

# TIMBRE

Brown University

Fall 2019

Thursdays, 1-3.30, Location: Orwig Music Hall 109

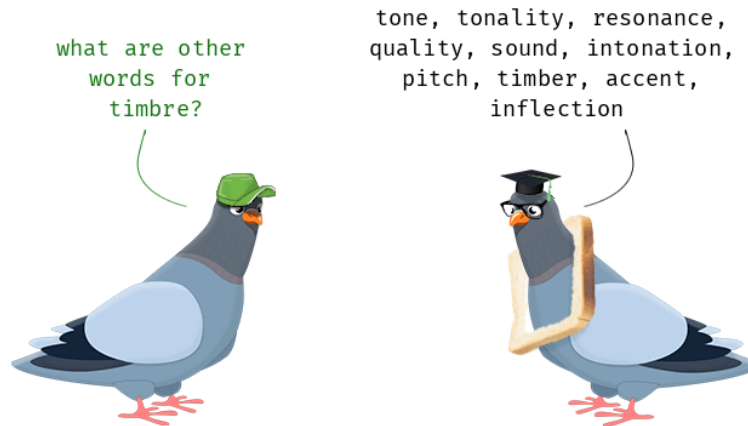
Music 2026

Prof. Emily Dolan ([emily\\_dolan@brown.edu](mailto:emily_dolan@brown.edu)) (she/her/hers)

Please call me “Emily.”

Please tell me what you would like to be called.

Office Hours: Tuesdays ~2-3pm and by appointment (Subject to change)



A SOMEWHAT BAFFLING IMAGE FROM THESAURUS.PLUS

## **Course Description and Goals**

This seminar takes as its starting point a collection of commonplace complaints and petitions in music studies around timbre: timbre is misunderstood; it is difficult to define; it is a woefully understudied musical parameter; it lacks a standardized theory and vocabulary; it needs more systematic analysis. All this we might call the “timbral litany,” to adapt a phrase from Jonathan Sterne. At the same time—and perhaps paradoxically—with the recent publication of books, edited volumes, special issues, and conferences devoted to timbre, people have also begun to speak of *timbre studies* as an emerging, discrete subfield. This seminar delves into this literature in order to think critically about the idea of timbre and these struggles to understand and sometimes tame it. Our bibliography spans musicology, ethnomusicology, music theory, music cognition, and sound studies.

We will learn as much as we can from this diverse body of scholarship about what timbre is and can be. I particularly want to attend to the ways in which the challenges that timbre poses are, far from a hurdle, a boon. Timbre often demands historical specificity, scientific precision, and inventive analysis; it resists abstraction and begs for critical reflection. In forcing us to forego or revise our usual, traditional analytical techniques, timbre unsettles networks of disciplinary assumptions and predilections that have served to bolster some musics and people and exclude others; it is not a coincidence that talk of timbre accompanies turns to questions of race, bodies, and musics outside the Western Art Music canon. Our ultimately goal in this seminar will be not to tame timbre, but to embrace the concept in all of its complex messiness.

## **Course Materials**

Students are asked to purchase Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Duke University Press, 2019). Paperback is \$24.15. A copy of this text will also be on reserve.

All other materials will be available via Canvas.

**Course Requirements**

Participation: 15%

Weekly Short Assignments: 20%

Small-Scale Creative Project: 15%

Final Paper: 50%

**Participation and Weekly Short Assignments (35% total)**

Thoughtful preparation and participation are vital to this seminar. Please see the seminar etiquette statement below on what I consider meaningful seminar participation.

For most classes, students will be assigned particular roles to help run each seminar. These will rotate during the semester. These are:

**Kickstarters:** So that we do not start seminar discussion “cold,” each week, two students (this might vary depending on the size of the seminar) will be designated as “kickstarters”; by **noon on Wednesday**, each kickstarter will post a **short reading response** to the readings on our Canvas site. This should include a comment on the readings, either delving into a one reading closely or doing some comparison across readings, and one or two questions for discussion. Everyone who is not a kickstarter is expected to read the responses and **post at least one comment by 10am the day of seminar.**

**Hunters:** A good exercise in seminar is to apply what we’ve been thinking and talking about to something new. To this end, the Hunter will be responsible for bringing in an object that relates to the discussion at hand, beyond what is assigned on the syllabus. This could be any kind of object: a musical work, an image, a quote, an instrument, a film clip, or a sound recording. Film and sound clips should be under 5 minutes (and ideally shorter). You should be prepared to talk about your object for a few minutes and have a couple questions for us. You do not need to pre-circulate your object or your questions: part of the exercise for us is the improvisatory work of thinking through the chosen object on the spot.

