

# MUSC 499: The Music Video: From Popular Music to Film and Digital Media

University of Southern California, Fall 2014

Tuesday, Thursday, 2:00-3:20

UUC B2

Instructor: Dr. Richard Brown

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**Course Description:** Since its emergence in the late 1970s, the music video has become the dominant means of advertising popular music and musicians, as well as one of the most influential multimedia genres in history. Music videos have affected aesthetic style in a wide range of film and television genres, introducing experimental and avant-garde techniques to a mass audience. Because most music videos last only a few minutes, it is difficult to make sense of their often-conflicting images, sounds, and messages. This course challenges participants to read music videos as texts by engaging with their visual and auditory materials. We will explore how the gender, race, and class of video participants shapes meaning, as well as how pacing and editing contribute to (or detract from) a narrative flow. We will also consider the music video in relation to notions of stardom and celebrity, and will speculate on the future of the music video amid drastic changes in the production and marketing of media. The second portion of the course applies these analytical skills to a wide variety of media, including video games, live concert films, film and television music placements, television title sequences and end credits, user generated content, YouTube, remixes and more.

## Course Materials:

There is one required textbook **available for free** via USC's electronic Ebook access: Carol Vernallis' *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). All assigned readings from this book will be indicated in the syllabus as "EMV". To retrieve the textbook readings, search for the title in Homer and click on the "electronic access" link. **Weekly YouTube Playlists** will be posted on Blackboard for all video content. Additional weekly topic readings will be posted to blackboard (marked **BB** in the syllabus), along with Power Point lecture slides and links to the required videos, when available.

## Grading:

You will graded on the following items:

- Weekly Online Quizzes via Blackboard: 25% of grade
  - 10 multiple choice questions based off lecture and readings. Two attempts allowed with a 30 minute time limit
- Group presentations: 15% of grade
  - Students will be organized into groups for a 10-15 minute presentation that outlines a specific music video, or other related audiovisual item (YouTube viral video, postclassical film, title sequence, etc.) Presentations will begin after Exam 2
- A midterm exam: 30% of class grade
  - Essay based on readings and lectures
- A final exam: 30% of class grade
  - Essay based on readings and lectures

## **Class Policies**

Exams cannot be rescheduled for any reason barring verifiable medical emergency. By verifiable, we mean that you will provide an official letter from a medical doctor explaining your condition.

You are responsible for obtaining notes for any lectures you miss from fellow classmates.

Students with disabilities who need special arrangements are required to register at the beginning of the semester with the Office of Disabilities, and to let us know about the issue as early as possible.

The USC Academic Integrity Code applies to all portions of this course and will be enforced (See *SCampus*).

Grading is as follows:

- 90-100% = A
- 80-89% = B
- 70-79% = C
- 65-69% = D
- below 65 = F

Pluses and minuses are as follows: B+ means 87 through 89; A- means 90 through 93, etc.

## **Statement for Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP:

[http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html), (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu).

## **Statement on Academic Integrity**

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, ([www.usc.edu/scampus](http://www.usc.edu/scampus) or <http://scampus.usc.edu>) contains the University Student Conduct Code (see University Governance, Section 11.00), while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A.

## **Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis**

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies.

# Schedule

(Weekly video screenings subject to change as new and more interesting videos are released – don't worry, I'll make sure the midterm and final review sheets clearly outline which examples you are accountable for!)

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Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignment
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<b>I</b>	<b>Aug 26/28</b>	<b>Introduction to Music Video; Terms and Analysis; narrative</b>
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Screening:	Miley Cyrus, "We Can't Stop" (2013), dir. Diane Martel Kendrick Lamar, "Swimming Pools" (2012), dir. Jerome D. Aerosmith, "Crazy" (1993), dir. Marty Callner Best Coast, "The Only Place" (2012), dir. Ace Norton Nas, "Daughters" (2012), dir. Chris Robinson Dixie Chicks, "Goodbye Earl" (2000), dir. Evan Bernard
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*A Hard Day's Night* (1964, dir. Richard Lester)

Reading:	EMV, 3-26.
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<b>II</b>	<b>Sept. 2/4</b>	<b>Avant Garde and Experimental Film; Editing</b>
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Screening:	Adele, "Rolling in the Deep" (2010), dir. Sam Brown Lady Gaga, "Bad Romance" (2009), dir. Francis Lawrence Beyoncé, "Countdown" (2011), dir. Adria Petty Jay-Z & Kanye West, "Ni**as In Paris" (2012), dir. Kanye West
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Oscar Fischinger, "An Optical Poem" (1938)  
James Whitney, "Yantra" (1957)  
James Whitney, "Lapis" (1966)  
Len Lye, "Swinging in Lambeth Park"  
Rene Clair, "Entr'Acte" (1924)  
Stan Brakhage, "DogStarMan" (1964-5)  
Kenneth Anger, "Scorpio Rising" (1964)  
Stan VanDerBeek, "Science Friction: (1966)  
Maya Deren, *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943)

Reading:	EMV, 27-53.
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David E. James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde: History and Geography of Minor Cinemas in Los Angeles*, (Berkeley: U.C. Press, 2005), 248-265.

