

JET – SYMPOSIUM ON
ECONOMIC TEACHING
CONTEXT-BASED LEARNING:
USING POPULAR COUNTRY
MUSIC IN THE CLASSROOM

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Outline

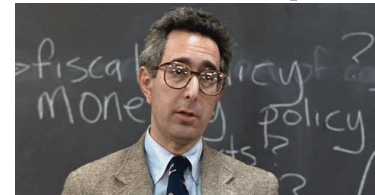


- Motivation
- Literature review
- How to use media in the classroom
- Econ Gone Country
- Selected songs from the website
- Example assignments
- Conclusion

Motivation

- Economics has the reputation of being difficult, boring, and generally unrelatable to students.
- As academics, we all find our fields of study interesting.

- ▣ However, many students may not...



- Goals

1. Increase student interest in economics and thus the number of majors.
2. Provide deeper connections with the material that students will remember.

Motivation

Teaching Style

- How did I learn best as an undergraduate?
- What do I remember from my classes?
- Why should students care about the content?

Motivation



- My teaching style gradually moved away from “chalk and talk” and towards a more interactive classroom experience with popular media.
- Positive student response.
- More fun for the instructor too!

Literature Review

- Becker and Watts (1995)
 - ▣ Explores existing literature on “Chalk & Talk” and more innovative methods
 - ▣ National Council on Economic Education: *Guide to Games and Simulations for Teaching Economics*, 1971
 - ▣ Journal of Economic Education, Fall 1993 – experimental economics in the classroom
 - ▣ Incorporating news articles to make economics more “real”
 - ▣ Cooperative learning and “Think, Pair, Share” in large lectures

Literature Review

- Tinari and Khandke (2000)
 - ▣ Music an important influence in the life of young adults
 - ▣ Listening to music evokes a sensorial and emotional response
 - ▣ Two versions of assignments: Music Project I & II
 - ▣ Music Project I – students listen to selected songs and write essay about lyrics, economic concepts, and analysis of the economic thinking implied by lyrics
 - ▣ Music Project II – variation of Project I where students work in groups and find their own economics songs

Literature Review

- Hall and Lawson (2008)
 - ▣ Students are given lyrics to a song and asked to respond to a series of questions
 - ▣ Appropriate for introductory or intermediate economics
 - ▣ Appeals to different learning styles
 - ▣ Anecdotal, students report the assignment was fun and interesting, and led to more in-depth discussions outside of the classroom

Literature Review - websites

- Hall, Lawson, and Mateer (2008)
 - ▣ From Abba to Zeppelin, Led: Using Music to Teach Economics
 - ▣ Facilitate the use of music in the classroom in the interest of moving away from “chalk and talk”
 - ▣ Selected lyrics (with link to full lyrics) and brief assignments available

Literature Review - websites

- Ghent, Grant, and Lesica (2011)
 - ▣ The Economics of Seinfeld
(<http://yadayadayadaecon.com>)
 - ▣ The goal of using music, television, and movie clips is to make economic concepts come alive for students

Literature Review - websites

- Kuester, Mateer, and Youderian (2014)
 - ▣ The Economics of the Office
(<http://economicsoftheoffice.com>)
 - ▣ Examples of commonly misunderstood concepts in economics
 - ▣ Short clips with explanations illustrating how to use them to reinforce economic concepts
 - ▣ Michael Scott helps students to understand how *not* to think about economics

Literature Review - websites

- Tierney, Mateer, Smith, Wooten, and Geerling (2016)
 - ▣ Clips, explanations, and lesson plans related to *The Big Bang Theory* (<http://www.bazinganomics.com>)
 - ▣ Helps student recognize that economics is everywhere

Literature Review - websites

- Economics Media Library – Wooten

- <https://econ.video/>

- Dirk Mateer Media Library

- <http://dirkmateer.com/>

Group Projects

- Rockonomix and EconBeats
 - ▣ National competition among college Principle of Economics students
 - ▣ Working in groups, students pick a popular song and then rewrite the lyrics to illustrate economic themes and concepts.
 - ▣ Appeals to different learning styles...and it's fun!!!
 - ▣ Students get recognition of their work and have a chance to win money for top 3 finish