The **Gatherer** will be our note taker for our session. The Gatherer’s job is to keep track of the main points that arise in discussion, and jot down any references to other interesting texts and objects that arise in discussion. For texts, you should then track down the complete bibliographic reference (this might involve emailing seminar participants afterwards to track down information). All notes will then be posted to our collective Google Doc.

A note on preparation: you should know who we are reading: look up the authors each week, find out where they work (institution and department) and what else they have written. Come with specific examples of what you were drawn to and what you found less compelling in our readings. As you read, ask yourself what approaches or ideas you could see yourself drawing upon in your own research. Think about the style of each piece we read: would you like to be able to write like a particular scholar? (Collecting favorite sentences can be very useful!)

**The Vocabulary of Timbre**

Over the course of the semester, we will attempt to assemble a collective glossary on a Google Doc for terms that we encounter that we deem central to the study of timbre. Each week, you will each offer candidates for inclusion into our glossary. You should have a definition (or multiple definitions) for your chosen term or terms and a reason why you think it should be included. As the weeks go on, we can refine

words already submitted or even remove or replace words. You should aim to have at least one word per session. As much as possible, try to refrain from collaborating or consulting with your colleagues on this task: part of the point of this exercise will be to see what each reader takes away from assignments independently.

### **Small-Scale Creative Project (15%)**

To broaden the ways in which we engage with timbre over the course of the semester, I ask that everyone undertake a small-scale creative project that engages with timbre in a way that reflects some of the themes from our class discussions. This project could take any number of forms: a short composition, a field recording, the creation of a method of visualizing timbres. I ask that you give me a short description (1 or 2 paragraphs) of your intended project by **Thursday, 10 October**. These projects are due **Monday, 2 November** (exactly how they are submitted will depend on the format of the project). You will give feedback to your peers on their projects. Your feedback is due **Thursday, 7 November**. This is necessarily experimental and you are welcome—indeed encouraged—to take risks.

### **Final Project (50%)**

Everyone is expected to undertake a final project. I ask that you turn in a final project proposal by **17 October**. Your paper proposal should be around 2 pages. You have three possible options here:

**Research Paper:** This is the traditional ~25- page research paper with a bibliography. Your proposal should explain both what you researching and why you chose to research it.

**Project Continuation:** if you have a project that you are working on that closely relates to themes from this class, you can choose to continue working on and revising that project. If you choose this option, you should plan to turn in the project in its current state by **17 October** along with 1) a detailed description of **how** you plan to revise it and 2) an explanation of **why** you are revising it. If you choose this option, I would like you to have a concrete, specific goal for the paper: either a plan to present it at a conference or to publish it as an article. If your goal is to write a conference paper, I ask that you have a polished presentation by the end of the term, including both the body of the talk and the audio/visual material (powerpoint presentation, handouts, etc.). I recommend this option for more advanced graduate students. If you are early in your studies, use this seminar as an opportunity to research something new!

### **Scholarly + Creative Project**

I welcome newly mixed final projects that combine a shorter scholarly paper (~10-15 pages with bibliography) and a newly created musical work, installation, instrument, or any other creative project that engages critically with the concept of timbres explored in your paper. (“Critical” is the operative word here: simply using timbre is not enough, since, well, timbre is pretty much inevitable.) For this option, I ask that you keep a design journal starting the week of 14 October, with weekly updates on your progress towards your final project.

### **Final presentations**

The final meeting of this seminar is reserved for the presentations of final projects. The exact nature of these presentations will depend on the size of the seminar and the kinds of projects seminar members undertake. We will work together to come up with a format that is both intellectually stimulating and suitably festive!

