This assignment spans Weeks 1-6, with diaries due to be handed in **February 23, 2021**.

AGAIN, DON’T PANIC! Prompts for each diary entry are included below, along with corresponding weekly syllabus entries. Additionally, we will discuss each assignment week-by-week. We will also provide more detailed instructions for the form of the diaries and the final report in the first class.

To help get you get started on keeping an ethnographic diary, you are invited to complete the following **OPTIONAL, UNGRADED DIARY EXERCISES** BEFORE class on Week 1:

1. Answer some or all of the following questions IN THE FORM OF YOUR CHOICE (text, images still and moving, sound) to provoke some initial autoethnographic reflections:

Who are you? Introduce yourself to yourself.

Why are you undertaking a degree in xxx?

What attracted you to this course?

What work do you want to do and why?

What do the terms “scores for living,” “multisensory ethnography,” “performance,” “place,” and “ethnography” mean to you?

What does it mean to you to practice embodied/sensory knowing?

What conversations do you have, and with whom, about your university work?
What course readings/viewings/assignments spark your attention? Why? How do they “grab” you?
What do you do re: writing, reading, collecting images and/or audio/visuals and/or objects as you work through a course like this?
What readings and viewings inspire you? Challenge you? Enrage you? Bore you?
What conversations inspire you? Challenge you? Enrage you? Bore you?
What surprises you?

2. After completing the readings for Week 1—and BEFORE coming to our first virtual class— take a short (15-20 minute) walk/amble of your choosing at a time of your choosing, and/or engage in an exploration of an indoor space where you are considering conducting your assignment.

The principal goal here is to begin a “thick, sensory, embodied, affective, critical and reflexive description” of your process of selecting your site/space, of your physical and mental preparation for your practice, and of your embodied temporal and spatial experience with/in a given environment.

You may record notes and reflections by hand, computer, voice recorder, or camera. **Bring your notes to class for discussion.**

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Week-by-Week Syllabus

Week 1. January 12, 2021

Required Reading:

- (1) Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2014), “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebelliousness,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, V.3(3): 1-25.
- (2) Joe Dumit, (2018) “Notes toward Critical Ethnographic Scores: Anthropology and Improvisation Training in a Breached World,” in *Between matter and method: Encounters in anthropology and art*, eds. G.A. Bakke & M. Peterson, 52-70. London: Bloomsbury.
- (3) D. Soyini Madison (1999), “Performing Theory/Embodied Writing,” *Text & Performance Quarterly*, V.19(2):107-124.

Required Viewing:

- (1) Althea Arnaquq-Baril, *Angry Inuk* (2016). 85 mins. NFB Free Access available through SFU Lib.

Other Readings (not required/optional):

- (1) Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston and Virginie Magnat (2018), “Introduction to Special Issue: The Transdisciplinary Travels of Ethnography,” *Cultural Studies—Critical Methodologies*, V.18(6): 379-391.
- (2) Dara Culhane (2017), “Imagining: An Introduction,” in *A DIFFERENT KIND OF ETHNOGRAPHY: imaginative practices and creative methodologies*, eds. Denielle Elliott and Dara Culhane, 1-21. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (Full e-book available through SFU Library.)
- (3) Deborah S. Vidali (2016), “Multi-Sensorial Anthropology: A Retrofit Cracking Open of the Field,” *American Anthropologist*, V.118(2): 395-400.
- (4) D. Soyini Madison (2018), “Introduction: Performance and what it does to ethnography,” *Performed*

Ethnography & Communication: Improvisation and Embodied Experience, xvii-xxxi. New York: Routledge.

Optional Viewing:

(1) Lucien Castaing-Taylor and V  rena Paravel, [Leviathan](#) (2012). 88 mins.

Week 2. January 19, 2021: On Touch

Required Reading:

(1) Rosemary Blake (2011), "Ethnographies of Touch and Touching Ethnographies: Some Prospects for Touch in Anthropological Enquiries," *Anthropology Matters*, V.13(1): 1-12.

(2) Vanessa Watts (2013), "Indigenous place-thought & agency amongst humans and non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!)," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, Society* V.2(1): 20-34.

(3) Jennifer Fisher (2007), "Tangible Acts: Touch Performances," in *The Senses in Performance*, eds. Sally Banes and Andr   Lepecki, 166-78. New York: Routledge.

(4) Royona Mitra and Akram Khan (2017), "Akram Khan on the politics of choreographing touch," in *Contemporary Choreography: A Critical Reader*, eds. J. Butterworth and L. Wildschut, 385-97. London: Taylor and Francis.

Required Viewing:

(1) Akram Khan and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, [Zero Degrees](#) (2005). 65 mins. Password: zero.

