

# From Rhythm and Blues to Broadway: Using Music to Teach Economics

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In an attempt to make the learning of economics more interesting and memorable, economic educators have used a variety of materials to convey economic knowledge. This material includes novels and other forms of literature, the popular press, motion pictures and videos, computer simulations, board games, experiments, the Internet, and other nontraditional vehicles (Becker and Watts 1998, 1995). Two noteworthy interdisciplinary efforts include Watts and Smith's (1989) use of literature and drama to teach economics and, more recently, Kish-Goodling's (1998) success using Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* as a vehicle to develop the economic concepts of interest, investment, loan defaults, and usury laws in her monetary economics course.

Little if anything has been written about the use of music in the teaching of economics. Few economists have actually attempted to harness the power of music to support their teaching because (we suspect) its use as a pedagogical tool has, up to this point, not been carefully examined.<sup>1</sup> Although there is little evidence of the use of music in the teaching of economics, music certainly is an important influence in the life of young people. The advent of the internet is likely to contribute to this interest as music companies devise new ways to induce customers into listening to and buying music via the internet (Bayne 1998). "Radio is a medium . . . that becomes increasingly important to young listeners as they grow older, particularly for the popular music that describes the life that awaits them" (Carroll et al. 1993, 162, citing Christenson and DeBenedittis 1986). What's more, racial and social class origins of rock and roll music continue to be reflected in today's music (Lipsitz 1982, ch. 10).

Clearly, the act of listening to a piece of music evokes a sensorial and emotional response (Lacher 1989, Lacher and Mizerski 1994). A number of recent studies in psychology explore whether music makes people smarter and more intelligent. "Music stimulates thought processes and enhances spatial reasoning, which are essential for academic achievement" (Rauscher 1995). Sarnthein et al. (1994) tested the effects of music on spatial task performance and demonstrated that musical training has long-term positive effects on cognitive abilities.

Despite overwhelming evidence that music has significant effects on cognitive

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processes, economists have generally not tapped into the use of music as a potential source for examples and applications in economics courses. We offer an innovative way that music could enhance the learning of economics in principles of economics undergraduate courses. Specifically, we examine how song lyrics taken from a wide variety of musical styles can be used as an interesting and effective aid to help students learn economics. We describe two similar yet distinct music essay projects that we have used in introductory level economics. We give examples of students' responses to their music selections and discussion of economic content in selected titles. An analysis of the results of the projects includes student evaluations and reactions. We also discuss the benefits and costs of the project and suggest several potential refinements and improvements.

## **STUDENTS AND THE MUSIC PROJECT**

Students who participated in the music project assignment were enrolled at Seton Hall University, New Jersey, and Furman University, Greenville, South Carolina. At Seton Hall, students in introduction to economics, a one-term survey course intended for arts and sciences students (31 and 28 enrollees in two sections) and in principles of macroeconomics (22 students) and microeconomics (30 students), were assigned the music project. The Seton Hall project is henceforth referred to as Music Project I. At Furman University, students who enrolled in the principles of macroeconomics course (24 students) were required to do the music assignment, Music Project II. These were mostly students who were economics or business majors or were taking an introductory economics course as part of the social science requirement toward graduation.

### **Music Project I**

In the music project at Seton Hall, students were asked to listen to audio tapes placed on reserve in the library and to select any three songs for analysis during the semester. The musical pieces on the tapes were chosen because they contained lyrics that dealt with money, jobs and industrial change, unemployment, spending and saving, recession, the forces of supply and demand, or other topical issues amenable to economic analysis. Several copies of two tapes containing 58 tunes were put on library reserve. The songs ranged from some written in 1932 to one written in 1992. The songs most represented on the two tapes were drawn from popular and rock music, mostly from the 1950s through the 1970s, reflecting the author's musical tastes. Chosen songs included 1930s' responses to the Depression such as "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?", 1950s' doo-wop classics such as "Get a Job" by the Silhouettes, and recent pop hits such as Dire Straits' "Money for Nothing." Genres ranged from Broadway show tunes to folk songs, rhythm and blues, rock, Christian pop, and jazz. Country & Western, rap, and punk musical styles were in short supply.

As part of the written assignment, students were required to include a summary of the basic message of the song's lyrics, a list of all economic concepts either mentioned or implied in the lyrics, and an analysis of the economic think-

ing implied by the lyrics. (See Appendix A for the assignment sheet.) One song essay was due at the end of each month of the semester. Students were given the option of selecting a song not found on the tapes provided. If they chose this option, they were required to notify the instructor of their selection well in advance and provide him a copy of the song on CD, tape, or record so that he could listen to it and give his approval of the selection. As a result of this option, during the course of the semester a third tape that included a total of 22 songs, many of which were from the late 1980s through mid-1995, was added to the collection of songs. (A complete list of the taped songs is provided in Appendix B.)

## **Music Project II**

To make the process more democratic and provide an opportunity for students to select their own songs, a variation of Music Project I was conducted at Furman University. Here, the instructor emphasized that the music project would be done in groups. Students were assigned to groups of four and were required to submit a group paper rather than an individual essay. This method was adopted to overcome the lack in economics courses of group work or cooperative learning techniques. A survey of economics instructors conducted by Becker and Watts (1996) indicated that about 85 percent of instructors in the economics profession still use the traditional lecture method with emphasis on use of the chalkboard. Students learn in different ways, and group projects can “increase the interaction between students, encourage the use of economic tools and theories, and provide additional opportunities for the instructor to model effective thinking in an economic context” (Cameron 1998).

