

The University of Western Ontario  
**Faculty of Information and Media Studies**

**MIT 3354G (001)**  
**Video Killed the Radio Star:**  
**Music Videos, MTV, and the Birth of New Music Media**  
**Winter 2021**



**Time and Place:** Wednesdays 3:30 – 5:30pm Online via our OWL course site

**Professor:** Dr. Selma A. Purac ([spurac2@uwo.ca](mailto:spurac2@uwo.ca))

Office Hours: TBA, online via Zoom

Or meetings by scheduled Zoom appointment

**Course Description:**

At 12:01 a.m. on August 1, 1981, a small cable channel went to air with a video montage of the Apollo 11 moon landing. Even at its inception, MTV brashly - and correctly - recognized that it would be one of the most important television events in history. What MTV did was revolutionize both music and television, primarily through the popularization of the music video genre. This course will explore how music videos have served as a space for the interaction of art and advertising. It will investigate the music video's cultural, sexual, and ideological influences on a generation of television viewers who have been moulded into an ideal demographic for the consumption of both media and consumer goods. Moreover, we will consider the processes and institutions involved in creating, marketing, and dissemination music videos.

This course will:

- Survey the theoretical, historical, social, and cultural contexts of music videos
- Examine the processes and institutions involved in the creation and dissemination of music videos and other promotional music media
- Analyze and evaluate promotional music media from a critical perspective
- Analyze the role that such media plays in relation to ideology and cultural consciousness
- Encourage students to assess and analyze the way in which we engage with contemporary shifts in promotional music media

**Required Texts:**

OWL Readings posted online

Our course text, Saul Austerlitz's *Money for Nothing: A History of the Music Video From the Beatles to the White Stripes* (NY: Continuum, 2007) is available online through Western's library catalogue. You can access the text directly here:

<https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=https://www.bloomsburypopularmusic.com/encyclopedia?docid=b-9781501330636>

**Evaluation:**

Essay #1	20%	February 10th
Exam	25%	March 10th
Essay #2	30%	April 7th
Group Presentation	15%	Student Sign-Up
Presentation Response	5%	Date Assigned
Forum/Discussions	5%	Ongoing

**Course Format:**

This class will run online through our OWL course site; it will therefore require students to have the technologies that will allow them to access and engage with the site on a weekly basis. Each week, lecture materials will be posted to coincide with our scheduled class time. Additional exercises, discussions, and forums will be posted online, and their deadlines will coincide with our scheduled class time. While the majority of the course will run asynchronously, occasional synchronous sessions will take place during our scheduled class hours, such as group presentations (which will be attended live by the presenters and the assigned respondents of both groups for that week – not by the entire class) and the course midterm. Students will be informed in advance of any synchronous course delivery. Assignments will be submitted to me via OWL.

### **WebCT OWL:**

OWL will be our primary tool for class communication. Course materials will be posted on the site weekly, alongside forums and discussions which students will be expected to engage with on a weekly basis. Class announcements and assignments will be posted on our OWL site, including the midterm exam – and, as noted above – some mandatory live sessions will be scheduled through OWL (such as the group presentations). Be sure to check the site regularly for updates.

### **'Attendance' and Participation Policy:**

This course will run online through our OWL site; however, we have been scheduled a weekly time-slot for the course, during which some synchronous course components will take place. These course components will consist of group presentations (which will be attended live by the presenters and assigned respondents of both groups for the week – not the entire class) and the midterm exam. Thus, live attendance will not be necessary every week, but students will nonetheless have to log-in and participate in weekly forums/discussions, access to which will close before the next class – thus, it will be necessary to log in to our OWL section weekly.

University Senate policy clearly indicates expectations for regular attendance in class, and penalties for chronic absence. In our class, attendance is defined as logging in to the course site on a weekly basis, participating by posting to weekly forums/discussions (dates listed in the syllabus), and attending any mandatory synchronous class sessions. A record of such ‘attendance’ will be kept by the instructor. A student who fails to login to the course OWL site on a weekly basis and fails to engage with the participatory components of the course, may be debarred from submitting the final assignment and/or writing the course examination. Such students will receive a written warning in the form of an email prior to the course drop date (March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

### **Forums:**

We will have class ‘discussions’ in the “Forums” section of our OWL site. I will post discussion prompts here most weeks (dates are outlined in the syllabus), and you will post your response before the following week’s class; extensions will not be offered on these postings. Most weeks, I will post a casual question or two about your own thoughts and experiences in relation to the music industry; your responses to these kinds of questions will not take all that long – nor will they require any kind of additional reading. Other weeks, however, I might ask for a brief analysis of something I have posted, which might take you a little longer to complete. Contributing to the Forum is mandatory for your participation grade; to keep things streamlined, you will not be required to respond to other student postings. See the information posted under the Assignments tab of our OWL site.