Other Readings (not required/optional):

(1) Michael Taussig (2011), *I SWEAR I SAW THIS: drawings in fieldwork notebooks, namely my own*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-3. (Full e-book available through SFU Library.)

(2) Karin Animoto Ingersoll (2016), "Introduction," *Waves of Knowing: A Seascape Epistemology*. Durham: Duke University Press.

(3) Kimberly Powell (2016), "Multimodal Mapmaking: Working Toward an Entangled Methodology of Place," *Anthropology and Education*, V.(47)4: 402-420.

Required Diary Exercise:

Document, over the course of a single day, your experience of touch. What/who do you touch? How are you touched back? If you had to describe/distinguish between the quality/kind of each touch, what words would you use? How does your experience of touch change depending on the time of day, where you are, who you're with? Where/when do you notice the absence of touch? Has this been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic? How has the pandemic made you more attuned to different social/cultural taboos around touch? If you had to create a touch score, what would it look like?

Week 3. January 26, 2021: On Taste

Required Reading:

(1) Rosemary Georgeson and Jessica Hallenbeck (2018), "We Have Stories: Five Generations of Indigenous Women in Water," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* V.7(1): 20-38.

(2) Yi-Fu Tuan, (2017), “Pleasures of the Proximate Senses: Eating, Taste, and Culture,” in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer, 221–228. New York: Bloomsbury.

(3) Elspeth Probyn (2000), “Bodies that Eat,” in *Carnal Appetites: FoodSexIdentities*, 11-34. New York: Routledge.

Required Viewing:

(1) Chris Boebel and Christine Walley, [Exit Zero](#) (2017). 90 mins.

Other readings (not required/optional):

(1) Christine Walley (2015), “Transmedia as experimental ethnography: The Exit Zero Project, deindustrialization, and the politics of nostalgia,” *American Ethnologist*, V.(42)4: 624-639.

(2) Pierre Bourdieu (1979/2004), “Excerpt from *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*,” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, eds. Carole Counihan et al., 31-39. New York: Routledge.

(3) Elizabeth Pérez, (2011), “Cooking for the gods: sensuous ethnography, sensory knowledge, and the kitchen in Lucumí tradition,” *Religion* V.41(4): 665-683.

Required Diary Exercise:

Compose a menu of your favourite tastes. With what/whom/where/when do you associate these tastes? If you had to reproduce one or more of these tastes multimodally, how would you do so? OR: Summon a taste memory from childhood. Produce a thick, sensuous description of that memory in whatever manner you wish. OR: On a continuum of tastes from delicious to disgusting, what would you put where, and why? What might a performance ethnography of one of your “food fears” look like?

Week 4. February 2, 2021: On Smell

Required Reading:

(1) Kelvin E.Y. Low (2013), “Olfactive frames of remembering: theorizing self, senses and society,” *The Sociological Review*, V.61: 688-708.

(2) Victoria Henshaw (2013), “Smellwalking and representing urban smellscape,” in *Urban Smellscapes: Understanding and Designing City Smell Environments*, 42-56. New York: Routledge.

(3) Sally Banes (2007), “Olfactory Performances,” in *The Senses in Performance*, eds. Sally Banes and André Lepecki, 29-37. New York: Routledge.

(4) Laura U. Marks (1997), “The Quays’ *Institute Benjamenta*: An Olfactory View,” *Afterimage* V.25(2): 11-13.

Required Viewing:

Stephen and Timothy Quay, [The Institute Benjamenta](#) (1995). 105 mins. Password: smell.

Other Readings (not required/optional):

(1) J. Douglas Porteous (1985), “Smellscape,” *Progress in Human Geography* V.(9): 3: 356-378.

(2) Emily Brady (2005), “Sniffing and Savoring: On the Aesthetics of Smells and Tastes,” in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, eds. Andrew Light and Jonathan Smith, 177-93. New York: Columbia University Press.

(3) Kelvin E.Y. Low (2015), “The sensuous city: sensory methodologies in urban ethnographic research,” *Ethnography* V.16(3): 295-312.

Required Diary Exercise:

Take a “smellwalk” of an urban “smellscape” and produce a “smellmap” (in whatever media/form you choose) of the sort discussed by Henshaw in her chapter. How does paying attention to smell emplace us differently in the city? What social and cultural and other asymmetries does it force us to confront?

Week 5. February 9, 2021: On Sound

Required Reading:

(1) Steph Ceraso (2018), “Sounding Bodies, Composing Experience,” in *Sounding Composition: Multimodal Pedagogies for Embodied Listening*, 28-50. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

(2) Steph Ceraso, (2018), “Reverberation: My Listening Body,” in *Sounding Composition: Multimodal Pedagogies for Embodied Listening*, 51-67. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

(3) Salomé Voegelin (2018), “Geographies of Sound: Performing Impossible Territories,” in *The Political Possibility of Sound: Fragments of Listening*, 75-101. New York: Bloomsbury.

