

THEOCRIT 9206B: Instrumentality
Winter 2022 / Centre for Theory and Criticism / Western University

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Office 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. Addressing 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).

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 re

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.

Ź> «j · Ÿ«¬ @ ± We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lenapeewak 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.

· Ÿj « Ÿ" «Ÿ. 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.

Schedule

1. Introduction (January 11)

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

Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Being and Time*, 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," *Organon* 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, *Strange Hospitality* (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 Human Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 127–37.

Don Ihde, "The Seventh Machine: Bow-under-Tension," in *Being Human: A Postphenomenological Inquiry*, 2nd ed. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), 171–84.

Jenny L. Davis, *Phenomenology of the Bow* (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, *Unconscious Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 192–207.

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

5. Pianos (February 8)

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

David Sudnow, *Rehearsal* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 5–47.

Jonathan De Souza, *Phenomenology of the Piano* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), 1–10.

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

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

Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. James Benedict (London: Verso, 1996), 47–57.

Tim Ingold, "Tools, Minds, and Machines," in *Being Human: The Problem of Agency* (London: Routledge, 2000), 294–311.

De Souza, *Philosophy of Language* (2017), Chapter 2.

Heidegger, *Being and Time*
Reading Week (February 21–25)

7. Microscopion

(Microscopion)

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

11. Prepared Guitars (March 29)

Ahmed, * *Prepared Guitars* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 197–229.

De Souza, *Prepared Guitars* (2017), Chapter 4.

12 Final Presentations (April 5)

April 22, Final Essay due