### **Class Hours and Expectations**

|                                    |                                       |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Class meetings:                    | 33 Hours                              |
| Weekly class preparation:          | ~8-10 Hours per session= 88-110 Hours |
| Small Scale Creative Project:      | 15 Hours                              |
| Final Paper: Research and Writing: | 30 Hours                              |

### **Accessibility and Accommodations**

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please let me know early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, please contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu. I also recognize that going through the accessibility office can sometimes be cumbersome, and I will also be happy to try to work out other arrangements that best support your learning.

### **Auditors**

Auditors are welcome in this seminar with permission. While auditors do not need to write a final research paper or do a small-scale creative project, auditors are expected to do the weekly readings and participate as Kickstarters, Hunters, and Gatherers.

### **Technology Policy**

This course will encourage the thoughtful use of scholarly technologies such as talking and reading, computers and the internet, pen and paper, projection, whiteboards and chalkboards, etc.

1. By and large, for most in-class note taking, I strongly recommend the use of pen and paper. If you have any reason why using a computer is easier or more effective, you are of course welcome to do use one. Our weekly Gatherer is welcome (but not required) to take notes directly onto our Google Doc.
2. We want to avoid having a classroom of “ambient computing.” If you need to open a computer (or any device with a microprocessor and internet connection) to look stuff up, that is fine. Do that and then close the computer.
3. I encourage you to experiment with reading in different formats: you might find that printing and reading an article allows you to engage with it differently from on-screen reading; reading on a tablet is different from reading on a laptop screen. For more difficult, thorny readings, I encourage you to print your texts and annotate them.
4. I’m not anti-computer by any means: for many classroom activities, we will use our laptops, and especially Google docs. Our goal will to be use computers actively and collectively.

### **Feedback and Evaluation**

I will give you feedback on your first two short responses. After that, if you would like additional feedback, you can submit two or three responses and we can meet to discuss them. You will get collective feedback on your short-creative project (and you are also expected to give feedback yourself). We will discuss your final project proposal in person and I will give you written feedback on your final project and seminar performance as a whole at the end of the semester.

### **Email**

Please feel free to email me with questions. Please give me 24 hours to respond to emails. I will try to respond sooner, but I occasionally get inundated with emails.

**Office hours:** I am happy to meet whenever it is helpful, whether it is about an issue directly related to seminar or not. I have scheduled my regular office hours for 2-3pm on Tuesdays (and I will be available from 1.30pm many Tuesdays). I am using my google calendar for office hour appointments: you can find a link to the appointments on the front page of our Canvas site. The appointments are divided into 15-minute slots: please feel free to sign up for more than one slot if you need more time. If my regular office hours do not work for your schedule, please let me know. I am happy to find another time to meet, and if it seems that this particular time is problematic for the seminar more generally, I will look for a different time!

### **Basic Seminar Etiquette**

1. I expect the best you can offer in class, which means thoughtful preparation and participation. While I do not expect an overly formal atmosphere in seminar, I do expect you all to take your assigned seminar tasks seriously and I want you to be ready for discussion. This means making sure your notes are organized and readings well marked so that you can find relevant passages that you want to draw our attention to quickly and efficiently. This is good practice for the rest of your life as a scholar.
2. I understand that occasionally you might not be able to prepare as thoroughly for class as you might like. In those cases—which I hope are rare—I ask that you write to me in advance. I also recommend that, in these cases, you focus on a smaller amount of the assignment rather than trying to skim everything.
3. I expect good faith and good humor to your colleagues in the classroom. Of course, disagreements are expected—indeed encouraged!— but please keep nitpicking to a minimum; personal attacks and intimidation are not acceptable under any circumstances.
4. Your job as a participant is to listen actively to what others have to say and to help advance the discussion. If you are a confident contributor, use your confidence for good and not evil. Help bring others into the discussion. Refer to your classmates by name, and be positive about the contributions of those who perhaps do not say as much. As much as possible, try not to dominate the discussion: if you've been speaking a lot during a particular class, be sure to wait to speak to give others a chance to speak up. We all have times when a particular topic fires us up and we are brimming with things to say; I might gently cut you off if I have a sense that others have been struggling to be heard.
5. You are welcome to share personal stories. Keep in mind that we all may have different interpretations of each other's stories. This is encouraged and allowed. If ever there is an issue you would like to discuss but would prefer not to share it with the entire class, get in touch and I will be happy to meet with you.
6. Awkward silences and hesitation are okay. Don't feel you need to rush to speak and don't worry if you need a little time to articulate something. Contributing to class discussion is more than the frequency of the times your hand goes up and the number of words you say. If you are struggling to articulate something, that's probably a sign that you are saying something that is new and not obvious.
7. Difficult content: I will never do anything intentionally to shock students. At the same time, it's our job to discuss difficult subjects in class, and nobody can predict the effect some materials may have on someone. I will try and give previews of the kinds of content you will encounter before you encounter it. If I forget, feel free to ask. If you are having difficulty dealing with a class discussion or a reading, you may raise the issue as part of the discussion, or you may simply discretely step out of class. A note to me would be helpful after the fact so that I know what happened and don't think you just got up and left.

