



Music 4 Econ: <https://music4econ.com/>

In order to assist economics educators at all levels, we have created a website www.music4econ.com that houses economic interpretations of songs. Users can click on the song title and watch a video of the song playing along with an economic analysis of the lyrics.

Wayne Geerling[†], G. Dirk Mateer[‡], Brian O’Roark*, Ben O. Smith**

[†]Monash University, [‡]University of Texas at Austin, * Robert Morris University, **University of Nebraska at Omaha



2022 Journal of Economics Teaching

1. Introduction

Using music to teach economics has a long history, and for good reason (see Tinari and Khandke, 2000, Lawson, Hall and Mateer (2008) and Hall, et al.¹ (2008), Raeshler (2010) and McClough and Heinfeldt (2012)). The lyrics of many songs contain economic references waiting to be appropriated by teachers. To this end, a number of web pages that catalog music related to economics have been developed, including [Broadway Economics](#), [Dirk Mateer.com](#), [Econ Gone Country](#), and [Economics Media Library](#). In this note, we present a new contribution to the available webpages housing economics related music: Music4Econ (M4E) www.music4econ.com. What differentiates the M4E site is that no other website provides a "How to Teach" section. In this section of the website, we provide short descriptions for nine of the songs in the M4E catalog along with specific review questions for each selection. Furthermore, while most of the songs on the M4E site (and all the songs on the previously mentioned sites) are English-language, we have also included songs performed in Bahasa-Indonesian, French, German, Hindi, Korean, Mandarin, and Vietnamese. Economic educators have been teaching with pop culture for decades, but the idea of using foreign-language resources to create a more inclusive and diverse classroom has only recently been adopted (Wooten, Geerling, and Calma, 2021; Geerling, Nagy, Rhee and Wooten, 2021).

The M4E site offers a curation of dozens of economics-related musical presentations created by students and faculty from around the world. After clicking on a song's title, users are redirected to the videoclip integrating the song with an economic interpretation of the lyrics. The site can be searched by topic for quick access, or users can click on the "Clips" button to sort through songs by general category: microeconomics, macroeconomics, AP econ/foundations, labor/trade, and personal finance.

The M4E approach is twofold. First, providing an economic analysis of the content of popular music helps instructors show students that economics is not constrained to what they read in a textbook. Second, it provides examples of what students themselves can do. M4E includes a number of student-created projects resulting from an assignment used in our classrooms since 2005 (see Geerling, Mateer and O'Roark, 2019). By applying the concepts learned during a course, students are actively engaged in putting their knowledge into practice.

What makes music a particularly effective teaching tool is that song lyrics can address a multitude of different economic topics across a myriad of genres. This is demonstrated by the publication of multiple papers explaining how music can be used to teach economics. Papers have been written targeting particular songs (Krasnozhan, 2013), Broadway shows (Rousu and Conrad, 2017) various genres (Melichar, 2018; O'Roark, Holder and Mateer, 2018; Roussu, 2016; Wooten, Geerling, and Calma, 2021), and even student-created music based projects (Al-Bahrani, et al., 2017; Holder, et al., 2015; Geerling, et al., 2019). Other work focuses on using music to teach particular courses (Van Horn and Van Horn, 2013; Ben Abdesslem, 2022) and specific topics (Geerling, et al., 2021; Rousu, 2018, Rousu, et al. 2021). As most students have at least a passing familiarity with, if not a love for, music, this medium can work to highlight economic concepts in a context that is familiar for most students. Moreover, because music is universal, it stretches across cultural divides. Add to this that most songs can be played in two to four minutes, so they don't require a lot of class time, and we have a compact yet powerful teaching device.

Based on our conversations with teachers who have used music from the site, some play a clip before class as students are filtering into the room to extend teaching time, while some play a clip at the beginning of class as a warmup. Others use the clips to break up a lesson, playing the song and asking questions about how specific lyrics apply to economics. Others assign the video building project to students as either an extra credit opportunity or as a graded assignment. A link to a how-to guide for this project is provided on the home page of M4E.