Each group was expected to choose a minimum of six of their own titles and record them on a cassette or CD (see Appendix C for the assignment sheet). No restriction was placed on music styles and students could choose from pop, rock, rap, country, or jazz sources. Consequently, student selections were extremely eclectic and included country music themes such as “Summertime Blues” by Alan Jackson and “Trouble in the Fields” by Nanci Griffith; rap titles included “Mr. Wendell” by Arrested Development and “Mo Money Mo Problems” by Notorious BIG; rock songs included “No Man’s Land” by Billy Joel and “Dead End Job” by the Police. (A list of student selections is provided in Appendix D.)

The groups were required to submit a music paper based on their selected recordings. For each title, students were required to do the following:

- State the basic message of the song (the students’ own interpretation).
- Make an exhaustive list of economic concepts, definitions, principles, theories, that are explored in the song, whether directly or metaphorically.
- Write a one- to two-page reaction for three of the selected titles. Here students were also encouraged to do some library research to support their reactions.
- Discuss at the end of the paper which was their favorite title and why.

In addition, on the assigned day, each group was required to make a 15-minute presentation to the rest of the class. The group was encouraged to discuss with the rest of the class how they reconciled individual music tastes, the process by

which they selected their titles, and where they obtained their music (own collection, borrowed from friends, public library, etc.). An audio tape player was provided and students were encouraged to play a few lines from some of the titles that influenced them the most, thus sharing with the class the economic ideas or theories that they thought were particularly appealing.

## STUDENTS' RESPONSES TO SONG TITLES

Most students chose songs written within the last 20 years, with Pink Floyd's "Money," Billy Joel's "Allentown," Tracy Chapman's "Fast Car," and Alabama's "Song of the South" among the most popular. Three specific examples of songs (described below) effectively demonstrate concepts and ideas that we routinely discuss in our principles courses such as unemployment, the forces of demand and supply, poverty and income levels, the Great Depression, and the Keynesian model. Lyrics from songs are but one way to introduce economic concepts, much the same way that teachers have used newspaper articles or videos to introduce economic content.

The following examples demonstrate that economic concepts may be explored fully through song lyrics and that students' learning of economics, its application and relevance to contemporary life, are reinforced through this project.

### **Structural Unemployment and Demand and Supply in Billy Joel's "Allentown"**

From "Allentown" we hear the following:

Well we're living here in Allentown  
And they're closing all the factories down.  
Out in Bethlehem they're killing time,  
Filling out forms, standing in line.<sup>2</sup>

One student from Music Project I wrote: "Employing an aura of American pride, hometown allegiance, and the story of the factory worker, 'Allentown' successfully portrays the struggles involved in coping with the decline of a community's primary industry." After doing some library research, he discovered that: "In the mid-1950s, Bethlehem Steel Corporation was the nation's second largest steel producer, trailing only United States Steel." He went on to explain proposed mergers in the steel industry, the federal government's invoking of antitrust legislation, subsequent labor unrest and strikes, and ultimate closing of several major facilities. For this student, the song's lyrics led him to learn some recent history and to see the economic impact of the actions taken by various parties.

One group from Music Project II wrote:

The song addressed the decline in the (steel) industry that occurred after World War II. Part of the reason for the downturn was competition from other industrial materials: plastics, glass, paper and aluminum. These other products took away part of the markets for iron and steel. As a result, the demand for steel was not as great as it was during the war. At the same time, mining procedures were leaving much of the rich ore areas in the United States with little high-grade ore. Companies began

turning to other countries to try to get high-grade ore. The song addressed the scarcity of resources in the Pennsylvania area with the line, *But they've taken all the coal from the ground*. In looking for new resources, the steel industry vastly overestimated the demand for steel.

There is evidence that the students had researched the industrial and product structure in Pennsylvania at the time and had obtained a good understanding of the factors that precipitated the fall in demand for steel.

Exploring the role of structural unemployment in the song, another group of students wrote about how the Bethlehem Steel Company ultimately slashed its work force by more than 9,000. Because Allentown was so specialized in the steel industry, it was forced to take a step back and re-evaluate the employment situation. The group wrote:

Slowly but surely the area became less dependent on manufacturing employment and began turning its attention to other employment opportunities. The economic stagnation that crippled Allentown hit hard across much of the Pennsylvania steel country during the 1970's and 1980's. From 1974 to 1983, Pittsburgh lost 10,000 jobs and had a city-wide unemployment level in excess of 10%. The Pennsylvania steel crisis of the 1970's and 1980's clearly demonstrates an interesting dilemma in a capitalistic market. On one hand, according to the principles of capitalism, a market should produce only those goods which can efficiently be produced. If the local market of a town like Allentown can produce steel more efficiently than any other market (due to natural resources, the skills of labor force, etc.), it should specialize in the production of steel. On the other hand, a market that is entirely specialized is highly sensitive to changes in the larger market for the good being produced. When the steel industry collapsed because of pressure from international markets, Allentown's entire economy collapsed with it. Thus, two seemingly antithetical tendencies seem to be at work in the market of Allentown. Should the economy specialize, or should it diversify?