Because this is an online course, you are expected to check into the OWL site on a regular basis, to read the posted material, participate in online discussions and to take part in any posted exercises. Failure to meet the minimum posting requirements will result in deductions to your participation grade in the course. Also, see the section on ‘Attendance’ and Participation Policy above.

### **Email Policy:**

Students must regularly check the course website on OWL and possibly their UWO accounts for important announcements such as additional information regarding assignments or other changes.

I do not accept assignments via email. If you email me an assignment, I will delete the file without opening it, and your assignment will not count as being submitted. Assignments must be submitted via OWL using the appropriate link.

Email communication should be restricted to questions or concerns that can be quickly and easily addressed via email. If you need help with course concepts or would like detailed advice on assignments, then you are welcome to meet up with me during my Zoom office hours or set up a Zoom appointment with me. I cannot provide such feedback via email.

Email correspondence should have MIT 3354 in the subject headline. I will respond to emails sent to my UWO account within two working days. I do not respond to emails over the weekend. Please note that UWO instructors can respond only to UWO email addresses, and that grades cannot be communicated via email.

**SRA:**

According to the Student Academic Handbook, SRAs begin at midnight (12:00am) on the first requested day and end at 11:59pm on the following day. Thus, should you log an SRA for a course essay, which would be due on a Wednesday at 3:30pm, your SRA would expire on Thursday at 11:59pm. With the SRA, your new deadline for the assignment would be Friday at 3:30pm. Please note, however, that you must email me about your SRA in advance (preferably on Wednesday) so that I can set up a new submission link for you.

**Make-Up Exam Session:**

Our midterm exam will take place during our regular scheduled class time via OWL. By registering for a course that follows a weekly schedule, you are indicating that you are available to write the exam when it has been scheduled. For those students whose official accommodations allow them to reschedule the exam, I will reschedule a single re-write session for all of the attendees via OWL; the timing of that session will be determined by the soonest availability of the students writing the exam. Please note that you will not be writing the same exam as the rest of the class, and the format of the make-up exam will not be the same as the official course exam.

**FIMS Grading Policy:**

Students will receive graded work worth no less than 15% at least 3 days prior to the deadline for withdrawal without academic penalty. This year, the date by which students are to have received at least 15% of their grade in a Winter semester course is March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Students can find details about this academic policy here: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/evaluation\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/evaluation_undergrad.pdf). Please note, students are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the grades they have received in their courses.

See the posted “Notes from the Dean’s Office” on OWL for more information on FIMS grading policy.

**Late Assignment Policy:**

Please note that assignments need to be uploaded to OWL prior to the posted deadline. I do not accept email submissions. If you email me an assignment, I will delete the file without opening it, and you will continue to accrue late deductions.

Late assignments will lose 5% per day, unless the student has a documented accommodations through their Academic Adviser. At the discretion of the instructor, a request for an extension may be granted for a legitimate reason; such requests must be made at least ONE WEEK before the due-date of the assignment to be considered.

**Statement on the Use of Zoom Recording:**

Remote learning sessions for this course will be recorded; in our case, this will consist of the group presentation sessions, which will be posted to OWL barring any technical difficulties. The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals under special circumstances. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings.

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

**Prerequisites:**

University Senate regulations state: "Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites."

**Anti-requisites:**

MIT 3402F if taken in 2009-10 or 2010-11, MIT 3404F if taken in Intersession in 2010, or MIT 3402G in 2011-12.

**Plagiarism**

Please be sure to review the policy on plagiarism in the "Notes from the Dean's Office" document posted on OWL. I will add that 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. Thus, all sources must be cited BOTH in the bibliography AND in-text.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and all plagiarised assignments will receive a grade of zero. Turnitin will detect the plagiarism for me, so the process is automatic and requires very little work from me. Note that Turnitin will flag any passages and/or phrasing that is lifted from online sources.

**Copyrighted Course Materials**

Please note that I own the teaching materials posted on our OWL site – this includes PowerPoints, notes, and recorded lectures. Students are prohibited from posting these materials or sharing these materials without my consent. Making copies or recordings of my posted teaching materials is prohibited.

## **MIT3354G: Video Killed the Radio Star**

### **GROUP PRESENTATION (worth 15%)**

In groups of three, you will prepare a 20-25 minute class presentation, followed by a discussion with your assigned respondents. The presentation dates are listed below – two groups of three students each will present on these dates. You can sign up individually for a presentation slot under the “Sign Up” tab of our OWL site.