<b>III</b>	<b>Sept. 9/11</b>	<b>Concert Films; Actors and Stars in Music Videos</b>
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Screening:	Justin Timberlake, "Suit & Tie" ft. JAY Z (2013), dir. David Fincher M.I.A. "Bad Girls" (2013), dir. Romain Gavras
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St. Vincent, "Cheerleader" (2011), dir. Hiro Murai  
Beach House, "Wishes" – Dr. by Eric Warheim  
Miley Cyrus, "Wrecking Ball" (2013), dir. Terry Richardson

Beach Boys, "Good Vibrations" (1966)  
The Monkees, "I'm a Believer" (1966)  
Bob Dylan, "Don't Look Back" (1965)  
*The Song Remains The Same*, dir. Peter Clifton and Joe Massot (1976)  
*Rattle and Hum*, dir. Phil Joanou (1988)  
*Gimmie Shelter*, dir. Albert and David Maysles (1970)  
*Sympathy for the Devil*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard  
Prince, *Sign O The Times* (1987)  
Madonna, *Truth or Dare* (1991)  
Beyoncé, *Life is But a Dream* (2013)

Reading: EMV, 54-72.

Philip Auslander, "Seeing Is Believing: Live Performance and the Discourse of Authenticity in Rock Culture," *Literature and Psychology* 44/4 (1998), 1-26.

**F 12 Sept. add/drop deadline**

**IV Sept. 16/18 Video Art and Early MTV; Settings, Props, and Costumes**

Screening: Rilo Kiley, "Let Me Back In" (2013),  
Cat Power, "Manhattan" (2013), dir. Greg Hunt  
James Blake, "Overgrown" (2013), dir. Nabil Elderkin  
Drake, "Started From The Bottom" (2013), dir. Director X  
Lana Del Rey, "Summertime Sadness" (2012), Dir. Spencer Susser and Kyle Newman  
Tim McGraw, "Truck Yeah" (2012), dir. Chris Hickey  
The Internet, "Dontcha" (2013)

Nam June Paik, *Global Groove* (1970)  
Nam June Paik, *Good Morning Mr. Orwell* (1984)

Reading: EMV, 73-108.

Jack Banks, "The Early Years of Music Video," in *Monopoly Television: MTV's Quest to Control the Music*, (New York: Harper, 1996), 23-47.

**V Sept. 23/25 MTV I; Lyrics and Music**

Screening: Foxygen, "San Francisco" (2013), dir. Cameron Dutra  
Chamillionaire, "Ridin'" ft. Krayzie Bone  
"Weird Al" Yankovic, "White & Nerdy"  
*The Shining*, dir. Stanley Kubrick, Opening credits  
Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti, "Only In My Dreams" (2012), dir. Travis Peterson

Danny Brown, "Grown Up" (2012), dir. Greg Brunkalla  
Father John Misty, "Hollywood Forever Cemetery Sings" (2013), dir. Noel Paul

RUN-DMC, "Walk This Way" (1993), dir. Jon Small  
Michael Jackson, "Thriller," (1983) dir. John Landis  
Duran Duran, "Hungry Like The Wolf" (1982), dir. Russell Mulcahy  
The Buggles, "Video Killed the Radio Star" (1978), dir. Russell Mulcahy  
Michael Jackson, "Billie Jean" (1982), dir. Steve Barron  
Herbie Hancock, "Rockit" (1983), dir. Godley and Creme

Reading: EMV, 137-174

Will Straw, "Popular Music and Postmodernism in the 1980s," in *Sound And Vision: The Music Video Reader*, ed. Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin, and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Routledge, 1993), 3-24.

## VI Sept. 30/Oct.2 **MTV II: Color, Texture, Space, and Time**

Screening: Frank Ocean, "Pyramids" (2012), dir. Nabil Elderkin  
M.I.A., "Galang" (2003), dir. Ruben Fleischer  
Minus the Bear, "My Time" (2010), dir. Mike Mohan  
Cold Mailman, "My Recurring Dream" (2013), dir. André Chocron  
Toro y Moi, "Say That" (2013), dir. HARRYS

Madonna, "Like a Prayer" (1989), dir. Mary Lambert  
Madonna, "Vogue" (1990), dir. David Fincher  
Madonna, "Cherish" (1989), dir. Herb Ritts  
Nirvana, "Smells Like Teen Spirit" (1991), dir. Samuel Bayer  
Weezer, "Buddy Holly" (1994), dir. Spike Jonze  
Nirvana, "In Bloom" (1991), dir. Kevin Kerslake  
Pearl Jam, "Jeremy" (1992), dir. Mark Pellington  
Red Hot Chili Peppers, "Under the Bridge" (1992), dir. Gus Van Sant  
Nine Inch Nails, "Closer" (1994), dir. Mark Romanek  
Beck, "Loser" (1993), dir. Steve Hanft  
Public Enemy, "911 is a Joke" (1990)  
M.C. Hammer, "U Can't Touch This" (1990), dir. Rupert Wainwright  
Dr. Dre, "Nothin But a G Thang" (1992), dir. Dr. Dre  
The Notorious B.I.G. "Juicy" (1994)

Reading: EMV, 109-136.