The students' ability to tackle normative issues in economics and stack these against the concept of *specialization* is noteworthy.

### **Poverty and Income Disparities in Tracy Chapman's "Fast Car"**

In an updated urban folkstyle, Tracy Chapman tells a tale of being raised in a broken home, having been left by her mother. She ends up quitting school because of the need to help her unemployed, alcohol-addicted dad. She apparently works in a dead-end, minimum-wage job and yearns to get away to start life anew. However, there is a hint of a looming problem she has with her boyfriend, with the possibility that her life story may reflect that of her mother. Lyrics from Chapman's "Fast Car" include:

You see, my old man's got a problem:  
He live with the bottle, that's the way it is.  
He says his body's too old for working,  
I say his body's too young to look like his.  
My mama went off and left him,  
She wanted more from life than he could give.  
I said somebody's got to take care of him  
So I quit school and that's what I did.<sup>3</sup>

One insightful student wrote: “The song focuses on Chapman’s view of the psychological pressure that poverty exerts on an individual. . . . It is clear that Chapman will struggle valiantly to procure a better life for herself and her family, but various factors are pitted against her plans.” The student stated, “The psychological impact of poverty that Chapman explores is wholly justified. Mary Brosnahan, executive director of the Coalition for the Homeless, explains how many Americans irrationally dismiss the mental anguish suffered by the impoverished.” For this student, then, the song initiated research on poverty and poverty programs and allowed her to connect what she was learning in economics with her other course work in sociology. (A complete copy of this student’s essay may be obtained from author Tinari.)

### **The Farm Sector and the Great Depression in Alabama’s “Song of the South”**

Alabama’s “Song of the South” is about a farming family in the south during the time of the Great Depression. It tells the story of economic hardships for farming families as crops such as cotton failed, and the price of cotton plummeted as the stock market collapsed. Consider the following lines from this song:

Well somebody told us Wall Street fell  
But we were so poor we couldn’t tell  
Cotton was short and the weeds were tall  
But Mr. Roosevelt was gonna save us all

Well Mama got sick and Daddy got down  
The county got the farm and they moved to town  
Papa got a job with the TVA  
He bought a washing machine and then a Chevrolet<sup>4</sup>

One of the student groups began its essay by making an exhaustive list of economic concepts referred to in this song. They include:

- recession—two or more consecutive quarters of decreasing GDP
- depression—an extended recession
- poverty—the condition of receiving less money in income than it would take to feed a family of the size under consideration
- agricultural subsidies—government supports of agricultural prices intended to increase the incomes of farmers, thus making their jobs sustainable
- unemployment rate—the percentage of people who do not have a job, and have been looking for one for the last four weeks
- Keynesian model—includes the theory that the government should spend more during a recession to boost GDP
- foreclosure—the process by which a bank collects on unpaid loans by seizing property from the debtor

We know that cotton was a major cash crop from the 1800s to the 1930s. The group wrote:

Farmers staked their fortunes on the volatility of the cotton markets, but because of a tremendous demand from the Industrial Revolutionizing European nations and Northern states, cotton was a relatively stable crop. However, in the mid-1920s, an

economic earthquake shook the world and swept the carpet out from under the feet of cotton farmers.

After some discussion of various proximate causes of the Great Depression, the students went on to discuss the role of the Fed.

The Federal Reserve essentially let commercial banks run free; no reserve requirements or oversight devices had yet been created. From May 1928 to September 1929, the average price of stocks rose forty percent, largely on artificial sources of income. Despite the seeming explosion of the stock market, farmers were already on the ropes by the middle of the 1920s. Their share of the national income had decreased from fifteen percent to nine percent in just eight years. Annual per capita income for farm workers was only \$273, as compared to \$750 for the population as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

The group did some research on the line, “Papa got a job with the TVA.” Their understanding of the policy implications inherent in the Keynesian model is shown in the following lines:

In 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected President, and immediately began to increase government spending. The Keynesian Model suggests that increases in spending can drive up the gross domestic product. Roosevelt fought with a conservative Supreme Court to pass an Agricultural Adjustment Act in 1938, propping up destitute farmers. He also founded the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps to increase employment. Roosevelt committed federal money to a massive dam project in Tennessee, called the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), providing countless jobs in a struggling region. The TVA is the haven where the father in the song finally finds financial safety.

For this group of students, these lyrics are a good example of government fiscal policy during a time of reduced economic activity (see Table 1 for additional songs and themes).

## ANALYSIS OF MUSIC PROJECT

Every learning tool or technique has its own strengths and weaknesses, and the music project was no different. How did students react? Both at Seton Hall and at Furman, the vast majority of students liked the project, remarking how it required them to think more seriously about the meaning of song lyrics. Only 2 of the 24 students at Furman felt the project was unnecessary. Most enjoyed the fact that they could connect what they were learning with something familiar and likable to them—their music. Many of those who chose their own music, especially contemporary rap, found an opportunity to share their perspectives on life of the streets. Many said that from now on they are likely to think very carefully about how a particular song relates to the economy and the message it is trying to convey.

The music project at Furman University required each group to discuss briefly their reaction to the project. One group summed it up best.

