Humanities Lab: Sound and Well-Being

Term: Spring 2020

Impact Project: Digital Postcards

Featuring:

Brooke Nelson (undergraduate student in the School for the Future of Innovation in Society)
Postcard: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYzfUDSu3PE&feature=youtu.be

What I appreciate most about this humanities lab is how it brought together such a wide array of individuals, each with their own interest and background in sound and well-being. It is incredibly rewarding to work with and learn from the others in the class, as well as those leading it. Through this experience, my perception and awareness of myself and my surrounding has opened immensely. It has made me much more conscientious about the noise and signals of my internal and external environments, and how I am both affected by and responsible for each. It is also incredible to see how each person’s unique contribution can come together so beautifully, so synergistically, in a way that enhances that of the other and how this relates to society at large.

Brian Grant (graduate student in the School of Sustainability)
Postcard: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2p-ptD1oqo

Our collective exploration of sound and well-being has led me to so many interesting discoveries; namely, that sound (and silence) is incredibly healing. Physically healing for our bodies, mentally healing for minds, and spiritually healing for our souls. And it is so for non-humans as well. I never realized how important and impactful sound is on our more-than-human world. In fact, I’ve been listening closely to the shift in our day to day 'song' amidst COVID-19, and while there is a chorus of human suffering, it is
foregrounded by Nature’s previously-muted orchestra. Before this class I hadn’t really heard the birds sing, and I’m so grateful to be dancing to their songs now when we need it most.

**Casey Cole** (graduate student in the School of Music)
Postcard: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JkNXmKXJeI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JkNXmKXJeI)

The Sound and Well-Being Humanities Lab is a unique collaborative learning experience. I really enjoy the ability to work with students across various disciplines at different levels of their college careers and learn from professors representing diverse fields. This lab offers an open environment that encourages us to share our opinions, our prior knowledge, and to engage in rich conversations. As a music student, I joined this lab with knowledge about how music can be utilized to facilitate health and well-being but was eager to expand my understanding of sound and learn about perspectives from individuals outside of music. As with many topics regarding well-being, sound is incredibly variable and individual. Having a diverse group of students allows us to contemplate and seek to understand the various sides of how sound can positively and negatively impact each other’s lives.

We tackle difficult issues, including how sound pollution can negatively impact our natural environment and our own physical and mental development and health. An important part of this lab has been taking discussions of these relevant issues and turning to discussion of solutions. I have found new ways to talk about sound and new ways to use sound and related research to bring awareness to issues and incite change. The format of this course challenges me to think creatively and critically about issues. Not only do we delve into discussion and research, but we apply what we learn in a hands-on format to current issues through creative projects. This type of learning forces me to get out of my comfort zone, but in return provides me with a richer understanding of how I might be able to apply those techniques.

I have enjoyed getting to experience various sound-based meditation practices and then being able to work with a group to create our own meditation experience to share with the class. Another project I particularly enjoyed was creating a digital postcard to utilize sound and images to bring awareness to a current environmental issue and offer a solution. Leaving my comfort zone and completing these unique projects has allowed me to engage in new techniques to convey a message or to help incite change, which is a useful and creative skill I know will help me in my future endeavors.