### **A note on the nature of seminars**

While there is no single correct way of running a seminar, my favorite seminars are those that create a general feeling of only barely controlled chaos. My goal is to generate lots of questions—more questions than we can possibly answer during the next few months but that we can all take with us into our future research projects. This syllabus is a little wind-up machine: I have done my best to think critically and creatively about the material and organize it in a way that seems productive. What happens next will be unpredictable. I have some notion of the directions I would like seminar to go in, but I suspect that many sessions will go in directions I cannot possibly imagine. This is a good thing. This might mean we cannot discuss all the assigned readings in a given session, which means you occasionally might not have the chance to share something you had prepared. This can be annoying and frustrating: if you feel we missed

out on something important, feel free to email me or the whole seminar after class with follow-up points. When necessary, we can return to readings the following week!

**A note on the readings: why did I choose the readings I chose?**

While I wanted cover a broad range of timbral topics in this seminar, I did not want to overburden the weeks with readings. My hope is that I have restricted the amount of reading each week so that you are all able to read the assigned texts deeply with time leftover for reflection. This means that there are inevitably some great texts and some important topics that we won't do in class and it is also why I have made some possible options for later in the semester. I want there to be flexibility to follow our collective interests! Last, I'll note that not all of the readings directly engage with or name timbre: I have chosen some readings with idea that part of our task will be to imagine how that particular piece of scholarship might have changed had the author explicitly grappled with timbre.

**Weekly Topics**

**5 September: Introductions and the Timbral Litany**

In our opening session, we will think collectively about how we define and talk about timbre. We will do some in-class listening exercises. We will also review the syllabus and the plan for the semester, as well as start to divvy up the weeks among the class members.

**12 September: Defining Timbre**

We'll delve into one of the foundational texts that helped to inaugurate what we might call "timbre studies" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Cornelia Fales's essay "The Paradox of Timbre." This is an essay I have come back to again and again, and sometimes it feels like every other essay that attempts to articulate what is so slippery and difficult about timbre ends up becoming another version of Fales's piece (this is of course not actually true, but it speaks to the power of the essay that it feels that way). In addition, we'll also read the introduction to the 2018 edited volume on timbre in popular music, with a particular eye to how the authors have framed the challenges that the study of timbre poses. We'll also look at the first modern definition of timbre, Rousseau's brief entry that he wrote for the D'Alembert and Diderot's *Encyclopedie*, as well as a very short essay by Chion pushing for getting rid of the term.

**Reading:**

Michel Chion, "Dissolution de la notion du timbre." *Analyse Musicale* 3 (1986): 7–8, translated as part of "Let's Have Done with the Notion of 'Noise.'" *differences* 22, no. 2–3 (2011): 240–48.

Cornelia Fales, "The Paradox of Timbre." *Ethnomusicology* 46, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 56–95.

Robert Fink, Melinda Latour, and Zachary Wallmark, Introduction, *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone: Timbre in Popular Music* (Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 1-17.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Tymbre" and "Son" from the *Encyclopédie* ed. D'Alembert and Diderot

Kai Siedenburg and Stephen McAdams, "Four distinctions for the auditory 'wastebasket' of timbre." *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 1747 (2017)

**19 September: Synthesis and Sampling Workshop + Timbre and/as Aesthetics at the Origins: Note, this session runs until 4pm.**

In this first part of this class, Kristina Warren will lead a workshop on Synthesis and Sampling, where we will engage with ideas of timbre and affect. **The first part of this assignment relates to this**

**workshop.** We will then convene as a regular seminar for the second half of class. These readings take us to the origin of the modern term, picking up from where we left off with Rousseau last week.

