



### Activity One: Create a Campaign Playlist

#### Overview

Over the past few electoral cycles, political candidates have capitalized on the popularity of playlist sites such as Spotify, circulating campaign playlists in hopes of forging a bond with voters, communicating their values and vision, and asserting their pop culture cred.

#### Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the ways presidential candidates use music to communicate with voting communities and evaluate the effectiveness of their music strategies.
2. Analyze a playlist from a recent campaign and examine the ways in which genre associations can be used to establish the candidate's brand or presidential persona
3. Create a new playlist for a potential candidate from your state and articulate the reasons why your music effectively captures the candidate's biography, platform, and character traits.

#### Take Home Assignment: Analyzing a Playlist

1. Listen to short excerpts from the Barack Obama campaign playlist (2008) and respond to the questions below. This playlist and others can be accessed at <http://dgorzela.dropmark.com/533851>
2. Choose one song from Obama's playlist: What does the song communicate about the candidate?
3. What musical characteristics of the song (melody, tempo, rhythm, instrumentation, vocal timbre, etc.) help to cement the candidate's message and persona?
4. Take a look at Obama's playlist overall. Music can sometimes be used to establish or solidify a candidate's brand. Come up with three adjectives/phrases that describe the candidate's brand (as implied by this music). Why do you think candidates choose to communicate through the medium of song? Do you think music is louder than words?

#### In the Classroom: Creating a Playlist

1. Organize teams of five students and have each team create a campaign playlist for one of two potential candidates for the 2020 Arkansas senate.
2. Take a few moments to read the candidate's website, focusing in on issues and biography. Create a brief outline of their policy positions and their background. What is the candidate trying to convey to the public through their website?
3. Using your outline as a starting point, make a list of adjectives or phrases that best describe your candidate. (Consider identity categories, profession, party affiliation, key policies, upbringing, character traits, etc.)

Examples:

Family values	Former doctor	Hometown boy
Child of the 1960s	LGBTQ friendly	Italian roots
Environmentalist	Energetic	Cosmopolitan
Family Man	Feminist	Soft spoken

4. Compile a playlist of between 10-15 songs that you feel best capture your candidate's persona, message, communication style, policies, etc. Include the following information for each song: title (with YouTube hyperlink), artist, genre, and year of release.

Add your playlist to the Google doc:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1OPiFV6RsI9S9ID25\\_Rxgsi1UN\\_G2BJrWFXe9PwqcqHk/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1OPiFV6RsI9S9ID25_Rxgsi1UN_G2BJrWFXe9PwqcqHk/edit?usp=sharing)

5. Be prepared to discuss/defend your choice of music for the candidate.

## Activity Two: Analyze a Campaign Parody

### Overview

Parody, “an imitation of the style of a particular writer, artist, or genre with deliberate exaggeration for comic effect,” takes on many different forms, including but not limited to poetry, literature, plays, comedy, and music. A musical parody graphs a new text onto a preexisting tune, and sometimes relies on exaggeration for comedic effect. Such treatment of music has a long history in electoral politics. In the 19th century, supporters would pen new texts for a candidate and sing them at rallies and parades. (Aspiring lyricists paired their texts with well known tunes such as “Yankee Doodle” and “Auld Lang Syne.”) Since the advent of YouTube (2005) and the development of accessible and affordable video and audio editing tools, campaign-themed music parodies have experienced a resurgence online. Many 21st-century campaign parodies feature both visuals and music (see list below).

### Learning Objectives

1. Define parody and investigate how it operates within campaign contexts
2. Analyze the text and images (where applicable) in a parody and articulate how such music works to construct/critique the image of a presidential candidate.
3. Compare the original tune to its parodied version in order to consider questions of meaning and context

### In the Classroom: Analyzing a Parody

In 2016, several creators of parodies capitalized on the popularity and cultural currency of *Hamilton*, a musical that offers a fanciful retelling of the interactions between the founding fathers. Multiculturalism and diversity are woven within the musical and poetic fabric of *Hamilton*. Creator Lin-Manuel Miranda is of Puerto-Rican descent, the show features a multiracial cast, the musical’s predominant style is hip-hop, a genre that began with the musical explorations of black and Latino youth in the South Bronx, and *Hamilton*’s storyline explores the immigrant experience. The connection between *Hamilton* and the 2016 election extends beyond musical parodies: Lin-Manuel Miranda endorsed Clinton’s candidacy, Clinton herself spoke at a performance, and the show’s Broadway cast directly addressed vice-president-elect Mike Pence after a performance in November 2016, to which Donald Trump tweeted a critical response. In short, the musical’s reception in 2016 offers a potent springboard for conversations regarding the intersection of popular culture and political culture, the role of the artist as activist, the ways in which theatre can be politicized, and the contested nature of America’s founding myths

1. Listen to Rad Motel’s “HamilTrump,” a parody of “Alexander Hamilton.”
2. In the musical *Hamilton*, this song offers a biographical sketch of the titular founding father. How does the meaning of the original song compare to the “HamilTrump” parody? In other words, what are some of the affinities between the founding father and the candidate? What does the parody tell us about the candidate?
3. Is the parody’s message ironic, sincere, or contradictory? How do you know? To what audience demographic is it directed? How do you know?
4. In the 19th century, parodies were sung by the crowds who attended political rallies and speeches. In the present day, the public rarely sings parodies in live campaign contexts, but rather passively views them on sites such as YouTube. What are the advantages and disadvantages of more modern media in spreading political music to listeners?

## RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

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### **Spotify Playlists**

- Barack Obama 2008 Playlist (Barack Obama)
- The Official Hillary 2016 Playlist (Hillary Clinton)
- Girl Power Playlist (Hillary Clinton)
- She's With Us Playlist (Hillary Clinton)
- Hillary Clinton's Women's History Month Playlist (Hillary Clinton)

### **Bibliography: Parody**

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## Campaign Parodies

- “All About That Bern” (set to the tune of Meghan Trainor’s “All About That Bass”)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1VTPhrnPrw>
- “Anything You Can Do” (set to the tune of Irving Berlin’s “Anything You Can Do” from *Annie Get Your Gun*)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xv1np1f8xlc>
- “Chelsea’s Mom” (set to the tune of Fountains of Wayne’s “Stacy’s Mom”)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRdyQjSHcJE>
- “Country Songs!” (set to the tune of Garth Brooks’ “Friends in Low Places”)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9m\\_PaIfVQ&feature=share](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J9m_PaIfVQ&feature=share)
- “Delete It!” (set to the tune of Michael Jackson’s “Beat It!”)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHDGuRs9gyg&feature=share>
- “Do You Wanna Build a Wall?” (set to the tune of Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez’s “Do You Wanna Build a Snowman?” from *Frozen*)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVN17U3Vg34>
- “HAMILTRUMP” (set to the tune of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s “Alexander Hamilton” from *Hamilton*)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUI9u3azLUg&feature=share>
- “Hillary Clinton 2016 Election Parody Song: Emails, Benghazi and Bill” (set to the tune of Gloria Gaynor’s “I Will Survive,” Katy Perry’s “Dark Horse,” Journey’s “Don’t Stop Believin,” and “Naughty by Nature’s O.P.P.”)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9\\_OOrWQs33E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_OOrWQs33E)
- “The Hillary Song” (set to the tune of Maroon 5’s “Sugar”)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7SEgceOKK4&feature=share>
- “I Am Rodham” (set to the tune of Helen Reddy’s “I am Woman”)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p36WMXgBMhE>
- “Jeb is Ready, He’s My Brother” (set to the tune of The Hollies’ “He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Brother”)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UydF6MK2E-M&feature=share>
- “The Official Donald Trump Jam” or “Freedom’s Call” (set to the tune of George M. Cohan’s “Over There”)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPRfP\\_TEQ-g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPRfP_TEQ-g)
- “Oh, That Donald!” (set to the tune of “Oh, Susanna!”). Video clip. Election Songs.  
[https://www.electionsongs.com/track/1057701/oh-that-donald?feature\\_id=295635](https://www.electionsongs.com/track/1057701/oh-that-donald?feature_id=295635)
- “Trump-Pence” (set to the tune of Robert B. Sherman and Richard M. Sherman’s “Feed the Birds” from *Mary Poppins*).  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G19s4OmvFw8>
- Untitled parody of “The Official Donald Trump Jam” (performed on *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*).  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UOKh00-GuY&feature=share>
- “We Will Bern You” (set to the tune of Queen’s “We Will Rock You”).  
YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eahykEwoduE>
- “You’re a Mean One, Mr. Trump” (set to the tune of Thurl Ravenscroft’s “You’re A Mean One, Mr. Grinch”).  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9-5DjhBh6M&t=1s>
- Trax on the Trail’s Parody Campaign Songs  
[https://open.spotify.com/user/1233425005/playlist/1G7VSZVTx2CNaydYNtt4w5?si=xmKo8szrT4afngQ3BrMd\\_A](https://open.spotify.com/user/1233425005/playlist/1G7VSZVTx2CNaydYNtt4w5?si=xmKo8szrT4afngQ3BrMd_A)

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## ***Hamilton Parodies***

- “Donald Trump (Alexander Hamilton Parody).” (set to the tune of “Alexander Hamilton”) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptR21X2Dh5I>
- “Hamilton Parody - The Election of 2016.” (set to the tune of “The Election of 1800”) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaQyW31OHy0>
- “Hamilton PARODY - Hillary Rodham Clinton! The Key of Awesome #114.” (set to the tune of “Alexander Hamilton”) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWtIGEZevDw>
- “‘Hamilton’ Parody – Trump: The Musical.” (set to the tune of “Alexander Hamilton”) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T\\_l-P1o8c9w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_l-P1o8c9w)
- “HamilTrump.” (set to the tune of “Alexander Hamilton”) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUI9u3azLUg&feature=share>
- “Hillary Clinton Ruins ‘Hamilton.’” (set to the tune of “Alexander Hamilton”) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjfSnXbVrVo>
- “Lin-Manuel Miranda changes Hamilton lyrics for Hillary Clinton” (set to the tune of “Ten Duel Commandments”) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o10xcWo2k04>

