

LIBS 340 – Critical Inquiry: Music through Visual Forms
East Texas A&M University – Fall Semester 2026
Wednesday 4:30 - 7:10
141 Ferguson Social Sciences Building

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Office Hours: M 11 – 1:30; R 2:15 – 4:45 or by appointment (Zoom meetings welcomed)

Catalog Description: In-depth exploration of a sustained topic throughout a semester employing content analysis methods, such as textual, visual, or cultural-historical approaches. May be repeated with change of topic.

Formal Course Description: The course will invite a chance to examine and analyze popular music through interdisciplinarity via visual media forms. Featuring screening of music videos (including documentaries, long- and short-form features, bio-pictures, etc.), the classroom community will engage the content through multiple lenses including but not limited to music in and as history, music as a business and creative art, music and aesthetics, music as a human endeavor, and the cinematic elements employed within music video forms.

Informal Course Description: We watch music films and videos and have conversations about what they show, what they mean(t), and how we make sense of them in relation to ourselves and the grander worlds we live in.

Course Objectives:

1. To encounter and engage texts from a variety of narrative styles as a means for generating synthesis, analysis and communication of critical thought
2. To apply the principles of interdisciplinary scholarship by reflectively and informatively examining experiences and settings where music in video form invites interpretation, critique, and/or discourse
3. To prompt awareness and application of course content to personal self-reflection and expression

Evaluation:

Content Knowledge Creations	25%
Curiosity Project:	10%
Global Presentation :	10%
Culmination Project:	20%
Reflective Review:	15%
Participation and Engagement:	20%

Grading System:

A (exceptional) = 100 - 90% B (good) = 89 - 80% C (average) = 79 - 70%
D (minimally sufficient) = 69 - 60% F (failure) = <60%

Though I am a believer in the philosophies of ungradedness, some versions of grading still exist. That stated, I am also a believer in the intrinsic pursuit of knowledge and discovery. If you join in that pursuit, there should be no worries or concerns of final grades. In nearly all grading instances, I start from a mindset that one begins at middle “C” (75%), and one proves their relative ability to shift above, shift below, or remain at that mark with their work.

Readings

All readings will be distributed via our online course shell.

All readings are to be completed during the respective week they are assigned, and their material will be needed on exams. On occasion, students may be asked to complete additional readings beyond those listed on the syllabus. Should this be the case, sufficient time and access to such readings will be provided.

Academic Dishonesty

All coursework is to be an original work by the student and created specifically for fulfilling the requirements for this course. Plagiarism, cheating, or otherwise representing another's work or ideas as one's own without proper attribution will not be tolerated. It is the student's responsibility to:

1. research and write their own papers
2. give proper credit through documentation when using words or ideas of others
3. rely on their own knowledge when taking tests
4. refuse to give another student the opportunity to be dishonest

Any act of academic dishonesty may result in the automatic failure of the course and may be subject to further disciplinary action by the university.

"Attendance" policy, instructor's rights and expectations:

All courses demand active participation and regular attendance. It is imperative that the student do all assigned work in a timely fashion. In particular, the benefits from discussion specifically depend on each student's respective preparation and distinctive contribution. Failure to do so hurts not only the individual student, but the collective community as a whole.

All assignments are devised for the explicit purpose of offering educational benefit, be that academic growth, hands-on experience, development and display of critical thought, or expression of our academic selves. Coursework is to be completed as assigned and is to be turned in via the D2L Brightspace dropbox no later than the formal due date. Any work turned in after due dates may incur a penalty respective of its relative degree of tardiness (to a point of no credit whatsoever); considerable flexibility in applying this will be enacted. Failing to complete assignments not only inhibits the immediate learning process but, again, ultimately hurts the overall learning community as discussion of the process and its results can prove insightful as well.

Please Note:

Popular music through video forms engages life as its muse. As such, it is comprised of the themes, subjects, and contents that contribute to everyday life. These contents, at times, can and do include aspects of violence, threat, sexuality, conflict, oppression, discrimination, inequality, profanity, varying ideology, crime, and impropriety. While effort has been taken to keep decorum in mind, engaging music visually through an array of mediums is intended for collegiate/adult maturities and some of the examples encountered in the course will comprise aspects of these contents.

Brief Assignment Explanations:

Participation and Engagement: Whether in the classroom or online, students are expected to dialogue in a way that provokes, clarifies, challenges, and enlightens the course community. In these communications, the concepts of a liberal studies approach to higher education will be practiced and varying interpretations, particularly in relation to the course readings, will be shared.

Additional considerations of a student's relative level of engagement and academic integrity will also be made across all aspects of the course including but not limited to completion and quality of tasks and assignments, communications, following instructions and guidelines, and accessing materials.

Content Knowledge Creations: At points in the semester, students will engage with the course as informed through reflections prompted by course content.

Curiosity Project: Students will take inspiration and contribute to sharing discoveries of music in video forms in connection and extension to provided course content.

Global Presentation: Students will select an instance/action/event of music video not formally covered within the course and familiarize themselves with both the history as well as to its geocultural significance. This will be conveyed through the creation of a shareable form, be it document, recorded presentation, or other alternative means of communication.

Culmination Project: Students will apply ideas practiced from the course via a realized outcome of examining and analyzing a particular music video of their choosing.

Reflective Review: Students will reflect on the course as a whole via a personalized consideration of the whole of the portfolio generated across the term.

Course Outline:

Note: The course outline is only a guideline. It is subject to change based on discussion, current events, or other such influences.

I am envisioning this course to be targeting music in ways that may or may not be as immediately considered. Ideally, our conversations will flow where each theme receives its requisite share of time and depth of discussion. That said, there will likely be overlap between and across themes so flexibility in conceptually recognizing the tenuousness to this outline is requested. We will negotiate formal parameters for due dates as a course collective. What is offered here is a relative guide.

Weeks 1-5 (Aug 20 – Sept 27): the places, people, and practices of music

- Content Knowledge #1 due Sept 27
- Potential screenings:
 - *Standing in the Shadows of Motown*: (dir. Paul Justman)
 - *20 Feet From Stardom* (dir. Morgan Neville)
 - *Hired Gun* (dir. Fran Shrine)
 - *Count Me In* (dir. Mark Lo)

Weeks 6-10 (Sept 28 – Nov 1): music styles, genres, and narrative histories

- Content Knowledge #2 due Nov 1
- Potential screenings:
 - *Happy and You Know It* (dir. Peny Lane)
 - *Anvil: the Story of Anvil* (dir. Sacha Gervasi)
 - *Country Music* (dir. Ken Burns)

Weeks 11-14 (Nov 2 – 29): the applications and sharing of discoveries

- Curiosity Project due Nov 15
- Global Presentation due Nov 19
- Content Knowledge #3 due Nov 29

Week 15 through finals (Nov 30 – Dec 11): Reflections on the whole

- Finals week session: Wednesday, Dec 9 from 4:15-7:10
- Culmination Project due Dec 9
- Reflective Essay due Dec 11

final grades available via MyLeo on Tuesday, Dec 15.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M University have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a ETAMU campus open computer lab, etc.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here: <https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

University Specific Procedures

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.etamu.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

ETAMU Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.etamu.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

<http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

AI Use Policy

East Texas A&M University acknowledges that there may be legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course. Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism). Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructor's guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed. In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

Students with Disabilities-- ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.etamu.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and East Texas A&M Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

East Texas A&M Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.etamu.edu/counsel