We found this project to be unique and original. It caused us to pay more attention to the real life applications of the concepts presented in class. As we listened to all of the different situations described in the songs, we began to realize how economics truly impacts many different aspects of our lives. It was helpful in allowing us to see economics outside of the classroom context.

**TABLE 1**  
**Sampling to Illustrate the Range of Topics in Song Lyrics,**  
**by Artist, Title, Basic Message, and Economic Concept**

Artist	Title	Basic message	Economic concept
Pink Floyd	"Money"	Cynical commentary on individual's desire to pursue wealth	Money, wealth, income distribution
Madonna	"Material Girl"	Life in a society that necessitates the spending of income to keep economy moving	Material goods, conspicuous consumption, credit
Randy Newman	"Mr President (Have Pity on the Working Man)"	Plight of workers as economy moved from a manufacturing to service economy in the 1970s	Wages, unemployment, government transfers, education, minimum wage
Arrested Development	"Mr. Wendall"	Daily economic and social struggles of title character	Unemployment, disposable income, consumption, discouraged worker, welfare, poverty
Nanci Griffith	"Trouble in the Fields"	Hard times experienced by farmers during the Great Depression	Recession, depression, unemployment, poverty, banking, credit
Less than Jake	"Dopeman"	Allure of underground drug market as an alternative lifestyle	Underground economy, demand and supply, minimum wage, welfare, personal income taxes
Midnight Oil	"River Runs Red"	Firms polluting and consuming natural resources in Australia	Externalities and spillover effects, pollution, factors of production, natural resources, scarcity
Billy Joel	"The Downeaster 'Alexa'"	A fisherman's perspective on the effect to his income from excessive government regulation	Scarcity, supply and demand, imports and quotas, capital, tastes and preferences, value added, externalities
Bob Dylan	"Union Sundown"	Job losses and breakdown of unions because of cheap imports produced with low-cost labor	GDP, imports, free trade versus protectionism, foreign competition, technology, opportunity costs
John Mellencamp	"Rain on the Scarecrow"	The establishment is not sensitive to certain sectors of the economy such as farming	Discouraged worker, price supports in agriculture, fixed costs, banks, credits, foreclosures

Overall, student comments reflected a very positive response to the music assignment, something that educational research tells us enhances their ability to store new knowledge in long-term memory (Vester 1978, 68, 125).

What about the marginal costs to the instructor of using this project? In our case, because we have always given written assignments, the music essays simply took the place of other potential assignments. Of course, the hours spent listening to musical selections to develop the inventory of taped songs comprised a substantial sunk cost. This included searching for and obtaining potentially useful recordings for listening, time spent listening to the music and weeding out inappropriate tunes, and the hours required to tape record the selected songs and prepare the final list. A list of this collection of songs is given in Appendix B. Thus, a big chunk of time can be saved for those instructors interested in implementing this project and willing to use our music selections.<sup>6</sup>

Another benefit/cost consideration is the additional time required to grade this project compared to more targeted assignments. For example, the instructor at Seton Hall has sometimes used a "letter-to-the-editor" project in which a newspaper or magazine editorial or story is selected dealing directly with an issue covered in the principles courses (such as ticket scalping, cigarette taxation, or the war on drugs). This type of assignment is designed to focus on a particular set of concepts and requires the instructor to evaluate each student's understanding and application of those concepts in a real-world setting. The reading and grading of this are streamlined because all students' papers are on an identical topic. Not so with Music Project I. First, each student's submission is different. One saving element is that, in practice, because certain songs are popular with students of a given age and because much of the music is literally unknown to them, the instructor typically received several submissions on each of a core of songs. Nevertheless, more grading time is consumed because of the need to "shift gears" for each different paper.

In addition, song lyrics typically do not focus on economic concepts in a straightforward way. Many embed economic concepts within some larger context or drama, thereby rendering such concepts obtuse or unclear when one listens to the song the very first time. This has meant, in some instances, that both students and professor must listen to song lyrics several times. A second or third listening often clears up any ambiguity in the lyrics or economic assumptions buried deep within the song. Fortunately, most CDs today contain written song lyrics, and many song lyrics are now made available on the World Wide Web.

For Music Project II, additional time is required to listen carefully to each group's tape (about 45 minutes each). Some time is saved because the instructor can read the group's paper and listen to the tape at the same time. The recorded tape must have at least six selections, whereas the written paper must have three essays. Occasionally students included some titles that had little or no economic content. We observed that of the required six titles, on average, each group submitted no more than one title that had little economic content. This did not impact the written assignment, where students choose appropriate lyrics for analysis and discussion of economic ideas.

On balance, therefore, except for the sunk costs that can be avoided as

explained above, there are some additional marginal costs, especially in added grading time, but the corresponding marginal benefit is that the music essay project is interesting to students and helps motivate their learning of economics by asking them to apply concepts to the lyrics of songs they self-select. We should emphasize that the nexus that we try to draw between music and economics is but one component of what we offer in the classroom, spending at most one day every few weeks on music-related assignments.

### **SUGGESTED REFINEMENTS**

Should instructors make use of the music essay project in their economics courses? If the reader is inclined to respond negatively, then several refinements and improvements could be entertained that might tip the balance in favor of its use. One possibility that we do not recommend is to limit students to analyzing one or a few tunes selected by the instructor. Although this would reduce the instructor's grading time, it would eliminate or severely constrain students' options to choose favored music and thus could eliminate the favorable affective responses they have to the project. In our view, that is too high a cost to pay.