(4) Ashon T. Crawley (2016), “Introduction,” *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 1-31. New York: Fordham University Press.

Required Viewing/Listening:

(1) Dame Evelyn Glennie, [Touch the Sound](#) (2004). Documentary available on YouTube. 50 mins.

(2) Susan Schuppli and Tom Tlalim, [Uneasy Listening](#) (2014); and talking about [Uneasy Listening](#). 10 mins total.

(3) Rebecca Belmore, [Ayum-ee-aawach Oomama-mowan: Speaking to Their Mother](#) (1991). 26 mins.

(4) Charles Mingus, [Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting](#) (1960). 5 mins.

Other Readings (not required/optional):

(1) Annie Goh (2017), “Sounding Situated Knowledges: Echo in Archaeoacoustics,” *Parallax* V.23(3):283-304.

(2) Iris Sandijette Blake (2020), “The Echo as Decolonial Gesture,” *Performance Matters* V.6(2): forthcoming.

Required Diary Exercise:

Following the instructional prompts outlined by Steph Ceraso on pp.51-54 in her “Reverberation: My Listening Body” interchapter, choose a memorable sonic experience (it could be quite recent or further in your past) and write about it, trying to reproduce as much sensory and embodied detail as possible. Think about how you might *re-compose* the experience multimodally for a diverse audience. Attempt to do so, reflecting on the process.

Reading Break. February 15-19, 2021

Week 6. February 23, 2021. On Vision and SENSES+

Required Reading:

- (1) Stephanie Takaragawa, Trudi Lynne Smith, Kate Hennessy, Patricia Alvarez Astacio, Jenny Chio, Coleman Nye, and Shalini Shankar (2019), “Bad Habitus: Anthropology in the Age of the Multimodal,” *American Anthropologist* V.(121)2: 517-24.
- (2) Martin Welton (2017), “Dark Visions: Looking at and in Theatrical Darkness,” *Theatre Journal* V.69(4): 497-513.
- (3) Deidre Sklar (2007), “Unearthing Kinesthesia: Groping among cross-cultural models of the senses in performances,” in *The Senses in Performance*, eds. Sally Banes and André Lepecki, 38-46. New York: Routledge.
- (4) Tim Ingold (2005), “The Eye of the Storm: Visual Perception and the Weather,” *Visual Studies* V.20(2): 97-104.

Required Viewing:

- (1) Tino Seghal, [*This Variation*](#) (2012), excerpt. 13 mins.
- (2) Shirazeh Houshiary, [*“Art Has Ambiguity.”*](#) TateShots (2014). 5 mins.

Other Readings (not required/optional):

- (1) Tim Ingold, (2010), “Footprints through the weather-world: walking, breathing, knowing,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropology Institute*, S.121-S139.
- (2) Andrew Irving (2017), “New York Stories,” *Journal of Anthropology* V.82(3): 437-57.
- (3) Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964/2003), “Eye and Mind” (from *The Primacy of Perception*). Reprinted in *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings*, ed. T Baldwin, 290-324. New York: Routledge.

Required Diary Exercise:

For your fifth diary entry exploring vision (traditionally the dominant sense in the Western five-sense sensorium), practice looking in different ways, and/or at different things. For example, how/what do we see with our eyes closed? In the dark? Upside down? Out of doors? While moving? With other senses? OR: Document your experience of trying to see the surface of the weather. What is made visible and what remains invisible? What other senses are engaged? To what extent does this exercise make you aware of light as a medium (as discussed by Ingold)?

For your sixth and final diary entry, compose a summative report on the “senses +.” That is, having completed each of the previous sense-specific prompts, how do you see your experiences articulating with each other? What other senses (e.g., kinesthesia, intuition, interiority, etc.) might be excluded from the traditional five-sense sensorium?

Prepare to hand in these and your previous diary entries at the end of class.

Week 7. March 2, 2021. Project Proposal Workshop

Bring a draft of the proposal for your course project to class; include an individual reading list from which a maximum of 2 titles will be selected for weeks 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

Discussion of Weeks 8-12 reading and score schedule.

Final revised proposals due electronically by noon on Friday, March 5.

Week 8. March 9, 2021: Student Readings and Scores 1

Week 9. March 16, 2021: Student Readings and Scores 2

Week 10. March 23, 2021: Student Readings and Scores 3

Week 11. March 30, 2021: Student Readings and Scores 4

Week 12. April 6, 2021: Student Readings and Scores 5

Week 13. April 13. Final Project Presentations

Completed final projects due Monday, April 19.