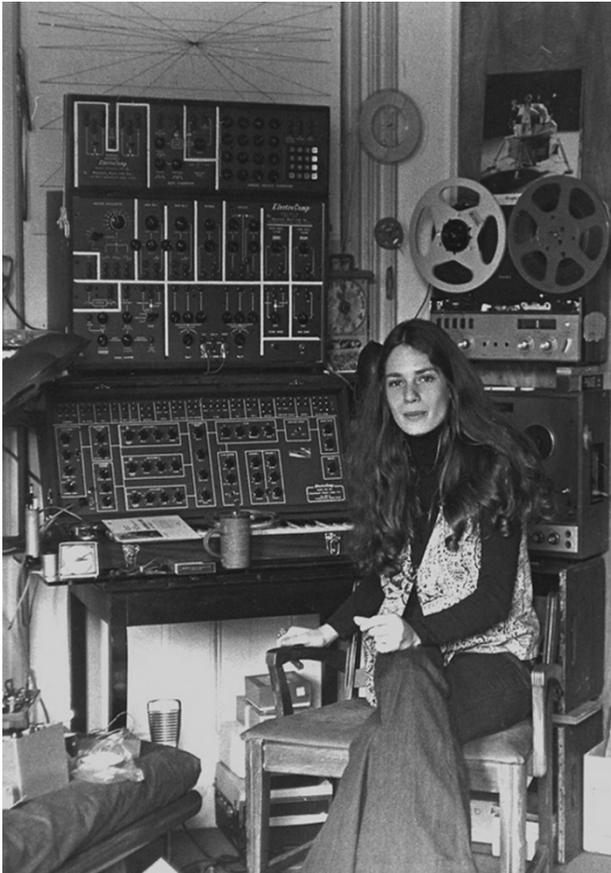


# Sound Stories: Life Histories and the Science of Sound

Faculty: Krishna Chowdary (physics and math) and Eric Stein (anthropology and history)

Spring 2026



## Credit Equivalencies

- 4 - Introduction to the Anthropology of Sound
- 4 - Introduction to Science and Technology Studies
- 4 - Conceptual Physics: Sound
- 2 - Life History Interviewing
- 2 - Audio Field Recording and Editing

## First Class Session

Tuesday, March 31, 10 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., Sem2 C1105.

## Registration Information

Course Reference Number (CRN): 30091, Fr-So

## Required Books

- David Haskell, *Sounds Wild and Broken*
- Mike Goldsmith, *Sound: A Very Short Introduction*
- Other readings provided as handouts or via Canvas

Image: Composer Laurie Spiegel

## Weekly Class Meeting Schedule

Mondays	No class meeting, open time available in Multimedia Lab (MML) for project work
Tuesdays	10am-12pm (or 10-11:30am) Physics Quiz, Lecture (Sem 2 C1105); 1-4pm (or 12:30-4pm) Lecture/Workshop (Sem 2 C1105)
Wednesdays	No class meeting, open time available in Multimedia Lab (MML) for project work
Thursdays	10am-12:30pm Multimedia Lab (Evans Hall 1404) – GROUP A 1:30-3:30pm Seminar/Workshop (Sem 2 C2105/C2107)
Fridays	9:30am-12:30pm Physics Lab (Lab 2 2238) – GROUP A 10:00am-12:30pm Multimedia Lab (Evans Hall 1404) – GROUP B 2-5pm Physical Lab (Lab 2 2238) – GROUP B

In addition to in-class time, students should expect to spend 20 – 25 hours per week outside of class on reading assignments, homework assignments, and audio work (see Assignments, next page).

## Field Trip Details

A required two-night field trip to Seattle (Thursday, April 30 – Saturday, May 2) to complete an event-based ethnography and collaborative audio podcast project. Alternate options for those with a valid reason to miss the trip.

# Assignments

Weely reading assignments (these will include texts, podcasts, films, other media) include:

- lecture readings to be completed before Tuesday lectures
- seminar readings to be completed before Thursday seminars
- physics readings to be completed after Friday physics labs and before Tuesday lectures

There will be four weekly assignments: 1) prepare for a Tuesday morning **Physics Quiz**, 2) a Thursday afternoon **Pre-Seminar Assignment**, 3) a **Lab Summary** due Fridays, and 4) a **Weekly Synthesis Reflection**, due Mondays.

