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
richarhb@usc.edu
www.richardhbrownjr.com

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 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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics, Readings, Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Jan. 15</td>
<td>Introduction to Music Video; Terms and Analysis; narrative</td>
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<td>A Hard Day’s Night (1964, dir. Richard Lester)</td>
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<td><strong>Reading:</strong> EMV, 3-53.</td>
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<td>II</td>
<td>Jan. 22</td>
<td>Avant Garde and Experimental Film; Editing</td>
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<td><strong>Reading:</strong> EMV, 54-98.</td>
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III Jan 29  
**Concert Films; Actors and Stars in Music Videos**

**Screening:**
- Justin Timberlake, “Suit & Tie” ft. JAY Z (2013), dir. David Fincher
- 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)
- *Sympathy for the Devil*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard
- Madonna, *Truth or Dare* (1991)
- Beyoncé, *Life is But a Dream* (2013)

**Reading:**
- EMV, 99-108.


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
- Drake, “Started From The Bottom” (2013), dir. Director X
- Lana Del Rey, “Summertime Sadness” (2012), Dir. Spencer Susser and Kyle Newman
- The Internet, “Dontcha” (2013)

- Nam June Paik, *Good Morning Mr. Orwell* (1984)

**Reading:**


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  

RUN-DMC, “Walk This Way” (1993), dir. Jon Small  
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  

VI    Feb 19  MTV II; Color, Texture, Space, and Time

Screening:  
Frank Ocean, “Pyramids” (2012), dir. Nabil Elderkin  
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  
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  
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

Reading: EMV, 156-174.


VII  Feb 26  MTV III: Auteur Directors, Film Soundtrack Videos, New Country, New New Pop; Connections among Music, Image, and Lyrics

Madonna, “Cherish” (1989), dir. Herb Ritts

Johnny Cash, “Hurt” (1994), Dir. Mark Romanek
Missy Elliot, “The Rain [Supa DuaFly]” dir. Hype Williams
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.

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)
“Gizmo Flushes” (2006)  
Weezer, “Pork and Beans” (2009)  
Kanye West, “Runaway” (2010)  
Dirty Projectors, “Hi Custodian” (2012)


X  Mar. 19  Spring Break

XI  Mar. 26  User Generated Content

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


XII  Apr. 2  Post-Classical Cinema


XIII  Apr 9  Live Concert Videos; Video Games


XIV  Apr 16  *Guitar Hero, Performativity, and Virtual Bands*


F. 18 Apr.  Last day to drop with a “W”

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


XVI  Apr 30  Small Screens, Web. 2.0 and the future of the Music Video


Final Examination: Wednesday May 7th, 7-9pm