

## **THEOCRIT 9206B: Instrumentality**

Winter 2022 / Centre for Theory and Criticism / Western University

Instructor: Jonathan De Souza (Don Wright Faculty of Music)

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Office Hours: By appointment (Talbot College 218, and online via Zoom)

Class time: Tuesdays, 9:30am–12:30 pm

In-person classroom: Stevenson Hall 3165

Virtual classroom: link/password available via the Zoom tab on OWL

### **Course Description**

Hammers, spoons, pianos, microscopes, ballpoint pens, knitting needles, compasses, laptops, and machine guns... Humans are surrounded by instruments. How do we use such objects? And how do they use us? This course will examine varied instruments in art, science, and everyday life, with help from phenomenology, musicology, organology (the study of musical instruments), history of science, media theory, anthropology, and cognitive science. Attending to the interplay of technology and technique, we will ask how instruments can affect not only human action but also perception and knowledge.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of this course, you will be able to analyze human-technology interaction in new ways and to critically evaluate scholarly writing about instruments and instrumentality. You will also have developed skills related to interdisciplinary research and communication.

### **Course Materials**

Readings and resources will be available via OWL ([owl.uwo.ca](http://owl.uwo.ca)).

### **Evaluation**

Twice during the term, you will be scheduled to serve as a discussion leader: you'll prepare critical questions, give a brief introduction and help to facilitate the discussion in class, and share a written summary of our discussion on the course website (posted before the next class). We'll make the schedule during our first meeting.

You will complete four brief writing exercises (1–2 pages). Each exercise will reflect on an instrument by foregrounding one of Aristotle’s four causes (material cause, formal cause, efficient cause, final cause). Your writing exercises may explore a single object or different ones. They may also factor into your final project, though that isn’t required.

Your final project will investigate an instrument, a technique, or a relevant text or theoretical issue. We will workshop topics in class on March 1 (after Reading Week). On April 5, you will give a ten-minute presentation on your project, followed by five minutes for discussion. This presentation will then form the basis of your final essay (10–14 pages, due April 22).

These elements will combine in your course grade as follows:

Discussion leading	20% (2 × 10%)
Writing exercises	20% (4 × 5%)
Final presentation	20%
Final essay	40%

### **Policies**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many new challenges, and I aim to be as supportive and flexible as possible. During January, we will meet online (link/password available via the Zoom tab on OWL). We hope to meet in person after then, but this will depend on circumstances beyond our control. Regardless, all students are welcome in the course. If I can make it more accessible to you, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

*Contact.* I aim to reply to email messages within 24 hours from Monday to Friday and within 48 hours on weekends and holidays. Though I am not planning to hold regularly scheduled Office Hours this term, I’m very happy to set up individual appointments. Just send me a message, and we’ll find a suitable date and time.

*Health and Wellness.* As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on-campus health-related services to help students achieve optimum health and

engage in healthy living while pursuing a graduate degree. Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone in whom they feel comfortable confiding, such as a faculty supervisor, a program advisor, or the Associate Dean (Graduate Studies). Campus mental health resources may be found at [http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental\\_health/resources.html](http://www.health.uwo.ca/mental_health/resources.html).

*Land Acknowledgement.* We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Chonnonton Nations, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. With this, we respect the longstanding relationships that Indigenous Nations have to this land, as they are the original caretakers. We acknowledge historical and ongoing injustices that Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) endure in Canada, and we accept responsibility as a public institution to contribute toward revealing and correcting miseducation as well as renewing respectful relationships with Indigenous communities through our teaching, research and community service.

*Academic Offences.* Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic offence, as found at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf).

## Schedule

### 1. Introduction (January 11)

Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye, Book II, Parts 3 and 9.

Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 164–75.

John Tresch and Emily I. Dolan, "Toward a New Organology: Instruments of Music and Science," *Osiris* 28, no. 1 (2013): 278–98.

### 2. Hammers and Tables (January 18)

Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), §§15–18.

Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 25–63.

### 3. Bows (January 25, Writing Exercise 1 due)

James J. Gibson, "The Theory of Affordances," in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 127–37.

Don Ihde, "The Seventh Machine: Bow-under-Tension," in *Experimental Phenomenology*, 2nd ed. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), 171–84.

Jenny L. Davis, *How Artifacts Afford* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), Chapters 4–5.

### 4. Canes (February 1)

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London: Routledge, 2012), 100–55.

N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 192–207.

Joel Michael Reynolds, "Merleau-Ponty, World-Creating Blindness, and the Phenomenology of Non-Normate Bodies," *Chiasmi International* 19 (2017): 419–36.

### 5. Pianos (February 8)

Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–19.

David Sudnow, *Ways of the Hand* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 5–47.

Jonathan De Souza, *Music at Hand: Instruments, Bodies, and Cognition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), Chapter 1.

**6. Bicycles and Barrel Organs** (February 15, Writing Exercise 2 due)

Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 311–28.

Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 1996), 47–57.

Tim Ingold, "Tools, Minds, and Machines," in *The Perception of the Environment* (London: Routledge, 2000), 294–311.

De Souza, *Music at Hand* (2017), Chapter 2.

**Reading Week** (February 21–25)

**7. Microscopes and Telescopes** (March 1)

Ihde, *Bodies in Technology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), Chapter 4.

Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, "Intersections: Some Thoughts on Instruments and Objects in the Experimental Context of the Life Sciences," in *Instruments in Art and Science* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 1–19.

Florian Nelle, "Telescope, Theater, and the Instrumental Revelation of New Worlds," in *Instruments in Art and Science* (2008), 62–77.

Deirdre Loughridge, *Haydn's Sunrise, Beethoven's Shadow* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), Chapter 1.

**8. Monochords** (March 8, Writing Exercise 3 due)

Alexander Rehding, "Instruments of Music Theory," *Music Theory Online* 22, no. 4 (2016).

David E. Creese, *The Monochord in Ancient Greek Harmonic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapter 1.

**9. Astrolabes** (March 15)

Edwin Hutchins, *Cognition in the Wild* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), Chapter 2.

**10. Typewriters** (March 22, Writing Exercise 4 due)

Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 13–19 and 183–207.

Roger Moseley, "Digital Analogies: The Keyboard as Field of Musical Play," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 68, no. 1 (2015): 151–227.

**11. Prepared Guitars** (March 29)

Ahmed, *What's the Use?* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 197–229.

De Souza, *Music at Hand* (2017), Chapter 4.

**12. Final Presentations** (April 5)

**April 22, Final Essay due**