## TRAX ON THE TRAIL WEBSITE CONTENTS

[www.traxonthetrail.com](http://www.traxonthetrail.com)

### **Essays**

- Bañagale, Ryan Raul. “30 Days, 30 Songs: ‘Puncturing that inflated horror of an ego.’” October 17, 2016.
- Barnard, Christianna. “Dancing Around the Double-Bind: Gender Identity, Likability, and the Musical Rebranding of Hillary Clinton.” November 28, 2015.
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- Hung, Eric. “The Clinton-Trump Debate: A Dirty Dancing Fantasy.” October 19, 2016.
- Kasper, Eric T. and Benjamin S. Schoening. “The Unwelcome Use of Musical Artists and Their Songs by Presidential Candidates.” December 18, 2016.
- Kennedy, Michael. “‘This Land Is (Once Again) Your Land’: Woody Guthrie and the 2015–16 US Presidential Race.” October 24, 2016.
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- Manela, Aaron. “Everyone is a Snowth: Trump Sings ‘Mah Nà Ma Nà.’” October 19, 2016.
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\_\_\_\_\_. "Not Another Term: Music as Persuasion in the Campaign Against the Re-Election of George W. Bush." October 5, 2016.

### Interviews

- "On the Inside Trax: John Balduzzi, Political Consultant." March 15, 2016.  
"On the Inside Trax: Kraig Moss, A Modern Day Troubadour for Trump." September 2, 2016.  
"On the Inside Trax: Stuart Schimler, Founder, American Pioneer Music." September 20, 2016.

### Educational Materials

Campaign Music 101 in the Music History Classroom

*Materials from a workshop on teaching campaign music in the classroom; includes presentation slides and bandout*

Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, Naomi Graber, Hanna Lisa Stefansson, Cameron Steuart, Mary Helen Hoque, Sarah Kitts, and Kassie Kelly

Rock & Roll to the White House

*Course unit on rock and electoral politics created in collaboration with the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame*

Kassie Kelly, Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, Leah Branstetter, Mandy Smith, Kathryn Metz, and Deanna Nebel

Popular Music in U.S. Presidential Commercials

*Course unit on analyzing popular music in campaign ads*

Joanna Love

The History of Presidential Campaign Music

*Lecture notes and slides*

Eric T. Kasper and Benjamin S. Schoening

### Podcasts

Trax on the Trail Podcast Series

(in collaboration with WRGC 88.3)

Trax on the Trail Podcast, Pt. 1 "Super Tuesday Edition," featuring Dana Gorzelany-Mostak and James Deaville WRGC 88.3FM (aired March 1, 2016).

Trax on the Trail Podcast, Pt. 2 "The Candidate Takes the Mic," featuring Brian Barone, James Deaville, Cannon McClain, and Dana Gorzelany-Mostak WRGC 88.3FM (aired April 26, 2016).

Trax on the Trail Podcast, Pt. 3 "Parodying the Presidency," featuring Christianna Barnard, Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, and Sarah Kitts WRGC 88.3FM (aired June 9, 2016).

Trax on the Trail Podcast, Pt. 4 "The Candidates Take On Broadway," featuring Naomi Graber, Elissa Harbert, James Deaville, Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, and Sarah Kitts WRGC 88.3FM (aired July 25, 2016).

Trax on the Trail Podcast, Pt. 5 "The Soundtrack of Populism," featuring Justin Patch, Matthew Jordan, Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, James Deaville, and Cannon McClain WRGC 88.3FM (aired September 22, 2016)

Trax on the Trail Podcast, Pt. 6 "The Empire Strikes Trax," featuring Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, Cannon McClain, Sarah Kitts, and Aly "Sam" Campbell (aired November 9, 2017).

Trax in the Classroom Podcast Series

(in collaboration with Dr. Emily Ansari and Western University)

Gleason-Mercier, Caroline. "An Unknown Legacy: The 1840 Election and Political Campaign Songs." March 3, 2016.

Jackson, Gary. "Saddam Hussein Will Always Love You?" May 5 2016.

Pasqualini, Nikki. "Vote for Change: John Kerry Will Not Surrender." January 21, 2016.

### Campaign Music Databases

Campaign Music Bibliography (A database containing bibliographic data for over 1,300 articles and books on the topic of campaign music).

Trail Trax (A campaign music database that catalogues over 8000 tracked instances of music on the 2016 presidential campaign trail).