

The Wolfe Institute

*The Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute for the Humanities,
in cooperation with the Hitchcock Institute for Studies in American Music,
presents*

Our Modest Witness **John Cage's Modernism**



John Cage believed his music could, like nature itself, be governed by the laws of chance. Though chance might lead to unforeseen futures, as Cage's surrogate for the category of nature, chance was in fact a route toward certainty, and could provide him with a foundation on which to base the authority of his aesthetic position. This quest for certainty marks Cage as a modern figure, when "modern" is defined by the distinction between an objective, apolitical nature and a subjective, political society.

Benjamin Piekut is Assistant Professor of Musicology at Cornell University. His latest work, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (University of California Press, 2011) examines the struggles of mid-1960s downtown composers and music activists John Cage, Henry Flynt, Charlotte Moorman, and Iggy Pop. Situated at the intersection of free jazz, the Cagean avant-garde, Fluxus, radical politics, and popular music, the book portrays New York experimentalism in the 1960's as a series of conflicts, struggles, and exclusions.

Wednesday, November 2, 2011
2:15 to 3:30 p.m.
Bedford Lounge, Brooklyn College
Student Center
Campus Road and East 27th Street

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