A more reasonable approach is to group songs into broad categories from which students can make their selections. For example, we are considering developing separate micro and macro lists of songs because students sometimes select songs that require knowledge that they do not yet possess. Although choosing songs beyond their level of economic knowledge may encourage independent learning as students look into new concepts, it tends to generate essays that often miss the point or fail to apply an appropriate concept. Such groupings could be further refined. For Music Project I, one possibility would be to group songs into sections—those that can be included by the students in their first music essay, and so forth. Such grouping, however, can only be taken so far before the process begins to impinge excessively on the freedom students have in selecting tunes.

Refinements in the implementation of the project should also be considered. One change that has already been implemented at Furman University is a practice run with students in class. A single song is assigned to the entire class early in the semester, and they are asked to write a short reaction paper reviewing the lyrics. Then, an in-class discussion is held. Because the short reaction paper ensures that students have thought about the song, this made for better discussion. One possible improvement in this regard is use of a computer-based discussion group for the class, giving students the opportunity to post their views and reactions to the entire class. The instructor could then require that students respond to at least one other posting to the discussion group. This facilitates a written record of the discussion and is likely to enhance the quality of discussion even further. There are costs involved in setting up a discussion group, but we suspect that computer system administrators at most universities and colleges would be able to set up such a discussion group with considerable ease.

In addition, to make the project more appealing, one could include a question that asks students how well the mood, tempo, and style of the music complement the lyrics. This would allow them to expound briefly on their likes and dislikes

regarding a song's overall delivery and effectiveness. Another potentially effective technique would be to ask students to compare any two songs, identify similarities or differences in them, especially each composer's view of various economic assumptions and use of concepts. Suggested songs for comparing with this variation would include "Busted" (sung by Ray Charles) and "Buddy, Can You Spare a Dime?", or Billy Joel's "Allentown" paired with Bruce Springsteen's "My Hometown."

Another variation that might be of interest to instructors who like to teach principles of economics within a historical context was suggested to the authors. This variation would group songs by the historical eras that led to their creation (e.g., Great Depression, postwar labor strife, 1970s oil price increases, etc.). The music assignment could then include a requirement that students undertake research regarding the historical economic context for the lyrics (Lipsitz 1982, 1990). Finally, we would advise instructors who want to implement the group-focused Music Project II to be mindful of the classic free-rider problem, a problematic element of cooperative learning (Bartlett 1995).<sup>7</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Our experience in using music to help students learn economics has been extremely rewarding. The classroom experience is most exciting when student and teacher learn from each other. We have been exposed to new genres of music such as rap and ska, which are rich in economic content. In turn, students have indicated that they have had fun with the music project. This positive response has most likely enhanced their learning of economic ideas. Becker and Watts (1995, 699) remind us that "Variety in the pace and format of undergraduate classroom instruction—across different class periods and even within a particular class—may well be the missing spice of good teaching and more enthusiastic learning." We agree and, in that spirit, encourage instructors who are even a little musically inclined to try using music to teach economics.

## APPENDIX A

### Seton Hall University: Music Essay Project Description

This is a new project, introduced this academic year, to stimulate your thinking about economic concepts and principles, and to afford you the opportunity to bring them to bear on the ideas expressed in popular song. You are asked to select desired songs from among those found on audio tapes on reserve in the library. Once you have selected a song, listen carefully to the lyrics and take notes. Then answer the questions listed below that are designed to elicit your analysis of the economic content of the song. The project also gives you the chance to express yourself clearly and succinctly in the written word.

### Questions to Be Answered

1. In no more than one typed page, *summarize* the basic message, idea or themes expressed in the lyrics of the song. This should be purely descriptive.
2. *List* all of the economic concepts that are either mentioned or implied in the song.
3. *Analyze* the economic thinking explicit or implicit in the song. Develop your analy-

sis in accordance with the following questions:

What is the attitude of the composer towards money (or work, employment, government policy, poverty, wealth, economic conditions, or whatever issues are being addressed)?

Is the view of the lyricist supportable by available data? Check available data or studies to see if the position taken in the song is supportable. (Please use your textbook, the library and other resources to answer this question.)

How are any economic terms defined (explicitly or implicitly)? Is each definition consistent with that found in economics?

You need not restrict your inquiry to these questions. You may use a song's lyrical content to branch out into related issues and other areas of economics. The idea is to demonstrate a) your knowledge of economics, and b) your ability to apply such knowledge to practical problems or contemporary issues.

*Number and timing of assignments.* Three songs during the semester, due roughly towards the end of each month. See your course syllabus for the exact due dates.

### **Evaluation of Your Essays**

Each project submission will be carefully evaluated in its use of economic knowledge, its application of that knowledge to the issues addressed by the selected song, your efforts made at obtaining data or studies that bear appropriately on the subject matter of the song, if applicable, the creativity exhibited in your exploration of the topic, and clarity in the use of the English language. Make sure that you always quote lyrics accurately when making your points.

In addition, your use of the English language will be evaluated and corrected, if necessary.

If I ask you to do so, resubmit an improved version of your essay in order to obtain a higher grade.

And don't forget to enjoy the different styles of music!