Saul Austerlitz, *Money For Nothing: A History of the Music Video from the Beatles to the White Stripes* (NY: Continuum, 2007), 135-162.

## VII Oct. 7/9 **MTV III: Auteur Directors, Film Soundtrack Videos, New Country, New New Pop; Connections among Music, Image, and Lyrics**

Screening: Justin Timberlake, "Suit and Tie" Feat. Jay-Z (2013), dir. David Fincher

Madonna, "Cherish" (1989), dir. Herb Ritts

Beastie Boys, "Sabotage" (1994), dir. Spike Jonze

No Doubt, "Spiderwebs" (1995), dir. Marcus Nispel

Garbage, "Stupid Girl" (1995), dir. Samuel Bayer

Johnny Cash, "Hurt" (1994), Dir. Mark Romanek

Missy Elliot, "The Rain [Supa Dua Fly]" dir. Hype Williams

Pink, Mya and Missy Elliot, "Lady Marmalade," (2001), dir. Paul Hunter

Bryan Adams, "[Everything I do] I do it for you"

Whitney Houston, "I Will Always Love You"

Celine Dion, "My Heart Will Go On"

Garth Brooks, "The Dance"

Britney Spears, "Toxic"

Eminem, "The Real Slim Shady"

Christina Aguilera, "Hurt"

Beyoncé, "Single Ladies"

Reading: EMV, 175-198; 209-235.

**VIII Oct. 14 Midterm Examination in class**

**Oct. 16 The Digital Revolution: YouTube**

**IX Oct. 21/23 User Generated Content; Long Form Music Videos**

Screening: "Me at the Zoo" (2005)  
"Badgers" (2009)  
"The Sneezing Baby Panda" (2006)  
"Gizmo Flushes" (2006)  
Tay Zonday, "Chocolate Rain" (2007)  
Liam Kyle Sullivan, "Shoes" (2007)  
Judson Laipply, "Evolution of Dance" (2006)  
Weezer, "Pork and Beans" (2009)  
Aqua, "Barbie Girl" (1997)

Kanye West, "Runaway" (2010)

Dirty Projectors, "Hi Custodian" (2012)

Reading: Carol Vernallis, "YouTube Aesthetics," in *Unruly Media: YouTube, Music Video, and the New Digital Cinema*, (Oxford University Press, 2013).

**X Oct. 28/30 User Generated Content**

Screening: *Me @ The Zoo*, dir. Chris Moukarbel and Valerie Veatch (2012)

Reading: Cayari, C. (2011). The YouTube effect: How YouTube has provided new ways to consume, create, and share music. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 12(6).

- XI Nov. 4/6 Post-Classical Cinema**
- Screening: *Moulin Rouge*, dir. Baz Luhrmann (2001)  
*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, dir. Michael Gondry (2004)
- Reading: Carol Vernallis, "The Audiovisual Turn and Post-Classical Cinema," in *Unruly Media: YouTube, Music Video, and the New Digital Cinema* (Oxford, 2013), 42-68.
- XII Nov. 11/13 Live Concert Videos; Video Games**
- Screening: *Video Out: The Religion is the Signal*, dir. Meredith Finkelstein and Paul Vlachos (2005)
- Reading: Karen Collins, "Game Audio Today: Technology, Process, and Aesthetic," in *Game Sound: An Introduction to the History, Theory and Practice of Video Game Music and Sound Design*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), pp. 85-106.
- XIII Nov. 18/20 Guitar Hero, Performativity, and Virtual Bands**
- Reading: John Richardson, "The Surrealism of Virtual Band Gorillaz: "Clint Eastwood" and "Feel Good Inc.," in *An Eye for Music: Popular Music and the Audiovisual Surreal*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 201-239.
- F. 14 Nov. Last day to drop with a "W"**
- XIV Nov. 25 Television Title Sequences and end credits; Music Placements**
- Reading: Ramsay Adams, David Hnatiuk, and David Weiss, *Music Supervision: Selecting Music for Movies, TV, Games, and New Media*. New York: Schirmer, 2005.
- XV Dec. 2/4 Small Screens, Web. 2.0 and the future of the Music Video**
- Reading: Carol Vernallis, "Music Video's Second Aesthetic?," in *Unruly Media: YouTube, Music Video, and the New Digital Cinema*, (Oxford University Press, 2013).

**Final Examination: Thursday, December 11, 2-4pm UUC B2**