

Summer Institute for Critical Studies in Improvisation 2010

Improvisation, Text and Media

Bob Ostertag

This seminar will examine the interplay between changes in music technology and the meaning of improvisation, and how these are situated in broader changes in technology and culture. The primary reading for the seminar will be the instructor's own recent quasi-autobiographical book, *Creative Life*, which addresses this topic extensively. Three other "classic" works will be examined. Participants should obtain the book by purchasing it, borrowing it from a library, pirating it, or by hook or by crook. The other readings are available on line.

Lectures:

Lecture 1 August 30

Title: Overview of my work.

Reading: *Creative Life*, Chapters 1-3 and Conclusion.

Lecture 2 August 31

Two Projects: Say No More and Living Cinema

Reading: *Creative Life*, Chapter 4.

Lecture 3 September 1

The Place of the Body in Technology-Intensive Music.

Reading: "Are Two Dimensions Enough?" and "The Prospects of Recording."

Lecture 4 September 2

The Changing Meaning of Improvisation over 100 Years

No reading.

Lecture 5 September 3

The ____ of _____ in the Age of Electronic Distribution

Reading: "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and "In Plato's Cave."

Reading list:

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*. Ed. Hanna Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1968. (available online [here](#)).

Gould, Glen. "The Prospects of Recording." Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music. High Fidelity Magazine, vol. 16, no. 4, April 1966, pp. 46-63. Eds. Christopher Cox and Daniel Warner. New York: Continuum, 1966. (available online [here](#)).

Ostertag, Bob. Creative Life: Music, Politics, People, and Machines. Champaign, IL: Illinois University Press, 2009. (Purchase directly from the publisher [here](#), or from [here](#) (for Canadian orders)).

Ostertag, Bob. "Are Two Dimensions Enough?" (unpublished manuscript available [here](#)).

Sontag, Susan. On Photography. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977. Chapter One, "In Plato's Cave." (available online [here](#)).