**Workshop Reading:**

Jonathan Sterne and Tara Rodgers, “The Poetics of Signal Processing,” in *differences* 2/2-3 (2011): 31- 53.

Please read the section ‘Signal Processing as Voyage’ (pp 43-48)

Marie Thompson, *Beyond Unwanted Sound: Noise, Affect, and Aesthetic Moralism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017): please read section “Relationality, affect and the non-human” (pp 43-48) and look at diagram on p. 50.

**Workshop Listening:**

Isabel Nogueira and Maia Koenig, *Isama Noko*, listen to Track 2 ‘Sin descanso’

<https://maiakoenig.bandcamp.com/album/isama-noko>

Claire Rousay, *Several Erasures*, listen to Track 1 ‘Clocked’

<https://alreadydeadtapes.bandcamp.com/album/ad306-claire-rousay-several-erasures>

**Reading:**

Johann Gottfried Herder, Selections from the “Fourth Critical Forest,” from *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, ed. and trans. Gregory Moore (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Dolan, “The Birth of Timbre,” in *The Orchestral Revolution: Haydn and the Technologies of Timbre*, pp. 53 - 89.

Isabella van Elferen, “Timbrality,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre*

Note: a PDF of this is available on Canvas, but I recommend accessing this, and other things from the *Oxford Handbook of Timbre*, online, where you can listen and watch any related audio/video materials.

**26 September: Timbre and Psychoacoustics**

In this session, physicist Eric J. Heller (Harvard University) will be joining us to talk about timbre from the perspective of acoustic. Prof. Heller teaches *Why You Hear What You Hear: The Science of Music and Sound* and is the author of a textbook of the same name.

**Reading:**

Selections from Eric J. Heller, *Why You Hear What You Hear: An Experiential Approach to Sound, Music, and Psychoacoustics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

**Further Reading:**

Herman von Helmholtz, *On the Sensations of Tone*, Chapter V: “On the differences in the quality of musical tones” (pp. 65-119)

Alix Hui, *The Psychophysical Ear: Musical Experiments, Experimental Sounds, 1840-1910* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013)

Benjamin Steege, *Helmholtz and the Modern Listener* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

**3 October: The Voice**

Is it possible to talk about the voice without talking—implicitly or explicitly—about timbre?

The following readings serve both to give a sample of voice studies more generally (the *JAMS* colloquy and Weidman’s entry in *Keywords in Sound*), while others engage more directly with the question of voice and timbre (Barthes, Samples). Weheliye’s essay does not directly invoke the

concept of timbre, but ask as you read the essay: what might change had Weheliye invoked timbre?

**Reading:**

Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice" (1972) trans. Stephen Heath in *Image Music Text* (New York: Noonday Press/Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1977): 179-89.

Martha Feldman, Convener, Colloquy: "Why Voice Now?" *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68/3 (2015): 653-685.

Mark C. Samples, "Timbre and Legal Likeness," in *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone: Timbre in Popular Music*: 119-140.

Alexander Weheliye, "'Feenin': Posthuman Voices in Contemporary Black Music," *Social Text* 71 20, No. 2 (2002), 21-47.

Amanda Weidman, "Voice," from *Keywords in Sound*, ed. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015): 232-245

**10 October: Technologies of Timbre**

Talk of timbre often goes hand in hand with attending to music's broader materialities and immediacies. This means this week is hardly the only session where technology comes up. But as we read the following readings, we will pay particular attention to *how* each piece relates timbre and technology.

**Reading:**

Dana Gooley, "Jazz Piano Pedaling and the Production of Timbral Difference," *Keyboard Perspectives* VI (2013): 101-126.

Gundala Kreuzer, "Gong" from *Curtain, Steam, Gong* (Oakland: California University Press, 2018): 109-161.

Melina Latour, "Santana and the Metaphysics of Tone: Feedback Loops, Volume Knobs, and the Quest for Transcendence," in *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone: Timbre in Popular Music*: 212-232.

**Further Reading:**

Rebecca Cypess, "Timbre, Expression, and Combination Keyboard Instruments: Milchmeyer's Art of Veränderung." *Keyboard Perspectives* VIII (2015): 43-69.