P.S. If you would like to select a song not on the tapes I have prepared, you may do so. First notify me of your selection and lend me the CD/tape/record so that I may listen to it. If I accept it, I will make a copy of the song for future use. I will quickly return your original.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Songs for Use in an Economics Course**

#### **Tape #1, Side A**

"Brother (Buddy), Can You Spare a Dime?" (by E. Y. Harburg and Jay Gorney/1932)

Peter, Paul and Mary (folk/pop) (1963) (2:29)

"Busted" (by Harlan Howard)

Ray Charles (The Genius) (pop/rock) (1963) (2:04)

"Homeless Blues" (by W. Smith)

Willie 'Long Time' Smith (blues) (1947) (3:09)

"Five O'Clock Whistle" (by Myron, Gannon and Irwin/1940)

Mavis Rivers (adult pop) (1959) (2:38)

"Get a Job" (by the Silhouettes)

Silhouettes (1958) (doo-wop) (2:25)

"The Good Life" (by J. Reardon and S. Distel)

Tony Bennett (adult pop) (1963) (2:14)

- “Got a Job” (by Gordy, Carlo and Robinson)  
Smokey Robinson and the Miracles (1958) (doo-wop) (2:40)
- “Greenback Dollar” (by H. Axton and K. Ramsey)  
The Kingston Trio (1963) (folk) (2:49)
- “Money (That’s What I Want)” (by Berry Gordy, Jr. and Janie Bradford)  
Barrett Strong (1960) (R&B) (2:35)
- “Money (That’s What I Want)”  
Beatles (The Fab 4) (1963) (2:47)
- “Money” (by J. Portnoy)  
The Legendary Blues Band (rock/blues) (1985) (2:40)
- “If I Were a Rich Man” (by J. Bock and S. Harnick)  
Zero Mostel (from *Fiddler on the Roof*) (Broadway) (1964) (4:54)
- “Money for Nothing” (by M. Knopfler)  
Dire Straits (1985) (rock) (4:05)
- “Money Burns a Hole in My Pocket” (J. Styne and B. Hilliard)  
Dean Martin (adult pop) (1954) (from movie *Living It Up*) (3:00)
- “Money Honey” (by J. Stone/1953)  
Elvis Presley (1956) (the King) (2:34)
- “Money, Money, Money” (by B. Andersson and B. Ulvaeus)  
Abba (1977) (Swedish pop/rock) (2:55)

**Tape #1, Side B**

- “Daddy’s a Millionaire” (by Tom and Pete)  
The Iveys (British 60s rock) (1969) (2:08)
- “Sittin’ in the Sun (Countin’ My Money)” (by Irving Berlin)  
Louis Armstrong (adult pop) (1953) (2:58)
- “Paying the Cost to Be the Boss” (by B. B. King)  
B. B. King (blues) (1968) (2:36)
- “Mr. Businessman” (R. Stevens)  
Ray Stevens (C&W/pop) (1968) (3:19)
- “Money’s Too Tight (to Mention)” (by J. and W. Valentina, C. Wiggins)  
Simply Red (1986) (British pop/rock) (3:38)
- “If You’re So Smart, How Come You Ain’t Rich!” (by Norman, Friedman and Bishop)  
Louis Jordan and His Orchestra (early 1950s) (jazz/pop) (2:53)
- “Money” (by Tom Evans)  
Badfinger (British rock) (1971) (3:34)
- “Gotta Find a Job” (by Allen Toussaint)  
Lee Dorsey (New Orleans R&B) (1967) (2:27)
- “Money” (by Waters)  
Pink Floyd (British progressive rock) (1973) (5:00)
- “Fast Car” (by Tracy Chapman)  
Tracy Chapman (pop) (1988) (4:26)
- “Down and Out in New York City” (by B. Chandlin and B. De Vorzon)  
James Brown (The Godfather of Soul) (1973) (3:15)
- “Crushed by the Wheels of Industry” (by Gregory, Marsh and Ware)  
Heaven 17 (British electro-pop) (1983) (3:41)
- “Greenbacks” (by R. Charles)  
Ray Charles (The Genius) (R& B) (1955) (2:47)

**Tape #2, Side A**

- “No Alibi” (by S. Walsh)  
Sheila Walsh (Christian pop) (1984) (4:45)

- “Allentown” (by B. Joel)  
Billy Joel (pop/rock) (1981) (2:49)
- “Manana (Is Soon Enough for Me)” (by P. Lee and Dave Barbour)  
Peggy Lee (pop/jazz) (1948) (2:49)
- “Chattanooga Shoe Shine Boy” (by H. Stone and J. Stapp)  
Red Foley (country swing) (1950) (2:46)
- “More Money for You and Me” (Medley) (by B. Belland and G. Larson)  
The Four Preps (pop) (1961) (3:42)
- “Gold Digger’s Song” (We’re in the Money) (by Harry Warren and Al Dubin)  
Ted Fio Rito Orchestra w/Dick Powell, vocal (1930s sweet band)
- “Working on a Coal Mine” (by Allen Toussaint)  
Lee Dorsey (New Orleans R&B) (1966) (2:48)
- “Why Don’t You Do Right? (Get Me Some Money Too)” (by Joe McCoy)  
Peggy Lee (pop/jazz/big band) (1943) (2:24)
- “Money Blues” (by C. Howard)  
Camille Howard (R&B) (1953) (2:29)
- “Mercy Mercy Me” (The Ecology) (by M. Gaye)  
Marvin Gaye (soul) (1971) (2:31)
- “Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend” (by Styne and Robin/1953)  
Marilyn Monroe (blond bombshell) (from movie *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*) (3:30)
- “The Right Thing to Do” (P. Smith)  
Paul Smith (Christian pop) (mid-1980s) (3:10)
- “Nobody Knows You When You’re Down and Out” (by Jimmie Cox/1929)  
Louis Jordan and His Tympany Five (jazz/pop) (1954) (2:58)
- “Your Cash Ain’t Nothin’ But Trash” (by C. Calhoun)  
Clovers (R&B) (1954) (2:54)

