

David Simons
Understanding Media Studies
Prof. Peter Haratonik
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ACADEMIC PLAN



Overly dramatic perhaps, but I am taking this seriously: I have learned so much and been so very stimulated intellectually and creatively during this first semester, it's almost scary to think of what's coming next. To begin, the process of learning, the format of scholarship, and having to research, think critically and write coherently, citing your references. Then, putting the work into the context of current and historical thought, theoretical movements, and the tradition of building upon the combined knowledge of other scholars in the field is both humbling and exciting.

One's whole identity comes into question, as it naturally would in the case of a younger student just out of college, but especially in my situation of an adult well into his mid-career stage. There's no doubt in my mind and that of my peers that I am changing for the better, improving the breadth, depth and quality of my thought processes, developing new skills and increasing the ones that I already have. My plan to teach at the college level is already taking place: this semester I have been a Teaching Assistant at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Teaneck, NJ, (as well as being a substitute teacher there in American cultural history). Starting next semester I will be teaching the CORE undergraduate course in Cross Cultural Perspectives. This is basic Anthropology, but with using my own research into Ethnomusicology and my creative work in pan-cultural music composition as a portal to the subject. Media Studies has absolutely been a guide in terms of critical thinking; re-thinking the literature, seeing the perceptual and cultural biases and manipulations at work in history and in current globalized society. From that examination one can identify some of the economic, political and psychologically conflicting aspects of cultural identity in this post-postmodern world.

In the course of writing the Literature/Media Review paper in my field of interest, I focussed on examining a realm in which I already had some experience: the GONG Cultures of South East Asia. I barely touched upon the larger area of gong culture in the western world, which would include contemporary music, healing arts, and other aspects of gong in society. The whole area of Gong Culture is a subject of future research. As I wrote in my essay, I am now planning to apply for a Fulbright fellowship to travel to Vietnam, Thailand and other countries in the area of South China Sea (especially China, Cambodia and Philippines) to study Gong Culture, and map the spread of peoples, instrument types, culture and music. (However, armed radical Muslim insurgents in the southern islands of Philippines, including Mindanao, are a major concern). I certainly intend to consult with Professor Carol Wilder regarding the Fulbright process. My experiences in World Music include more than 25 years performing in Balinese Gamelans, composing and premiering works for the Gamelan Son of Lion in NY, and many trips to Asia to research and collaborate with musicians and artists in Thailand, Korea, Bali and Java. My interest in Chinese culture at one stage extended to learning the calligraphy, and studying Zheng, the Chinese zither.

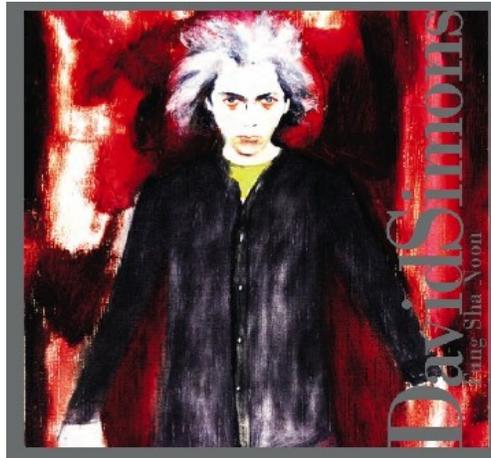


It would be impossible and not even productive to list here all the research, development and experiences I've had in the realm of Ethnomusicology and new compositions for mixed ensembles. I am not proposing at this point to switch my focus on that as a degree, which would entail changing schools, but I could see taking some ethnomusicological field training courses at another institution to prepare me for this expedition. Both New York University and Columbia have graduate level courses in this field, and I have seen the offerings in their catalogues. If I would receive credit for completing one or more of these courses, it would seem to be very useful to my studies. The New School does offer a highly popular course in Documentary Research Methods which I'm looking forward to taking when it becomes available.

My career as a composer is by no means ending, but evolving. A new CD of my work has just been released on the TZADIK label, (Fall 2009) and I'm learning more about how to market my work online.

(see [david simons podcast](#))

<http://www.simons-karrer.com/newschool/david_j_simons_podcast/Podcast/Podcast.html>



I have conceived of a new interactive composition that would be transmitted, arranged (by the viewer) and possibly performed online. Next semester I'll be taking *Media Practices: Interactive*, with Jorg Muller, who has introduced me to so many facets of design, theory and creation in the class *Media Practices: Concepts*; I hope to learn how to realize many of my new projects with his guidance. I will also be taking *Media Studies: Ideas* with Paul Ryan, to whom I was assigned as my faculty advisor. This way I can be in close contact with the school re: my academic plans.

I've been taking 6 credits per semester, which is considered part time, and that is my plan to continue. Even with this first student loan for one year I still have to put time into music performances, rehearsals, and teaching. This is for making money and making art, which is my profession. The school work is challenging, and with or without the research trip to Asia I hope to complete my MA in 3 years, by the end of 2012 spring semester. I'm going to try to finance my education by getting work/study jobs through the school, and petition, if possible, for a higher percentage of scholarship funding from the school. The job market is awful, and I just hope I can afford to be a student and complete this process. At Parsons there are courses I will take such as *MAX/MSP*

interactive sound and media programming. Other sound based courses I'm interested in at the New School are *Audio Experiments* with Joan Schuman, *Projects in Multi-Sensorial Spaces* with Ernesto Klar, *Interactive Media Studies* with Douglas Rushkoff, *Sound Studies* with Melissa Grey, and probably another sound course with Chris Mann. A big project of mine is to develop the "Instrument that is Played by the Mind Itself" using bio-medical instruments to track variations in brain voltage to the control of sound files. This *Independent Study* or *Independent Production* course could result in a final thesis project, or it could be in addition to the Gong Cultures research trip, to be determined with *Thesis tutorial/advisor*. The New School radio station interests me - if it is up and running I'd like to get involved. I am planning to take at least one course such as *Critical Foundations of Anthropology* in the Fall 2010 semester at New School for Social Research, and possibly go further into the studies of Ethnography and Anthropology, especially since my field of interest includes Cross-Cultural fertilization.



My goals upon completion of an MA in Media Studies is mastery and fluency with digital media techniques of capturing and manipulating sound and image. An expanded vocabulary of artistic and social methodology to communicate and document the phenomena I observe, or the experiments I engineer. To bring my skills to bear in a variety of situations such as

teaching, producing, consulting, and publishing. And as always, the creation of a continually evolving and unique body of artwork in music as it relates to other overlapping media.

Here is one of many interesting assignments from my first semester: Please look at my very short film created from stills, which is on [my student website](http://simons-karrer.com/semisentienshipstory.mov): <http://simons-karrer.com/semisentienshipstory.mov>

Thank You