Catherine Provanzo, "Auto-Tune, Labor, and the Pop-Music Voice," in *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone: Timbre in Popular Music*: 159-184.

Joshua Tucker, "Sound and Song," from *Making Music Indigenous: Popular Music in the Peruvian Andes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019): 72-101.

**17 October: Analyzing Timbre**

What does it mean to analyze a musical work, a recording, or other artwork *for its timbre*? Each of the readings below examines particular musical works (rather than outlining a general methodology, though some might do that as well). With each example, consider: how does the author position timbral elements in relation to other musical parameters? What methodologies are used? Does the author push back against "traditional" musical parameters (form, harmony,



etc.) in the analysis? Is there an attempt made to generalize from the particular work(s) under investigation to a broader theory of timbre/orchestration/sound? I've listed a lot of readings here. For our actual class, we will pick three of these articles for discussion.

**Reading:**

David Brackett, "Writing, music, dancing, and architecture in Elvis Costello's 'Pills and Soap,'" from *Interpreting Popular Music* (University of California Press: 2000): 157-195.

Jeffrey DeThorne, "Colorful Plasticity and Equalized Transparency: Schoenberg's Orchestrations of Bach and Brahms." *Music Theory Spectrum* 36/1 (2014): 121-45.

Dolan, "The Birth of Orchestration," from *The Orchestral Revolution*

Eva McMullan-Glossop, "Hues, Tints, Tones, and Shades: Timbre as Colour in the Music of Rebecca Saunders," *Contemporary Music Review* 56/6 (2017), 488-529.

Viviana Moscovich, "French Spectral Music: An Introduction," *Tempo* 200 (1997): 21-27

Kaija Saariaho, "Timbre and Harmony: Interpolations of Timbral Structures," *Contemporary Music Review* 2/1 (1987): 93-133.

Gabriel Solis, "Timbral Virtuosity: Pharoah Sanders, Sonic Heterogeneity, and the Jazz Avant-Garde in the 1960s and 70s." *Jazz Perspectives* 9, no. 1 (2015): 47-63.

**24 October: Other Ears**

When we talk about timbre, what sorts of unspoken assumptions do we make about who is listening? Are there forms of listening that radically alter the importance of timbre? The short essay on deafness by Mara Mills serves as a useful introduction to some of the key terms in Deaf studies; some of these concepts come up again in Holmes' lengthier article. In neither piece is timbre a focus for either writer (the term appears, more or less in passing, twice in Holmes's essay).

**Reading:**

Mara Mills, "Deafness," from *Keywords in Sound*, ed. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 45-54.

Jessica Holmes, "Expert Listening beyond the Limits of Hearing: Music and Deafness," *JAMS* 70/1 (2017): 171-220.

Stefan Helmreich, "Music for Cochlear Implants" *Oxford Handbook of Timbre*

**31 October: No Class (AMS meeting in Boston)**

If you haven't already, please get started reading Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* for next week.

Optional Assignment: for all students attending the AMS, I ask that you do one of the following: seek out one paper that engages with timbre in some form (do keyword searches on the program and abstracts; only two papers use the word "timbre" in their titles). Attend the paper and post a brief response to our class discussion board. Or, attend a paper that doesn't explicitly take up ideas of timbre, and discuss what might (or might not) have changed had the author focused on timbre.

### 7 November: Race and Timbre

This session will pick up on the issues of timbre and race that we began to delve into last week. For this session, we will read Nina Sun Eidsheim's book in its entirety. It is a good exercise to spend time with a large-scale study. In the last hour of class, Prof. Eidsheim will Skype into our class for a discussion.

*Note: The Race of Sound is not a gigantic book, but please plan ahead and start reading early so that you can really take in the book as a whole.*

#### Reading:

Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Duke University Press, 2019).

### 14 November: Timbral Listening

Just as we might analyze music *for timbre* we might also *listen* for timbre. There might be no more powerful articulation of timbral listening in musical scholarship than Theodore Levin and Valentina Süzükei's award-winning study of Tuvan musical culture (now out in a new edition).

#### Reading:

Dolan, "Impossible Gluck, or the Future of Timbre," *draft of article in progress*

Cornelia Fales, "Hearing Timbre: Perceptual Learning among Early Bay Area Ravers," in *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone*: 21-42.

