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## Teaching (with) Popular Music: Editor's Introduction

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"We both had to admit that popular songs really had no academic significance" (Browne, 1971). This is Ray B. Browne's recollection of what he was told when his submission was rejected by a fine journal in the "Foreword" of the first issue of *Popular Music and Society* over fifty years ago. Although the prejudice that popular music is less of a valuable and serious research subject still exists in the academy and has been perpetuated in the curriculums across disciplines, these days we can find plenty of academic monographs and a good number of peer-reviewed academic journals dedicated to popular music. For instance, in addition to *Popular Music and Society*, we may find journals such as *Popular Music* (Cambridge University Press; publishing since 1981), *Journal of Popular Music Studies* (University of California Press; publishing since 1988 via Wiley), *Punk & Post-Punk* (Intellect; publishing since 2012), *Metal Music Studies* (Intellect; publishing since 2015), and *Global Hip Hop Studies* (Intellect; publishing since 2020), just to name a few.

Besides a growing scholarly interest writ large and the genrefication of such scholarly interests, we can also notice an increasing attention to the geopolitics of popular music (studies) and attempts to displace the European and North American centrism endemic in the scholarly and pedagogical discourses of (popular) music studies. For example, the *Journal of World Popular Music*, publishing since 2014, aims to provide an open-minded space for debating notions and issues around international popular musics known as World Music and Global Pop. The above-mentioned journals also regularly publish works concerned with various regions and cultures. Meanwhile, long-established geographically focused academic journals, such as *Asian Music* (University of Texas Press; publishing since 1968) and *African Music* (The International Library of African Music; publishing since 1954), are covering more and more topics in popular music, both locally and transnationally in scope.

Popular music is now a prolific field for critical and interdisciplinary inquiries. Popular music education, on the other hand, seems to have more struggles. In 2010, David Lee Fish (founding board member of the Association for Popular Music Education) and Irwin Kornfeld (CEO of *In Tune Monthly* magazine) were only able to identify a dozen universities and colleges in the United States offering popular music programs out of around 2,500 four-year institutions (Fish, n.d.). Although it is almost standard to see popular music courses being offered in higher education programs across continents these days, the unfortunate discrepancy between course offerings and earnable degrees points to the continued need to address the academic and pedagogical value of popular music. This *Teaching Media Quarterly* special issue seeks to make our own contributions in this regard.

While there is still much to be done to further popular music education, the interdisciplinarity of popular music research and pedagogical practices means that we must break the mold regarding both how we historicize popular music scholarship and how we envision the future of



teaching (with) popular music. Notably, led by a group of cultural studies scholars associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (1964-2002), popular music, and everyday cultures in general, has found welcoming home programs outside the predictable home of music. Some of these disciplinary homes include cultural studies, media studies, performance studies, communication studies, museum studies, sociology, and ethnic studies. Remarkably, instructors can teach (with) popular music to address many of the multisensory and transdisciplinary dimensions of media literacy in the undergraduate classroom.

It is within the above historical and disciplinary context that this special issue offers two lesson plans that both nurture critical media literacy and encourage cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural adoptions. **Eleftherios Zenerian's** lesson plan, "Learning About Music Fanzine Cultures: Making a Music Fanzine in the Classroom," bridges the cultural study of popular music, technology, and everyday life with fanzine cultures through the hands-on activity of creating a music fanzine. The lesson takes a one-hour lecture and a two-hour seminar to complete. Interested instructors may find lecture notes, facilitation questions, and activity instructions in the lesson plan. Originally offered in a module required for students of the BA (Hons) Music Business and Media at the University of Brighton's School of Art and Media, Zenerian's lesson plan can be adopted for a variety of popular media courses to address topics such as alternative and subcultural media, participatory culture, low-fi and DIY media, and public and private spheres.

In "Examining Afro-Japanese Encounters Through Popular Music," **Warren A. Stanislaus** shares a lesson plan designed for the Japanese students in the Global Liberal Arts Program offered at Rikkyo University in Tokyo. In this lesson, students take on the role of cultural ambassadors and examine Afro-Japanese encounters and the representations of "blackness" in Japan through curating a Spotify playlist to introduce Black British artists for the Japanese audience. Stanislaus offers rich lecture notes, reading assignments, discussion questions, and representative class conversations with facilitation notes. This mid-term assignment, comprising one homework task and one or two class sessions, can also be delivered as a standalone activity. Despite the unique cultural context of the lesson, any instructors interested in a comparative approach to fostering critical minds around the complex notions of Blackness may find inspiring and creative ideas in this contribution. Considering the rich cross-fertilization of hip hop and Japanese pop culture (and Asian cultures at large), instructors may address many critical media literacy concepts with this lesson, such as globalization, multiculturalism, cultural hybridity, cultural appropriation/appreciation/borrowing, and cultural hegemony.

Both lesson plans in the special issue animate experiential learning through a collaborative creative project: one through making a music zine and the other one through curating a music playlist. In addition, both lesson plans embody and contribute to public and digital humanities while involving undergraduate students. Instructors may find Zenerian's course blog and the music zine resulted from the lesson as well as the student Spotify playlist from Stanislaus' lesson toward the end of the each lesson plan. While Zenerian's student zine is now publicly available, Stanislaus' student playlist was included in the British Embassy in Tokyo's official 2020 Black History Month campaign in Japan. These lesson plans offer exemplary frameworks of how to combine public and digital humanities with undergraduate popular music education.



## References

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