<https://www.rockonomix.com/>

How to Use Media in the Classroom

- Two general practices
 - ▣ Pre-lecture: play song/video three to four minutes before the start of class
 - Encourages punctuality
 - Gains students' attention to begin class
 - Something students will look forward to
 - Sets the stage for the topics that will be covered in class
 - ▣ During lecture
 - Helps break the monotony of lecture
 - Draws students' attention back to the lecture
 - Reinforce and illustrate the “real world” application of topics being covered

How to Use Media in the Classroom

□ Assessment

- Classroom Polling – media can complement the use of classroom clickers, TopHat, Poll Everywhere, etc.
- Think, Pair, Share – students work in pairs and discuss the question posed by the professor. Quick and easy way to get students involved in classroom discussion.
- Assignments – quiz, homework, or even bonus questions can be based off of media shown in class.
 - Tip: include one or two questions on the exam pertaining to media clips.

EconGoneCountry

Supply and demand with a twang

Explore



Country music is full of stories about money, success, failure, and love. What people may not realize is that these are the foundations of many economic concepts. Welcome to EconGoneCountry.com -- Supply and demand with a twang



About

Learn more about me and my teaching style.



Economic Concepts

A list of all the economic concepts discussed throughout the website. Search here for videos that cover a topic you're interested in.



Social Media

Follow me on Twitter
[@EconGoneCountry](https://twitter.com/EconGoneCountry)

<http://www.econgonecountry.com/>

Selected songs – Time is Love

<http://www.econgonecountry.com/time-is-love.html>

Title: Time is Love

Artist: Josh Turner

Economic Concepts: Opportunity Cost; PPF

Details: The song begins by stating that to make money, you have to work and that work must be done while the sunlight shines. This illustrates that we are restricted by fixed resources; there are only so many hours in the day. However, if someone is not working then what else would they be doing? What's their next best alternative? In economics, what you give up or forgo to get more of one item is referred to as opportunity cost. In this song, if the man wasn't working he'd be spending time with his significant other. He places such a high value on spending time with his significant other, in other words his opportunity cost is so great, that no matter what else needs to be done, including work, "can get done some other time". Later in the song, we hear an example of calculating opportunity cost when the question is asked "in the time we spent talking, how many kisses have I lost?...Time is Love".



Selected songs – Time is Love

- Economic Concepts: PPF, Opportunity Cost
- Assumption of fixed resources in PPF
 - ▣ “I only get so many minutes, Don’t wanna spend ‘em all on the clock”
- Opportunity cost is what you give up to do or get something else
 - ▣ “But anything I gotta get done, it can get done some other time...Time is love”
 - ▣ “In the time that we spent talkin’, how many kisses have I lost?”

Selected songs – I'll Name the Dogs

<http://www.econgonecountry.com/i-ll-name-the-dogs.html>

Title: I'll Name the Dogs

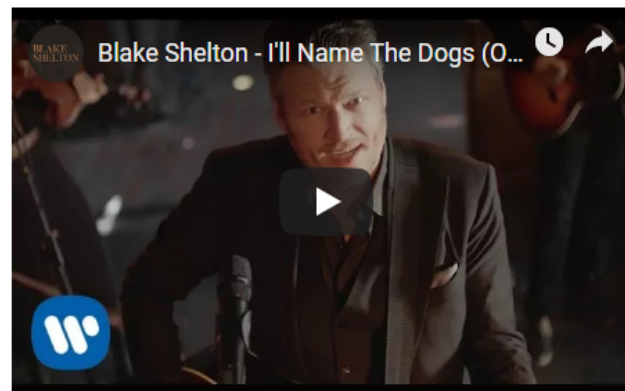
Artist: Blake Shelton

Economic Concepts: Specialization; Division of Labor;
Comparative Advantage; Trade

Details: One of the most important concepts learned in a principles of economics course is that of specialization and the benefits of trade. In this song, a couple is about to get married and the man is laying out his vision for their life together. "You find the spot and I'll find the money...You plant the flowers, I'll plant the kisses...I'll hang the pictures, you hang the stars...You pick the paint, I'll pick a guitar...You name the babies and I'll name the dogs." Specialization and comparative advantage lead to more efficient production which leads to more possible consumption. Similarly in a relationship, both parties will benefit from specialization and the division of labor. So, although the application is quite different, we can still see the benefits of trade through this song.