Theodore Levin and Valentina Süzükei, "Listening the Tuvan Way," from *Where the Rivers and Mountains Sing: Sound, Music and Nomadism in Tuva and Beyond* (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 2019): 45-72

#### Further Reading:

Marc Perlman, "Golden Ears and Meter Readers: The Contest for Epistemic Authority in Audiophilia," *Social Studies of Science* 35/4 (2004), 783-807.

Alex Rehding, "Timbre/Techne" in *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre*

### 21 November: Voice II with guest Stephan Pennington (Tufts University)

Prof. Stephan Pennington's research explores music, gender, sexuality, and transgender vocality. He teaches courses at Tufts on Queer Pop, the history of African American Music, is currently completing a book on the trans voice.

#### Readings TBA

## 28 November: No Class (Thanksgiving)

[Enjoy the break!](#)



## 5 December: Multiple Choice

Below are three possible sets of readings we could do in this session. I wanted to build some flexibility into our final meeting so that we could go in whatever direction seemed the most interesting to the class as a whole. We'll pick our weekly theme in early November. It could easily turn out that by then, we might have thought of entirely new avenues of exploration—we are not bound to do one of the themes listed below.

### 1. More Timbral Paradoxes

Throughout the semester, we have encountered a vast range of approaches to thinking about timbre and what it is, means, and does. The readings in this session return to the idea of timbre as some sort of fundamental paradox, as a thing in need of careful deconstruction.

#### Reading:

Daniel Villegas Vélez, “The Matter of Timbre: Listening, Genealogy, Sound,” *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre*

Stefan Helmreich, “Chimeric Sensing,” from *Florian Hecker: Chimerizations* (New York: Primary Information, 2013): 9-15.

Naomi Waltham Smith, “Timbre and Deconstruction” in *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre*

#### Additional Optional Reading:

Zachary Smith, Bertrand Delgutte, and Andrew J. Oxenham, “Chimaeric Sounds Reveal Dichotomies in Auditory Perception,” *Nature* 416/6876 (7 March 2002), 87-90.

### 2. Collecting Timbres

The task of transcription often brings timbral issues to the forefront: what we transcribe is what we perceive to be valuable and timbre's resistance to our usual notational systems means that those engaged in transcription are forced to confront the place of timbre in their work. (Originally, this was a fixed week earlier in the semester, but I realized there was a good chance that Daniel Walden's essay would not be available until later in the semester).

#### Reading:

Alix Hui, "The Naturalization of Timbre: Two Case Studies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre*

Grant Olwage, "The Class and Colour of Tone: An Essay on the Social History of Vocal Timbre," *Ethnomusicology Forum* 13, no. 2 (November 2004), 203–226.

Daniel Walden, "Pitch versus Timbre," in *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre*

Explore:

Milton Metfessel, *The Phonography in Folk Music: American Negro Songs in New Notation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1928).

**3. Timbre in Popular Music**

We have only scratched the surface of *The Relentless Pursuit of Tone*. If there is interest, we can choose three more chapters to read.

**4. Timbre and Cognition**

There is whole world of research being carried out within the realms of music cognition and psychoacoustics that takes up the question of timbre. Indeed, a different version of this syllabus could be filled with such scholarship! For our purposes, however, I am interested in considering what researchers engaged in such work take timbre to be, how they define it, and how they invoke, ignore, or think across history. Below are three possible readings, though we could certainly bring in others!

Guillaume Lemaitre, Patrick Susini, Suzanne Winsberg, Stephen McAdams, "The Sound Quality of Car Horns: A Psychoacoustical Study of Timbre" *Acta Acustica united with Acustica* 95 (201) 356-372.

Lindsey Keymore and David Huron, "Identifying the Perceptual Dimensions of Musical Instrument Timbre" in Richard Parncutt and Sabrina Sattmann, eds., *Proceedings of ICMPC15/ESCOM10* (Graz, Austria: Centre for Systematic Musicology, University of Graz, 2018): 372- 377.

Zachary Wallmark and Roger A. Kendall, "The Cognitive Linguistics of Timbre," in *The Oxford Handbook of Timbre*

**12 December: Final Presentations**

The exact nature of this session will depend on the size of the seminar and the kinds of final projects people undertake. We might end up scheduling two sessions or we might decide to share our final work in some other way.