Groups will deliver their presentation live via Zoom during our scheduled class hours; thus, I recommend that groups practice using Zoom and the ‘screen share’ function. These live presentations will not be attended by the entire class; they will be attended by the week’s presenters, me, and the week’s assigned student respondents for each group. Barring technical difficulties, recordings of the presentations will then be posted online on our OWL site so that the rest of the class can access them asynchronously.

Each week, the presentations will reflect upon the general topic of discussion. Listed below are some suggestions and possible topics; keep in mind, however, that these are simply loose guidelines – you will be expected to present on *specific* music video directors, musicians, videos, etc. Certain topics are restricted, however. You CANNOT work on the following:

- Artists that are listed in the course schedule (see the Weekly Titles of the class)
- Music videos that appear on the “Off Limits” list posted under our “Assignments” tab and also in this syllabus
- Any videos/artists you discuss in your essays
- A topic that has already been claimed by another group on the sign-up sheet
- Videos that have already been covered in class

You must pass your topic by me via email at least one week prior to your presentation date; failure to do so will result in a grade penalization for all members in the group. If you wish to claim a topic before anyone else in the class does, let me know as soon as possible and I will update your topic on the “Sign Up Sheet” posted under the Resources tab of our OWL site. Once you have claimed a topic, it belongs to you – no other group can infringe on your chosen subject. Guidelines and a grading rubric for the assignment are posted on OWL.

#### **1. Jan 27: Musical Genre and Video Iconography**

-possible topics : the iconography of country-music, heavy-metal, or boy-bands; videos that thwart our genre expectations; artists who have shifted music genres; the predictability of music videos

#### **2. Feb 3: Constructing the Image of the Musician via Music Videos**

-possible topics: changes in the image of a musician over time, the videos of artists who straddle or shift musical genres, self-reinvention via music videos, music video personas

#### **3. Feb 10: The Authenticity of the Artist in Music Videos**

-possible topics: the struggle between directors and musicians, documentary or biographical music videos, the underground music scene, artists who resist making music videos  
\* note: this presentation date coincides with the due date for the first essay; thus, students presenting this week will automatically receive a week-long extension on their essay.

#### **4. Feb 24: Auteur Theory and Music Videos**

-possible topics: director/musician collaborations, specific tropes in the work of a single director, specific tropes in the work of a band/musician, musicians who make/direct their own videos

5. Mar 3: **Is it Art or Advertising?**  
-possible topics: music videos as ads for musicians, music videos as ads for products or lifestyles, product placement in music videos, music videos that resist commercialization
6. Mar 17: **Visual Storytelling in Music Videos**  
-possible topics: music videos as a form of contemporary storytelling, visual stories and their relation to song lyrics, 'stories' that challenge the star-text
7. Mar 24: **The Intersection of Music Videos and Feature Film**  
-possible topics: music videos as mini-films, soundtrack music videos, music videos based on movies, celebrity cameos in music videos
8. Mar 31: **Gender, Sexuality, and Violence in Music Videos**  
-possible topics: gender bending in music videos, male objectification in music videos, LGBTQ+ representations in music videos, representations of taboo sexuality
9. Apr 7: **VEVO Killed the Video Star**  
-possible topics: unconventional promotional videos, artists who avoid making costly music videos, artists who refuse to market their image, VEVO and issues of control

**MIT3354G: Video Killed the Radio Star**  
**PRESENTATION RESPONDENTS (worth 5%)**

Presentation Respondents will drive the post-presentation discussion, asking questions of their assigned group and engaging with presenters as well as with the material outlined during the presentation. Thus, Respondents will be responsible for ensuring that they complete the readings for the week in advance of class, attending a live presentation session via Zoom (scheduled during class hours), listening carefully to the presentation, asking thoughtful questions after the presentation, and engaging with the discussion that follows.

Respondents should contribute something meaningful to the discussion, and they will be marked according to the nature of their engagement.

You will be a Respondent for the other group presenting on the same day as your presentation. Thus, positions will be swapped: for the first half of the presentation session, Group 1 will present and Group 2 will respond, and we will then switch; Group 2 will present and Group 1 will respond. Please note, however, that Respondents will be marked individually rather than as a group.