¹While this paper discusses the application of song lyrics to economics, the link to the website is no longer live.

As economics teachers, we all agree that econ is everywhere. We hope Music for Econ will reinforce this for you and your students. Enjoy!

References

- Al-Bahrani, Abdullah, Brad Libis, Sara Drabik and John Gibson. 2017. “Econ Beats: A Semester Long, Interdisciplinary, Project-Based Learning Assignment.” *Journal of Economics and Finance Education* 16(3): 1-11.
- Ben Abdesslem, Amel. 2022. “Teaching Macroeconomics Through Music.” *Journal of Economics Teaching* – forthcoming.
- Geerling, Wayne, G. Dirk Mateer and Brian O’Roark. 2019. “Music Then and Now: Using Technology to Build a Lyric Animation Module.” *The American Economist* 65(2): 264-276.
- Geerling, Wayne, Kristofer Nagy, Elaine Rhee and Jadrian Wooten, “Using K-Pop to Teach Indifference Curve Analysis, Behavioral Economics and Game Theory”, *Journal for Economic Educators*, 21 (1), 2022, pp. 40-56.
- Hall, Joshua, Robert Lawson, Dirk Mateer, and Andrew Rice. 2008. “Teaching Private Enterprise Through Tunes: An Abecedarium of Music for Economists.” *Journal of Private Enterprise* 23(2): 157-166.
- Holder, Kim, Adam Hoffer, Abdullah Al-Bahrani and Solina Lindahl. 2015. “Rockonomix.” *Journal of Economic Education* 46(4): 443.
- Krasnozhan, Leonid A. 2013. “Using Popular Music to Teach Principles of Economics: Beyonce’s Take on Demand and Quantity Demanded.” *Journal of Private Enterprise* 28(2): 139-149.
- Lawson, Robert, Joshua Hall and G. Dirk Mateer. 2008. “From Abba to Zeppelin, Led: Using Music to Teach Economics.” *Journal of Economic Education* 39(1): 107.
- McClough, David and J Heinfeldt. 2012. “Assessing the effectiveness of music lyrics in conveying economic concepts.” *Journal of Economics and Economic Education Research* 13(2): 55-65.
- Melichar, Mark. 2018. “Economics Gone Country.” *Journal of Economic Education* 49(4): 363.
- O’Roark, Brian, Kim Holder, and Dirk Mateer. 2018. “From the Beatles to Twenty One Pilots: Economics in Music in the Pop Culture Era.” *Perspectives on Economic Education Research* 11(1): 41-57.
- Raeshler, Rod. 2010. “The Use of popular music to teach introductory economics in a live and online environment.” *International Journal of Pluralism and Economics Education* 4(1): 78-92.
- Rousu, Matthew C. 2016. “Broadway Economics.” *Journal of Economic Education* 47(3): 268.
- Rousu, Matthew C. 2018. “Using Show Tunes to Teach about Free (and Not-So-Free) Markets.” *Journal of Private Enterprise* 33(4): 111-128.
- Rousu, Matthew C. and Courtney A. Conrad. 2017. “Economic Lessons from the Musical Hamilton.” *Journal of Economics Teaching* 2(1): 30-50.
- Rousu, Matthew, Mark Melichar, and Bailey Hackenberry. 2021. “Using Music to Teach Agricultural, Applied, and Environmental Economics.” *Applied Economics Teaching Resources*. Online first.
- Tinari, Frank. D., and Kailash Khandke. 2000. “From Rhythm and Blues to Broadway: Using Music to Teach Economics.” *Journal of Economic Education* 31(2): 253-270.

Van Horn, Robert and Van Horn, Monica. 2013. "What Would Adam Smith Have on His iPod? Uses of Music in Teaching the History of Economic Thought." *Journal of Economic Education* 44(4): 64-73.

Wooten, Jadrian, Wayne Geerling and Angelito Calma. 2021. "Diversifying the Use of Pop Culture in the Classroom: Using K-Pop to Teach Principles of Economics." *International Review of Economics Education* 38: 100220.