## **Tape #2, Side B**

- “Paper Money” (by A. Pratt)  
Andy Pratt (mid-1980s) (alternative Christian pop) (4:30)
- “(Potatoes are Cheaper—Tomatoes are Cheaper) Now’s the Time to Fall in Love” (by Al Lewis and Al Sherman) (from movie *Palmy Days*)  
Victor Young w/Fran Frey, vocal (sweet band) (1932) (2:51)
- “Can’t Buy Me Love”  
Beatles (1964) (2:12)
- “Lazy Bones” (by J. Mercer and H. Carmichael)  
Hoagy Carmichael (pop) (1933) (2:59)
- “With Plenty of Money and You” (by A. Dubin and H. Warren)  
Hal Kemp Orchestra w/Skinny Ennis, vocal (sweet band) (from movie *Gold Diggers of 1937*) (1937) (3:02)
- “Yakety Yak” (by Leiber and Stoller)  
Coasters (R&B cutups) (1959) (1:49)
- “If You’ve Got the Money, I’ve Got the Time” (by Fizzell and Beck)  
Jo Stafford (country swing/pop) (1950) (3:45)
- “Baby You’re a Rich Man” (by J. Lennon and P. McCartney)  
Beatles (1971) (3:07)
- “(I Need Some) Money” (by Gordy and Robinson)  
Miracles (doo-wop) (1958) (2:26)
- “You Can’t Take it With You When You Go” (by Cordle, Shell and Colwell)  
Ricky Scaggs (C&W) (1992) (2:53)
- “Taxman” (by George Harrison)  
Beatles (1966) (2:34)
- “Don’t Sell Your Soul for Money” (by Eric Turner)

- Mansfield and Turner (blues) (1991) (2:55)
- “I Got Plenty O’Nuttin’ ” (by Hayward and Gershwin)  
Lawrence Tibbett (from *Porgy and Bess*) (1935) (2:56)
- “More to This Life” (by S.C. Chapman and Phil Nash)  
Steven Curtis Chapman (Christian rock) (1990) (5:06)
- “Loadin’Coal” (by D. Billard)  
The Five Sounds (60s rock) (19 ) (3:00)

### **Tape #3, Side A**

- “C.R.E.A.M.” (by Wu-Tang Clan)  
Wu-Tang Clan (rap) (1993) (4:12)
- “For the Love of Money/Living for the City” (by Troop, Levert and Queen Latifah)  
Troop, Levert and Queen Latifah (rap) (1991) (5:45)
- “Mercedes Benz” (by Janis Joplin)  
Janis Joplin (rock/blues) (1971) (1:45)
- “Got My Mind Set on You” (by Rudy Clark)  
George Harrison (rock) (1987) (3:49)
- “Material World” (by Tracy Chapman)  
Tracy Chapman (pop) (1989) (6:06)
- “Lodi” (by John Fogerty)  
Creedence Clearwater Revival (rock) (1969) (3:09)
- “Sowing the Seeds of Love” (by Orzabal and Smith)  
Tears for Fears (British rock) (1989) (6:06)
- “Moneytalks” (by Young and Young)  
AC/DC (metal rock) (1990) (3:45)
- “Money” (by Frost and Johnson)  
Snoman (rap) (1993) (4:43)
- “Superconductor” (by G. Lee, A. Lifeson and N. Peart)  
RUSH (metal rock) (1989) (4:47)
- “Money” (by John B. Sebastian)  
The Lovin’ Spoonful (folk rock) (1968) (2:01)
- “Day-O (The Banana Boat Song)” (by Belafonte, Burgess and Attaway)  
Harry Belafonte (folk) (1957) (3:02)

### **Tape #3, Side B**

- “Uptown Girl” (by Billy Joel)  
Billy Joel (pop/rock) (1983) (3:15)
- “Downeaster ‘Alexa” (by Billy Joel)  
Billy Joel (pop/rock) (1989) (3:35)
- “Material Girl” (by Peter Brown and Robert Rans)  
Madonna (pop/rock) (1990) (3:47)
- “Concrete Jungle” (by Bob Marley)  
Bob Marley and the Wailers (reggae) (1973) (4:08)
- “Hold” (by L. Parker)  
KRS-One (rap) (1995) (4:48)
- “Sights in the City” (by GURU and Courtney Pine)  
GURU and various artists (rap) (1988) (5:10)
- “Another Day in Paradise” (by Phil Collins)  
Phil Collins (pop) (1990) (5:36)
- “Back in the Saddle Again” (by G. Autry)  
Gene Autry (Western swing) (circa 1940) (2:45)
- “Opportunities” (by Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe)

- Pet Shop Boys (pop/rock) (1983) (3:35)  
“The Last Payday” (by Connick and McLean)  
Harry Connick, Jr. (big band/pop) (1991) (7:09)

### **APPENDIX C**

#### **Furman University Music and Economics Assignment**

You will work on your music project with your assigned group. Your assignment through the semester is to record on a tape songs/titles that explore economic themes, ideas and concepts. There is no restriction on the music styles; pop, rock, country, jazz, rap, whatever makes you tap your feet. You must have minimum of six titles. The only restriction is that two is maximum number of songs on the side of any one artist.