Factors that I will take into consideration when grading the Respondent:

- Frequency (does the Respondent comment/ask questions)
- Questions (are the Respondent's questions thoughtful and insightful)
- Follow Up (does the Respondent continue to engage with the discussion)
- Making Connections (does the Respondent demonstrate a wider knowledge of course materials)

**NOTICE OF RECORDING**

As noted above, the presentation/question sessions will be recorded by the instructor and then posted to our OWL site. The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals participating in the course for their private or group study purposes. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings. Participants in the course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation, or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

Please note that you cannot focus your presentations or papers on any videos I discuss in class or on any of the following:

- A-Ha "Take On Me"
- Aphex Twin "Come to Daddy"
- Arcade Fire "The Suburbs," "We Used to Wait," "The Wilderness Downtown"
- Bad Bunny "Caro"
- Beastie Boys "Sabotage," "Make Some Noise"
- Beyonce "Bonnie and Clyde," "Countdown," "Formation," "Lemonade"
- Billie Eilish "Bad Guy," "Xanny," "Bury a Friend"
- Bjork "It's Oh So Quiet," "All is Full of Love," "Big Time Sensuality," "Army of Me"
- Brandon Flowers "Crossfire"
- Cardi B "Bodack Yellow," "Press", "Twerk"
- Cars "You Might Think"
- Charlie XCX "Boys"
- Childish Gambino "This is America"
- Daft Punk "Around the World"
- Drake "Hotline Bling"
- Duran Duran "Girls on Film," "Rio," "Hungry Like the Wolf"
- Fatboy Slim "Praise You," "Weapon of Choice"
- FKA Twigs "Cellophane"
- Guns N'Roses "November Rain," "Welcome to the Jungle"
- Jay-Z "99 Problems," "Picasso, Baby," "New York State of Mind," "The Story of OJ," "Moonlight"
- Johnny Cash "Hurt"
- Jonas Brothers "Sucker", "What a Man Gotta Do"
- Kanye West "All Falls Down," "Jesus Walks," "Diamonds," "Monster," "Runaway", "Power," "Bound 2," "Famous," "Fade"
- Katy Perry "Roar," "Last Friday Night"
- Kendrick Lamar "HUMBLE"
- Kylie Minogue "Come Into My World"
- Lady Gaga "Alejandro," "Paparazzi," "Bad Romance," "Born This Way", "Applause," "Telephone," "Marry the Night"
- Lil Dicky "\$ave Dat Money"
- Lil Nas X "Old Town Road"
- Madonna "Justify My Love," "Frozen," "What It Feels Like For a Girl," "Like a Prayer," "Material Girl," "Bitch I'm Madonna"
- M.I.A. "Born Free," "Bad Girls," "Borders"
- Michael Jackson "Thriller," "Black or White," "Scream," "Billie Jean"
- Miley Cyrus "Wrecking Ball," "Doooo It!"
- Missy Elliott "Work It," "WTF"
- Mumford & Sons "Little Lion Man," "I Will Wait," "Hopeless Wanderer," "Ditmas"
- Nelly "Air Force Ones"
- Nicki Minaj "Anaconda"
- Nine Inch Nails "Closer," "Hurt"
- Nirvana "Heart-Shaped Box," "Smells Like Teen Spirit"
- Notorious B.I.G. "Sky's the Limit"
- OK Go "Here It Goes Again," "This Too Shall Pass," "Needing/Getting," "Upside Down & Inside Out"
- Pearl Jam "Jeremy"
- Peter Gabriel "Sledgehammer," "Steam"
- Pharrell "Happy," "Go Up"
- Portishead "Only You"
- Radiohead "Just," "Karma Police," "Fake Plastic Trees"
- Rihanna "Umbrella," "Bitch Better Have My Money," "Pour It Up"
- R.E.M. "Losing My Religion," "Everybody Hurts"
- Robert Palmer "Addicted to Love"
- Robin Thicke "Blurred Lines"
- Sisqo "The Thong Song"
- The Black Keys "Howlin' For You"
- The Chemical Brothers "Elektrobank," "Star Guitar," "Let Forever Be"
- The Hours "Ali in the Jungle"
- The Prodigy "Smack My Bitch Up"
- Tyler the Creator "Yonkers," "EARFQUAKE"
- Taylor Swift "Bad Blood," "Wildest Dreams," "Blank Space," "Look What You Made Me Do," "You Need to Calm Down"
- U2 "Even Better Than the Real Thing," "One"
- Weezer "Buddy Holly"
- White Stripes "Fell in Love with a Girl," "Hardest Button to Button," "Dead Leaves"
- Woodkid, "Iron"
- Young Thug "Wyclef Jean"

-avoid videos listed on page 225-227 in Austerlitz's book

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

\* PLEASE NOTE: some days will look very reading-heavy; don't let this concern you -- many of the readings are short and fast reads. Austerlitz can be tackled quickly and some of the articles posted on OWL (such as Werner and Hopper's works) are quite short.