Lyrics:

Girl, it's high time, I tell ya
No more messin' around
Time to lay these cards on the table
And just throw it on out

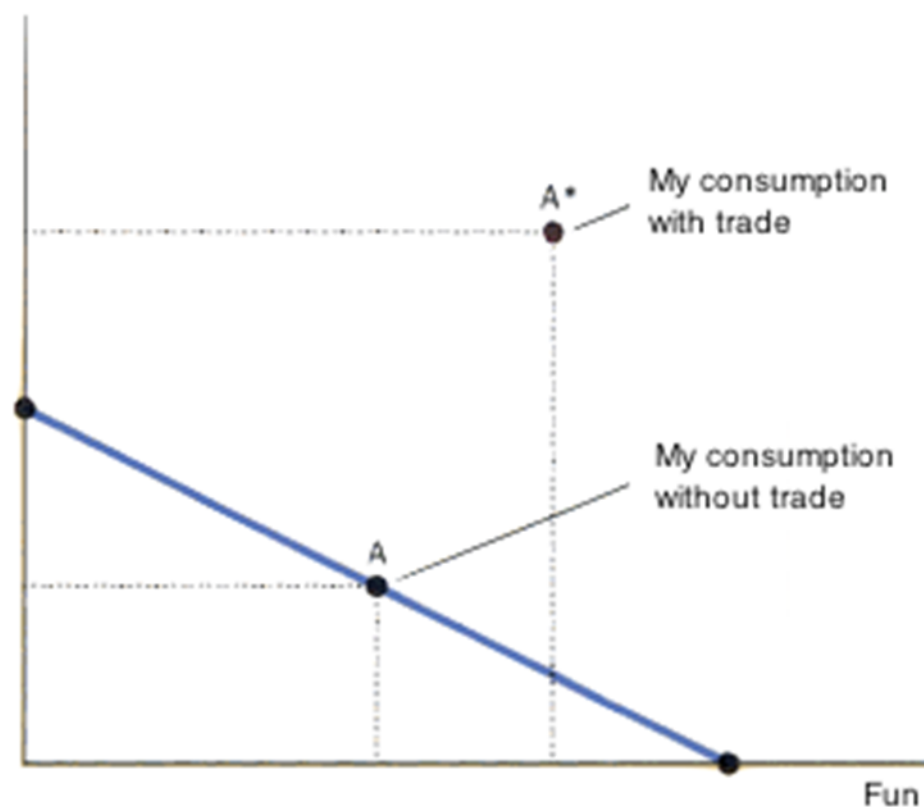


Selected songs – I'll Name the Dogs

- Economic Concepts: Specialization, Comparative Advantage, Division of Labor, Trade
 - ▣ Specialization leads to greater efficiency, and trade allows both parties to benefit.
 - “You find the spot and I’ll find the money...You plant the flowers, I’ll plant the kisses...You pick the paint, I’ll pick a guitar...You name the babies and I’ll name the dogs.”
 - ▣ Specialization and comparative advantage lead to more possible consumption (utility). This is true in economics and relationships.

HOW TRADING AND EXCHANGING IDEAS OVER DINNER
WOULD EXPAND OUR SET OF CONSUMPTION OPPORTUNITIES

Happiness



Happiness



SO IT'S A DATE??

Selected songs – Keep the Wolves Away

<http://www.econgonecountry.com/keep-the-wolves-away.html>

Title: Keep the Wolves Away

Artist: Uncle Lucius

Economic Concepts: Negative externalities; Market failure; Social class; Labor economics; Social safety net; Unemployment; Labor force participation rate

Details: This song tells the story of a young boy growing up in a lower middle class family south of Houston, TX. His dad works hard, often more than 40 hours per work, in order to provide food, shelter, and safety for his family and "keep the wolves away". This is a good example of social class and the struggles faced by many poor, working class families.

There are also multiple references to market failures and negative externalities. The skyline where the boy grew up is "colored by chemical plants" and a drawing shows his house overshadowed by smokestacks and pollution. As a teenager, an oil tanker spilled "poison" into Galveston bay in the Gulf of Mexico, creating large external costs. A few years later, the family moves away from the greater Houston area "where the sky isn't heavy with refinery clouds".

