



# Soundscape Composition

## Module 2

A **soundscape composition** is an audio media production that communicates the relationship between sound and space. It compels both the producer and the listener to think in new ways about everyday sounds and what they reveal about particular environments. A soundscape composition is not a neutral document: the recordist/composer makes explicit decisions about what sounds + spaces to explore, and ultimately, what story to tell.



On a technical level, a soundscape composition assembles a number of discrete field recordings into a single composition (i.e. it is multi-tracked). The number of recordings it includes is up to you, though it must include a vocal track recorded either on-location (in the context of a field recording), separately and mixed in afterward, or some combination of both. The composition will be between 3-5 mins. All audio will be captured in .wav format using a hand-held portable recorder.

The assignment will be presented in the form of a web page post that includes the soundscape composition alongside a brief bit of writing (~1pgh) and a series of photos to offer context. The aim is to develop field recording techniques, to learn multi-track production, and to present this as audiovisual media that can circulate publicly.

Some questions to consider before you begin: *What space(s) are meaningful to you? How does sound bring that meaning to life? And how might you construct a narrative to communicate that meaning to others?*

**Step 1:** Select a theme for your piece. What space do you want to explore?

**Step 2:** Begin plotting the narrative. What is it you want to say?

**Step 3:** Record. What sounds must you capture? From what physical location, using what perspective? Remember that at every move, you're making decisions that will affect the outcome of the composition.

**Step 4:** Import all files to your computer's desktop and organize them in folders (i.e. "space 1", "space 2", "voice", etc.). Be sure never to overwrite original files just in case you need to go back to them.

**Step 5:** Import audio to Audacity and begin editing/multi-tracking. Allow the sounds to tell the story, rather than simply using your voice to describe everything in words. Think carefully about pacing and rhythm. Clean up the sounds as necessary (edit, normalize, EQ). Fade in/out each individual recording when multi-tracking to prevent jarring and/or abrupt transitions.

**Step 6:** Design a web page post to host your audio. Include a written introduction and a series of photos, whatever images are most appropriate in light your topic. Use the photo composition techniques we learned in this module!



**Step 7:** Develop a title for the project, include it on the web page, and upload your audio to the website (as .mp3). To submit the project, include the link to the specific page in Brightspace's assignment submission box, upload a .wav file, and include a 30 second "throw" for radio.

You will be graded on quality of recording, narrative flow, and composition. On a technical level, the goal of this assignment is to demonstrate the ability to balance vocal levels with ambience and other competing sonic elements. Conceptually, it is to create a statement about a given space using sound, image, and text.