Turn on Your Radio and Hide
Audio Storytelling from War of the Worlds
to Welcome to Night Vale

With Mr. Alex Dawson, full-time faculty member at Rutgers University, where he teaches creative writing and audio storytelling and is the artistic director of Raconteur Radio.

We'll talk about the mind's innate obedience, its willingness to try to see whatever someone suggests it see, no matter how absurd. We'll talk about how sound triggers terror more acutely than any other sense. How we're evolutionarily disposed to jump at noise before light. We'll talk about the closed door. How what's behind it scratching (or at the top of the stairs creaking), is never as scary as the scratching and creaking itself.

We'll talk about radio auteurs like Orson Welles and his notorious Jersey-centric broadcast, The War of the Worlds; about Rod Sterling, most famous for The Twilight Zone, who got his start writing original content for WJEM, a station in Springfield, Ohio; about Lucille Fletcher, who knew that audio drama wasn't simply sound effects, but a psychic space in the brain, a landscape of the unknown.

We'll talk about serialized storytelling and cliffhangers, about getting under the listener's skin and sustaining apprehension after the last word, about guaranteeing they'll tune in for the next installment. We'll go cosmic. Microscopic. We'll travel to the top of Mount Everest, to the bottom of the Mariana Trench.

Participants will see (at least) one vintage radio drama performed live, hear (at least) one recorded modern fictional podcast, and write their very own (prompted) tale of suspense. Plus Nolan's bug, Hitchcock's bomb, and why Stephen King calls horror the art of disappointment.

Thursdays, April, 23, 30 and May 7 - 7:00 - 8:30

The Psychology of Language

With Mr. Sten Knutsen, Cognitive Psychology Ph.D. Program and Lecturer at Rutgers University - New Brunswick

Have you ever wondered:
- Why doesn't Siri (or Alexa) ever understand what I'm saying?
- Why are children able to easily pick up new languages that adults struggle to learn?
- What makes human language different than animal communication?
- What is the relationship between language and thought?

If you are interested in the answers to these questions, or if you've enjoyed reading Steven Pinker's "The Language Instinct" this series is for you! Psychology of Language is the study of the cognitive and neurobiological factors that allow humans to acquire, understand and produce language.

June 5 - Introduction to the Psychology of Language.
What does it mean to know a language? Does the language we speak influence how we think? What makes human communication unique?

June 12 - Language Acquisition and Conclusion.
How do children learn languages? From newborn to adult, we track the course of language development.

All classes begin at 10:30 a.m.
The Roots of Rock and Roll in the 1950s and 1960s

With Dr. Robert W. Butts, Artistic Director/Conductor The Baroque Orchestra of New Jersey, Professor Montclair State University, College of Saint Elizabeth

Rock and Roll emerged in American music in the 1950s, combining elements of country, folk, blues, soul, gospel, swing, pop, and other musical styles. The early days 1945-1955 were marked by the popularity of doo wop, rockabilly, country, and swing like tunes. In the mid-50s, Elvis Presley took the new music to every greater popularity, joined by artists like Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, and Little Richard. The early 1960s were marked by solo artists and groups like The Four Seasons, Dion, Ricky Nelson and the girl groups like the Chiffons, Ronnettes, and Shirelles. In 1964, The Beatles and British groups dominated along with American artists primarily recording on the Motown Record Label. By the end of the 1960s, rock and roll became "rock," but several artists returned to their country, folk, rockabilly, and pop roots.

March 27 - Roots of Rock and Roll: 1945-1955

April 3 - Elvis Presley and the late 1950s

April 17 - Rock & Roll: 1960-1964

April 24 - The Beatles, Motown, and the 60s

All classes begin at 10:30 a.m.