Death and injury in the workplace are important topics in the study of labor economics. The boy's father is gravely injured when "liquid fire" filled his lungs and his eyes, which caused him to be sick for many years. As a result, he becomes disabled and is no



Selected songs – Keep the Wolves Away

- Economic Concepts: Negative externalities; Labor economics; Unemployment; Social safety net; Market failure
 - ▣ Story of a lower middle class family near Houston. The father is the sole breadwinner, often working overtime to “keep the wolves away”
 - The song illustrates the struggles faced by many poor, working class families, and how one event can “blow the whole house down”.
 - ▣ Multiple references to market failures and negative externalities.
 - The skyline where the boy grew up is “colored by chemical plants” and a drawing shows his house overshadowed by smokestacks and pollution. As a teenager, an oil tanker spilled “poison” into Galveston bay in the Gulf of Mexico, creating large external costs. A few years later, the family moves away from the greater Houston area “where the sky isn't heavy with refinery clouds”.
 - ▣ Many people in America now spend time and money caring for their sick and elderly parents. This burden is illustrated when he sings, “so I’m going for broke with every song I play, ‘cause now it’s my time to keep the wolves away”.

<http://www.econgonecountry.com/love-like-crazy.html>

[illegible]

Example Assignment – Love Like Crazy

- Economic Concepts: Nominal vs Real, Inflation, Escalator clause
 - ▣ “They’ve been together fifty-eight years now, that’s crazy...He brought home sixty-seven bucks a week, he bought a little two bedroom house on Maple Street...Yea that’s crazy”
- Is it really ‘crazy’ that the man brought home \$67 a week? How much is that in real terms?

Econ Gone Country (<http://www.econgonecountry.com/>)

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Love Like Crazy – Lee Brice

Assume the song “Love Like Crazy” was **released in 2011**. Based on the lyrics in the song, please calculate and answer the following questions.

1. How long has the couple been together?

The couple has been together 58 years which means that they started out together in 1953.

2. How much did the man in the song earn per week? Assuming he worked 40 hours per week, what was his hourly wage?

In the song, the man earned \$67 per week which equates to an hourly wage of roughly \$1.68/hr.

Using the escalator clause, we can adjust the man's 1953 wage for inflation. Using the CPI from the Federal Reserve Economic Research (FRED), we can see that the CPI in 1953 and 2019 is 26.77 and 255.66, respectively.

$$\text{1953 wage in real 2019 dollars: } \$67 \times \frac{255.66}{26.77} = \$639.87$$

Adjusted for inflation, the man brought home what would be equivalent to roughly \$640 per week in today's dollars.

4. Assuming he worked 40 hours per week, what was his hourly wage in real 2019 dollars?

Assuming 40 hours worked per week, this comes out to about \$16 per hour.

5. Lee Brice says that the man's earnings per week are "crazy". What do you think? In real terms, are the man's wages "crazy"? What are some factors which influence a person's wage/salary? Provide some sort of rationale for your response (see the table below for help with your answer).

It is difficult to definitively state whether the man's wages, even after adjusting for inflation, are "crazy" or not. We have no idea what industry the man worked in, his level of education, or what part of the country he lived in. That being said, one can look at current earnings across various industries and conclude that \$16/hr is quite low.

The main point is that to determine if the man's wages were truly "crazy", one first needs to adjust for inflation and compare the earnings in real terms. Without this adjustment, we lack the proper context in which to analyze the earnings.

Lessons Learned

- Be prepared
 - ▣ Smooth transition between lecture and media
 - ▣ Check old links, YouTube videos, etc.
- Don't force it
 - ▣ Although media is fundamental to my overall teaching style, it does not need to be present in every class
- Don't overuse it
 - ▣ Media should complement your academic material
 - ▣ Maintain high academic standards

Lessons Learned

- Technology can be fickle
 - ▣ Internet may go down, computer might install updates, etc.
 - ▣ Have a plan B and be able to continue on without the media clip
- Have fun!!!

Conclusion

- Movement away from “Chalk & Talk” and towards more interactive methods over the last 30 years
- Popular music, television, and movie clips have been used by various professors
 - ▣ Recent trend to create websites housing economic examples with tips on how to incorporate into lecture
- *Econ Gone Country* fills a niche in the economics of music

Conclusion



Thank you!!!