Start your written essay by listing songs you have chosen as they appear on the tape. Next, discuss in a paragraph what music means to you in general and how as a group you reconciled individual members music tastes to come up with your list.

For at least 3 selections you need to do the following:

Make an exhaustive list of economic concepts, ideas, definitions, theories that are either directly or indirectly referred to in the song.

The basic message contained in the lyrics.

Your reaction and an essay for this title (one–two pages).

Your reaction and essay must contain some library research linked to the songs’ basic themes.

(As a matter of convenience in terms of my grading and listening to the project, it will be easier on me if the three songs you write your essay on are recorded at the beginning of the tape in the same order as they appear in your paper.)

Finally, discuss briefly which was your favorite title and why? Discuss briefly your reaction to this project.

Each group will make a 10-15 minute in-class presentation of their music sharing with the rest of the class the process by which they selected these songs, their motivation and ideas that they derived and perhaps they can play a song or two or a few lines.

Happy listening, have fun.

### **APPENDIX D**

#### **Furman University—Titles Submitted by Students**

- “High Cotton,” Alabama  
“40 Hour Week,” Alabama  
“Mo Money Mo Problems,” Notorious BIG  
“Eat the Rich,” Aerosmith  
“Mister Mister,” Fugees  
“Dopeman,” Less than Jake  
“Money Ain’t Everything,” Clay Walker  
“Summertime Blues,” Alan Jackson  
“Mr. Wendall,” Arrested Development  
“1st of Tha Month,” Bone Thugs-n-Harmony  
  
“Another Day in Paradise,” Phil Collins  
“Money,” Pink Floyd  
“Gotham City,” R. Kelly  
“No Man’s Land,” Billy Joel  
“Mr. President (Have Pity on the Working Man),” Randy Newman  
“Dead End Job,” The Police  
“It’s All About the Benjamins,” Puff Daddy and Family  
“Shelter,” Sarah McLachlan  
“Trouble in the Fields,” Nanci Griffith

"Material Girl," Madonna  
 "Song of the South," Alabama  
 "Iron John," Jackopierce  
 "It's a Hard Life Wherever You Go," Nanci Griffith  
 "Take the Money and Run," Steve Miller Band  
 "Cold Feet," Tracy Chapman  
 "Look to the Children," Sister Hazel  
 "Island of Souls," Sting  
 "In the Ghetto," Elvis Presley  
 "Will Work for Food," Kimm Rogers  
 "Survival of Da Fittest," 69 Boys  
 "River Runs Red," Midnight Oil  
 "Heartland," Willie Nelson  
 "The Downeaster Alexa," Billy Joel  
 "Rain on the Scarecrow," John Mellencamp  
 "Union Sundown," Bob Dylan  
 "This Ain't Living," G Love and Special Sauce  
 "American Honky-Tonk Bar Association," Garth Brooks  
 "Out of Work," Gary U.S. Bonds  
  
 "Scuffle Town," Avail  
 "Daysleeper," REM  
 "Career Opportunities," The Clash  
 "My Hometown," Bruce Springsteen  
 "And the Money Kept Rollin In (and Out)," *Evita* Soundtrack  
 "Slap Leather," James Taylor  
 "Taxman," Beatles  
 "Governor," Robert Bradley's Black Water Surprise

#### NOTES

1. We do not explore the underlying reasons for this deficiency in this article, but they could certainly make for some interesting research and hypothesis-testing as more educators begin to incorporate the use of music in the classroom setting.
2. Copyright © 1981, Joel Songs. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
3. Copyright © 1988, Hal Leonard Corporation. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
4. Copyright © 1986, Universal-PolyGram International Publishing, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
5. "Timelines of the Great Depression." Online chronology of economic events between the 1920s and 1945 found at <http://www.scruz.net/~kangaroo/Timeline.htm>.
6. Instructors who do not have access to the vast array of recordings we used may contact the authors to arrange for copying of the tapes we have already prepared and those we have obtained from our students. There is only the minimal acquisition cost of the audio tapes, and these are often made available by an institution's audio-visual department. In all instances, however, it must be emphasized that these tapes *must* be used solely for pedagogical purposes and should not be allowed to be copied by students.
7. Some possible ways to minimize the free-rider problem include asking members to assign a grade to other members of the group and/or asking the class to evaluate or assign a grade to the in-class presentations of each group. An alternative and harsher method would be to let members in a group "fire" any nonperformers (after discussion with the instructor), forcing them to do the music assignment on their own. The pressure to conform and the fear of being ostracized will, we suspect, minimize the free-rider problem.

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