

Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario

MIT 3351F – Popular Music and/as Cultural Labour

Dr. Matt Stahl, Fall 2019, Tuesdays, 1:30-4:30, FNB 1220

COURSE OUTLINE

Office Hours: TBA

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THE COURSE

This class examines social, legal, discursive, and economic structures that characterize the production of music in commercial contexts. A primary focus here will be on recording artists as creative workers and as working people.

Questions the course addresses include these: How do recording artists manage the balance of commercial pressures and self-expressive opportunities of musical work? How do their employers/financiers balance their need for predictability with unpredictable audience tastes and the need for innovation? Why do some creative workers get to own what they create while others have to surrender their work to their employers? Why do some people in a given creative work relationship get to tell others what to do?

There are bigger questions that serve as themes and backgrounds to our study: the status of labour and intellectual property in modern society; the workings of contract as a social institution and as private law; alienation as a continuum of experience with subjective and objective dimensions.

A very important part of the class is the analysis and discussion of *representations* of musical work; excerpts of fictional and documentary film and television about cultural workers (e.g. *Rock Star*) will be screened and discussed throughout the semester. Such material is to be treated as any other course text; students are advised to take notes as themes and interactions presented in these films will feature in essays and the final exam.

Requirements: 3 short essays and one slightly longer one; local music ethnography project (undertaken in threes); active participation in class discussion (students are required to come to class with notes on and questions and/or comments about the readings, and to be prepared to ask questions and offer thoughts and/or insights when called upon in class).

Marking will strictly follow the FIMS undergraduate grading guidelines. Writing pointers: use the first person singular as necessary, but in formulations such as “I argue” rather than “I believe” or “I feel.” In the first paragraph of every written assignment include a statement that begins something like this: “In this essay I will...” and then say what you’re going to do (e.g., argue, analyze, etc.). In essays for this class be specific and concrete regarding your examples, and discuss one or two ideas/examples in depth rather than three or more in a more superficial way. It will also help if you use as few adjectives as possible and avoid the passive voice. If you’re not sure what a word (that you either read or write) means, look it up.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, REQUIRED READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

Week 1 Sept. 10	Introduction to Course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philmore, “The Libertarian Case for Slavery” 	Short Essay 1 assigned: Contract and Control (assignment sheet may be found appended to this document)
Week 2 Sept. 17	Contract and Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenfield and Osborn, “Understanding Commercial Music Contracts” 	Screening: <i>Rock Star</i> (part 1) Short Essay 1 due.
Week 3 Sept. 24	No class – professor away <ul style="list-style-type: none"> View: <i>Rock Star</i> (part 2) 	
Week 4 Oct. 1	What’s special about cultural labour? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ryan, “The Contradiction of the Artist-Capitalist Relation” 	Short Essay 2 assigned: <i>Rock Star</i> and Cultural Labour.
Week 5 Oct. 8	Music and “abstract labour” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meier (selections from <i>Popular Music as Promotion</i>) + TBA 	Short Essay 2 due.
Week 6 Oct. 15	Authenticity claims <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Groce, “Copy and Original Music Performers” Scarborough, “Making It in a Cover Music Scene” 	
Week 7 Oct. 22	Ethnographic study of music-making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grazian, “Popular Music as Confidence Game” Lee – “Escaping Embarrassment” 	Short Essay 3 assigned: Compare & contrast ethnographies of music-making
Week 8 Oct. 29	Ethnography in practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ogbu, “Ethnographic Research Manual” Fretz et al., selection from <i>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</i> 	Short Essay 3 due. For next week: Observe (and participate in) local music making. Assignment: In groups, visit a local music venue, observe an event, take & compare notes,
Week 9 Nov. 12	Participant/observation progress report & discussion	Prepare presentation for next class. Details TBA
Week 10 Nov. 19	Findings of participant observation	Student groups present findings. Prepare ahead of time for strict time limit.
Week 11 Nov. 26	Musical Labour and Alienation I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marx: “Estranged Labour” Blauner, “Alienation and Modern Industry” View: <i>Standing in the Shadows of Motown</i> (part 1) 	Screening: <i>Standing in the Shadows of Motown</i> (part 2) Slightly longer essay (#5) assigned on <i>Standing in the Shadows</i> , “Estranged Labour,” and “Alienation and Modern Industry,” due next (final) class
Week 12 Dec. 3	Musical Labour and Alienation II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burawoy, “Toward a Theory of the Capitalist Labor Process” 	

Assignments

Short essays (3 x 15%)	45%
Slightly longer essay	25%
Local music group project	20%
Class participation (attendance and classroom discussion):	10%
	<u>100%</u>

(with the exception of Short Essay #1, assignment sheets will be distributed in class)

CLASS POLICIES

Absenteeism: A missed class without medical documentation submitted to the FIMS deans office within a week of the absence results in a reduction by 5% of the overall course grade; a missed in-class assignment, absent such a note, results in 0% for that assignment. More than three missed classes, without appropriate documentation, may result in failure of the course, at the discretion of the instructor. If you need to miss a class due to religious observance or holiday, you must notify the instructor at least one week in advance of the missed class; failure to do so may result in the 5% reduction noted above.

Participation: (attendance + attentive listening and thoughtful verbal contribution) in class discussion counts for 10% of your final grade. Just showing up to class is not enough to pass this portion of the class.

Laptops and other electronic devices: Except under circumstances documented by the office for students with disabilities, *students are not permitted to use laptops in class*. Turn off and put away your phone. **If I see you texting or otherwise fiddling technologically, I may ask you to leave class.** If this gets to be a problem, I may request students deposit their devices at some out-of-immediate-reach collection point in the classroom for the duration of the class.

REQUIRED READINGS

All readings will be made available either in class, on line, or via email. Students are required to read ***all readings*** for ***all weeks***. All students are required to ***print the readings*** and ***bring them to class*** for the week assigned.

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

g Indigenous Services:

[http://indigenous.uwo.c](http://indigenous.uwo.ca/)

a/

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.