In addition, there will be several larger assignments: 1) An **iterative synthesis essay** building from the weekly synthesis reflections, with several rounds of revisions and expansions, and 2) Three **audio/ethnography assignments** (two of which have a collaborative element) that combine observations, recordings, and analysis.

## First Week Seminar Reading

Haskell *Sounds Wild and Broken: Sonic Marvels, Evolution's Creativity, and the Crisis of Sensory Extinction*, pp.1-77.

## Faculty



[Eric Stein](#) Ph.D., Anthropology & History ([steine@evergreen.edu](mailto:steine@evergreen.edu))

Hello Everyone! Since coming to Evergreen in 2007, I have co-taught in programs that explore waste, public health, language and power, social media, materiality, ruins, urban planning, and aesthetics and philosophy. My [earlier research](#) studied public health--especially hygiene and family planning--within the histories of colonialism, decolonization, and nationalism in twentieth century Indonesia. In an ongoing [visual book project](#) on oral history, archival studies, and ethnography, I am thinking through questions of colonialism and decolonization to consider what it would mean to engage in ethically

grounded, self-reflexive, collaborative social research. As part of this work, students in my programs often do audio field recording, in-depth interviewing, and podcast design. Recently, I was the faculty scholar at Evergreen's Learning and Teaching Commons; my major project involved collaborating with students to design more accessible and equitable class syllabi. I'm very excited to meet you all and engage in some audio thinking together!

[Krishna Chowdary](#) Ph.D. (Physics & Mathematics) ([chowdark@evergreen.edu](mailto:chowdark@evergreen.edu))

I love helping students learn physics and math. Like Eric, I came to Evergreen in 2007 and I've been looking forward to teaching with him since we came to Evergreen. I've taught in a wide range of interdisciplinary programs with other scientists (biologists, chemists, computer scientists, mathematicians, and other physicists), artists (an animator, a dramatist, a musician, and a fine metals artist), humanists (a classicist, philosophers, and a literary scholar), and social scientists (a political economist, political geographers, and now an anthropologist!). In graduate school, I researched novel nanoscale magnetic materials (magnets are cool). I've also taught in Evergreen's pre-orientation program and our foundations of college success course. I enjoy working with students at all levels to think about how interdisciplinary breadth and depth matter in their learning and their lives. I'm looking forward to learning about sound with you in lecture, seminar, workshop, and particularly in lab.



## Program Description

In this introductory program we will work closely with sound, both as an emotionally resonant field of perception shaped by culture and history, and as a salient aspect of our physical world. How does sound work? How have human beings understood and used sound in ways that have changed over time?

Starting with the evolution of communication and human language, we will trace a history of sound and story, studying how oral cultures and the soundscapes of everyday life have changed over time. Playing with the physical properties of sound, we will explore frequency, tone, timbre and other audio features. We will consider the physical workings of various technologies that produce, record, and translate sound, and explore how these technologies enabled new kinds of listening, storytelling, and imagination. We will also study the place of music, story, and noise within political movements, with an emphasis on the rise of podcasting in contemporary cultures. Our readings will span anthropology, science and technology studies, and the science of sound.

In the multimedia lab, students will learn the fundamentals of audio editing using Adobe Audition and will produce several audio projects, including a podcast based on an original in-depth life history interview. We will spend much of our in-class time experimenting with sound recording, listening closely, developing interviewing skills, recording audio, and doing a range of creative work.

Through hands-on investigations in physics lab, students will explore the physical basis of sound and waves. Students will make and measure sounds, record and reproduce it, analyze it in a variety of ways, and build devices such as simple speakers and basic audio circuits.

As part of our studies, there will be a required two-night field trip to Seattle to record soundscapes and complete an event-based ethnography and collaborative audio podcast project.

## Fees

\$320 fee covers a 2-night field trip to Seattle and a required media/lab fee.

## Fields of Study

Film and Media Studies; Film, Video, and Audio Production; Physics; Sociology and Anthropology

## Preparatory for studies and careers in:

The program will prepare students for continued studies and careers in media, audio recording, anthropology, the humanities, and the physical sciences.