<b>Week 1: The Rise of Music Videos and the Birth of MTV</b>	Jan 13	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Saul Austerlitz "Music Video in Fugue" from <i>Money for Nothing</i> (11-30)</li><li>-Rob Tannenbaum and Craig Marks "It's the Greatest Thing in the World" (OWL)</li></ul> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<b>Week 2: Postmodernism and Cinematic Innovation From DEVO to M.I.A.</b>	Jan 20	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Saul Austerlitz "Television Vaudeville" from <i>Money for Nothing</i> (31-63)</li><li>-John Fiske "MTV: Post-Structural Post-Modern" and Kuan-Hsing Chen "MTV: The (Dis)Appearance of Postmodern Semiosis, or the Cultural Politics of Resistance" (both on OWL)</li></ul> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<b>Week 3: Genre and Iconography from Michael Jackson to Mumford &amp; Sons</b>	Jan 27	<p>Readings: (some of these readings are quite short)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Craig Werner's "Megastardom and its Discontents: Michael and Madonna" (OWL)</li><li>-Kobena Mercer "Monster Metaphors: Notes on Michael Jackson's Thriller" (OWL)</li><li>-Saul Austerlitz "This Video's for You" (65-97) and "Can't Stop Won't Stop" (186-192) from <i>Money for Nothing</i></li></ul> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<b>Week 4: Constructing the Image of the Artist: Duran Duran, Taylor Swift, and The Weeknd</b>	Feb 3	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>--Virginia H. Fry and Donald L. Fry "MTV: The 24 Hour Commercial" (OWL)</li><li>-Andrew Goodwin "Metanarratives of Stardom and Identity" (OWL)</li><li>-Saul Austerlitz "Embracing Performance" from <i>Money for Nothing</i> (197-198)</li></ul>
<b>Week 5: Authenticity and the Artist: From Johnny Cash to Jay-Z/Beyoncé</b>	Feb 10	<p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Warren Zane "Video and the Theatre of Purity" (OWL)</li><li>-Cyndi Fuchs "I'm from Rags to Riches: The Death of Jay-Z" (OWL)</li><li>-Saul Austerlitz "Magnificent Megalomania" from <i>Money for Nothing</i> (115-129)</li></ul> <p><b>ESSAY 1 DUE</b></p> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>

<b>Week 6:</b>	Feb 15 -19	<b>READING WEEK</b>
<b>Week 7:</b> <b>Auteurism in the Music Video: Chris Cunningham and Michel Gondry</b>	Feb 24	<p>Readings:            -Saul Austerlitz (217-219) and "Spike and Michel" (163-173) from <i>Money for Nothing</i></p> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<b>Week 8:</b> <b>Art or Advertising?: Madonna, OK Go, and X Ambassadors</b>	Mar 3	<p>Readings:            -Leslie Savan's "Commercials Go Rock" (OWL)            -Jessica Hopper's "How Selling Out Saved Indie Rock" (OWL)            -Saul Austerlitz "Incredible Shrinking Video" in <i>Money for Nothing</i> ] (210-217)</p>
<b>Week 9:</b>	Mar 10	<b>EXAM</b>
<b>Week 10:</b> <b>Visual Storytelling: Narrative, Jonathan Glazer, and Stories of Youth</b>	Mar 17	<p>Reading:            -Carol Vernallis "Chapter 1: Telling and Not Telling" from <i>Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context</i> (OWL, but a clearer copy is also available online through Google Books)            -Andrew Goodwin "The Structure of Music Video: Rethinking Narrative Analysis" (OWL)</p> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<b>Week 11:</b> <b>Hollywood Homage from Spike Jonze to Said the Whale</b>	Mar 24	<p>Reading:            -Roger Beebe "Paradoxes of Pastiche" (OWL)            -Saul Austerlitz "Hall of Mirrors" (153-155) and "The Joker" (173-182) from <i>Money for Nothing</i></p> <p><b>Forum Question Posted (due before next class)</b></p>
<b>Week 12:</b> <b>Stereos and Stereotypes: Gender, Sexuality, and Violence</b>	Mar 31	<p>Reading:            -Rana A. Emerson "Where My Girls At?: Negotiating Black Womanhood in Music Videos" (OWL)            -Saul Austerlitz "T&amp;A Parade" (157-160) and "Madonna or Whore?" (193-197) from <i>Money for Nothing</i></p>
<b>Week 13:</b> <b>VEVO Killed the Video Star: The Future of the Music Video</b>	Apr 7	<p>Readings            -Rob Tannenbaum and Craig Marks "You Have No Idea How I Miss It" (OWL)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>ESSAY 2 DUE</b></p>