

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

University of Southern California, Spring 2014

Wednesdays, 6:00pm-9pm

THH 202

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. **Lectures will be video captured** and posted online the day after class.

Grading:

You will be graded on the following items:

- Weekly Online Quizzes via Blackboard: 40% of grade
 - 10 multiple choice questions based off lecture and readings. Two attempts allowed with a 30 minute time limit
- a midterm exam (**March 5th, in class**): 30% of class grade
 - Part I – questions based off of weekly quizzes
 - Part II – Essay based off of readings and lectures
- a final exam (**May 7th, 6:00-8:50pm**): 30% of class grade
 - Part I – questions based off of weekly quizzes
 - Part II – Essay based off of 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, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 740-6948 (TDD only), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) 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 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 lectures will be video captured and posted to blackboard the following day)

Week Date Topics, Readings, Assignment

I Jan. 15 Introduction to Music Video; Terms and Analysis; narrative

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

A Hard Day's Night (1964, dir. Richard Lester)

Reading: EMV, 3-53.

II Jan. 22 Avant Garde and Experimental Film; Editing

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

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, 54-98.

E. Ann Kaplan, "MTV and the Avant-Garde: The Emergence of a Postmodernist Anti-Aesthetic?," in *Rocking Around the Clock: Music Television, Postmodernism, and Consumer Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1987), 33-48

David E. James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde: History and Geography of Minor Cinemas in Los Angeles*, (Berkeley: U.C. Press, 2005), 248-281.

III Jan 29 Concert Films; Actors and Stars in Music Videos

Screening: Justin Timberlake, "Suit & Tie" ft. JAY Z (2013), dir. David Fincher
M.I.A. "Bad Girls" (2013), dir. Romain Gavras
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, 99-108.

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

F 31 Jan add/drop deadline

IV Feb. 5 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, 109-136.

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

Andrew Goodwin, "From Anarchy to Chromakey: Developments in Music Television," in *Dancing in the Distraction Factory: Music Television and Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1992), 24-48.

V Feb. 12 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, 137-155

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 Feb 19 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, 156-174.

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

VII Feb 26 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, 175-208.

Cynthia Fuchs, "'I'm from Rags to Riches': The Death of Jay-Z," in *Medium Cool: Music Videos from Soundies to Cellphones*, ed. Roger Beebe and Jeson Middleton (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2007), 290-302.

Roger Beebe, "Paradoxes of Pastiche: Spike Jonze, Hype Williams, and the Race of the Postmodern Auteur," in *Medium Cool: Music Videos from Soundies to Cellphones*, 303-328.

VIII March 5 Midterm Examination in class

IX March 12 The Digital Revolution: YouTube and 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).
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).

X Mar. 19 Spring Break

XI Mar. 26 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).

XII Apr. 2 Post-Classical Cinema

Screening: *Moulin Rouge*, dir. Baz Luhrmann (2001)
Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, dir. Michael Gondry (2004)

Reading: Carol Vernalis, "The Audiovisual Turn and Post-Classical Cinema," in *Unruly Media: YouTube, Music Video, and the New Digital Cinema* (Oxford, 2013), 42-68.

XIII Apr 9 Live Concert Videos; Video Games

Screening: *Video Out: The Religion is the Signal*, dir. Meredith Finkelstein and Paul Vlachos (2005)

Reading: D-Fuse, *VJ: Audio-Visual Art and V.J. Culture* (Laurence King, 2007), 3-48.

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.

XIV Apr 16 Guitar Hero, Performativity, and Virtual Bands

Reading: Kiri Miller, "How Musical is *Guitar Hero?*," in *Playing Along: Digital Games, YouTube, and Virtual Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 85-124.
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. 18 Apr. Last day to drop with a "W"

XV Apr 23 Television Title Sequences and end credits; Music Placements

Reading: Jeremy G. Butler, *Television: Critical Methods and Applications*, 4th Ed., (NY: Routledge, 2012), 325-356.
Ramsay Adams, David Hnatiuk, and David Weiss, *Music Supervision: Selecting Music for Movies, TV, Games, and New Media*. New York: Schirmer, 2005.

XVI Apr. 30 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: Wednesday May 7th , 7-9pm