

Pop Modernity: An Introduction to Popular Music Studies

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Mondays, 1:30-4:20pm, FNB-1220

Office Hours: Mondays, 4:30-5:30pm

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Email policy: Email is for simple, “yes or no” questions. If you have a more complicated question, please speak to me in person during office hours.

All electronic devices (e.g., laptops, iPads, cellphones, recorders, etc.) **are prohibited** in this class.

Overview

This course explores how the history of twentieth century pop resonates with some of the central tensions and promises of modernity. Shifting ideas about the popular “mainstream” will be a particular focus as we explore core concerns, concepts, and debates in popular music studies. The course will address questions of musical industrialization and technological mediation, musical taste and audience segmentation, identity formation and cultural expression, among others. We will spend time listening closely to popular music texts in order to understand better the role of popular music in the experience of the modern social world. Students are therefore expected to set aside time each week for assigned listening that will be made available online, as well as the required reading. The course will develop student skills in making critical connections across musical/media texts and social/cultural/historical contexts. In so doing, we will expand our understanding of the history of Western media cultures in the twentieth century and how that history has shaped our present.

Course Objectives

- 1) To survey selected historical developments and media texts relating to the history of popular music in the twentieth century.
- 2) To understand the industrial, institutional and technological processes that shape popular musical experience.
- 3) To familiarize students with some of the foundational concepts and debates in popular music studies.
- 4) To develop critical and analytical abilities in relation to media cultures in general and to listening to recorded sound in particular.

Texts

Course readings may be in one of three places: on the web, in OWL (<https://owl.uwo.ca/portal>), or as an electronic resource via UWO Libraries. (FYI: some things you can't get full access to directly on the web are fully available via the Proxy function on the UWO Libraries website, such as Eric Weisbard's Top 40 Democracy). I encourage you to make sure you can access OWL immediately; if not, notify me asap.

Further reading: Scholar.google.com is one of the best places to start looking for additional materials. There is also an on-line bibliography of critical writings on popular music studies, “Everyday I Write the Book,” that is useful but which has not been updated since 2000, so it is missing much: <http://www.comm.umn.edu/~grodman/biblio/biblio-front.html> The UWO Library catalogue also has several excellent online resources: the Proquest Entertainment Industry Magazine Archive includes trade journals such as Billboard and Variety along with popular music periodicals, and the “Rock’s Back Pages” database covers the history of rock criticism.

Evaluation

1) Attendance and Participation: 15% of final grade.

To get the most out of this course, you need to do the assigned readings, listen to assigned recordings, attend the lectures and screenings, and be prepared to discuss the issues at hand in class. I expect all students to come to class having read and thought about that week’s readings. There will be a number of videos shown and discussed in class that are unavailable elsewhere and will not be re-screened. Musical recordings played in class as part of the lecture, however, will be made available online—and **students are expected to spend time familiarizing themselves with these assigned listening materials**. If you miss a lecture, it is your responsibility to secure notes from a classmate.

2) Mid-Term Examination: 35% of final grade. Monday, Oct. 21st @1:30 p.m.

3) Final Examination: 50% of final grade. Given during final Exam Period.

Exact date/location “to be announced.”

The final exam will cover **all** material presented: assigned listening, required reading, and material from class lectures **from first to last week** of the course.

Outline of Lectures and Readings

Sept. 9 **Introduction: Singin’ [and Dancin’] in the Rain (1952)**

Sept. 16 **Music/Media/Modernity**

Required Reading:

Carol Clover (1995) “Dancin’ in the Rain” (OWL)

Sept. 23 **Musical Tastes/Social Imaginaries**

Required Reading:

David Riesman (1950) “Listening to Popular Music” (OWL)

Dan Brooks (2014) “Streaming Music Has Left Me Adrift” New York Times Magazine 17 October. (OWL) Also available online at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/19/magazine/streaming-music-has-left-me-adrift.html>

Suggested Reading:
Howard Becker (1963) "The Culture of a Deviant Group"
Eric Weisbard (2014) "Introduction" Top 40 Democracy (UWO e-book)

- Sept. 30** **Tin Pan Alley**
Required Reading:
Simon Frith (1987) "The Industrialization of Popular Music"
Bethany Bryson (1996) "Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes"
- Oct. 7** **Song/Sound/Star**
Required Reading: Eric Weisbard (2014) "It's Whose Thing? The Isley Brothers and Rhythm and Blues", chapter 1 of Top 40 Democracy
- Oct. 14 Thanksgiving Holiday (no class)
- Oct. 21** **Rock 'n' Roll**
Required Reading: Keir Keightley (2001) **first part only** of "Reconsidering Rock," pp. 109-120 (OWL) (stop reading before "Folk versus..." section begins)
- Oct. 28** **Mid-Term Examination**
- Nov. 4 Fall Reading Week (no class)
- Nov. 11** **Reconsidering Rock**
Required Reading:
Keightley (2001) pp. 120-141 (from "Folk versus..." until "Further Reading")
Suggested Reading: Weisbard chap. 5 "Wrath of the Buzzard" (UWO e-book)
- Nov. 18** **Easy Listening?**
Required Reading:
Norma Coates (2003) "Teenyboppers, Groupies, and Other Grotesques: Girls and Women and Rock Culture in the 1960s and early 1970s"
Suggested Reading:
Weisbard chap. 2 "Duets with Modernity: Dolly Parton & Country" (e-book)
- Nov. 25** **Glam into Punk**
Required Reading: Weisbard Top 40 chapter 4, "Madman Across the Water"
- Dec. 2** **Dancing/Sampling/Flowing**
Required Reading:
Mark Katz (2004) "Music in 1s and 0s: The Art and Politics of Digital Sampling"
Suggested Reading:
Weisbard chap. 6 "This Generation's Radio" (UWO e-book)

Final Exam will cover **all** course material from September to December and will be held during UWO's Exam Period, December 8th-19th; **exact date TBA**.

Note: If you need to ask the question, "I've booked a non-refundable flight that conflicts with the exam period, Dec. 8th-19th, so will it be ok if I take a make-up exam?", the answer will be: "No."

Western University is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lunaapeewak and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the land and region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. The local First Nation communities of this area include Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region there are eleven First Nation communities and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western values the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America).

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Fall 2019

Rights and Responsibilities

The conditions governing a student's ability to pursue their undergraduate education at Western are ratified by Senate and can be found on the Academic Policies section of the University Secretariat:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software Turnitin under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the

semester, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- during exam periods,
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are NOT met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate, if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact the FIMS Undergraduate Student Services Office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration For Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#) and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

Grading at FIMS

- Normally, first year courses required for entry into an MIT or MPI module (MIT 1020E and MIT 1025F/G) are expected to have a course average between 68-72%.
- Normally, second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%.
- Normally, third year required courses (MIT 3000, 3100) are expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

Elective courses and 4th year seminars have no recommended course averages.

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>

SUPPORT SERVICES – LINKS

Office of the Registrar:

www.registrar.uwo.ca

Student Development Centre:

www.sdc.uwo.ca

Psychological Services:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych

Services for Students with

Disabilities:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd

Accessibility

Information:

www.accessibility.uwo.ca

∟ Writing Support

Centre:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing

Learning Skills Services:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/learning

Indigenous Services:

<http://indigenous.uwo.ca/>

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International and Exchange Student

Centre:

www.sdc.uwo.ca/int

Career Centre at Western:

www.success.uwo.ca/careers/

Appendix A: Suggested Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall.

90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

Stages in the Appeals Process:

The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor. For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee. Appeals of final grades must be **within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendar.** It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;
2. if work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. **If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.**

The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.