

## Decolonizing “Intro to World Music?”

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As the movement of people has increased in intensity over the past several decades, university classrooms have become more diverse, bringing students from around the world together in unprecedented proportions. Instructors cannot presume a single shared cultural knowledge or experience among all of their students, or even a real majority of them (if they should have made such an assumption in the first place). With this mobility has come a movement of global sounds; students are bombarded with music through flows of culture and technology that structure their lives and relationships. Students report unprecedented access to a global soundscape via video- and music-streaming services and social media platforms. K-pop, Southern American trap, Indonesian punk, and remixes and mashups of a multitude of global genres pump through white ear buds, intersecting with the sounds of urban bustle as they speed walk to campus.

As students enter the classroom with aesthetic sensibilities developed through this intensive contact with musical (and non-musical) sound, and with the world at their fingertips, one must ask, is the “Intro to World Music” survey course obsolete? Although students may not need such a class for exposure to global sounds, they need tools for thinking critically about difference, perhaps more than ever before. I argue that in an era of political crisis, coupled with the intensified cultural contact brought on by globalization and technological (post)modernity, instructors may use a rehabilitated “Intro to World Music” curricular framework as a means to engage students in decolonial praxis. The pedagogical approach I propose here focuses on conversations about self and other, resists Eurocentric thinking, and facilitates encounters with others in the context of experiential learning projects. The teaching strategies I share below may help students to move beyond the cultivation of oppositional or analogous thinking about culture (e.g., how “they” are different from or similar to “us”), toward relational thinking about cultural difference that is other-centered, rather than self-centered. Both the pedagogical approach and teaching strategies can be applied to any course on music in its social/historical context,

including the music history survey. Unfortunately, however, what I offer here is not a solution to the problem of colonization. As I will discuss at several points in the essay, I believe that the structural realities of twenty-first-century academic life relegate decolonization to the realm of the aspirational. What follows are my thoughts on why and how we should try anyway.

### Setting the Terms of Engagement

My use of “decolonization” throughout this essay refers to techniques intended to break the shackles of colonial, imperial, and/or Eurocentric thinking about what music is, who makes it and listens to it, and how it functions in human societies. But defining decolonization in fixed terms or proscribing what it should look like for all people in all contexts is antithetical to the concept. Cultural studies scholars Catherine Walsh and Walter D. Mignolo do not “provide global answers” or “sketch global designs for liberation.” Instead, they define decoloniality in terms of *relationality*, that is:

the ways that different local histories and embodied conceptions and practices of decoloniality, including our own, can enter into conversations and build understandings that both cross geopolitical locations and colonial differences, and contest the totalizing claims and political-epistemic violence of modernity.<sup>1</sup>

The mere *inclusion* of “Intro to World Music” and more specialized area-studies courses by music-department curricula is not itself a form of decolonization; according to Alejandro Madrid this is “diversity understood as tokenism.” In his rejection of a tokenistic integration of Ibero-American music into the music history canon, Madrid writes: “it is about quotas and not about the challenging nature that diverse experiences may bring to the very structures music academia has taken for granted for decades.”<sup>2</sup> Decoloniality, as Madrid and others understand it, fundamentally challenges the regimes of knowledge that thrive on exercises of epistemic power and reorients undergraduate music curricula toward an equitable view of who and what counts. Within the “Intro

1. Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 1.

2. Alejandro L. Madrid, “Diversity, Tokenism, Non-Canonical Musics, and the Crisis of the Humanities in U.S. Academia,” this *Journal* 7, no. 2 (2017), 126. I also strongly recommend Sarah Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), for a broader assessment of the hollowness of “diversity language” in higher education.

to World Music” context, this involves a radical resistance to Eurocentric conceptions of “the world” and “music” and a displacement of those conceptions in order to embrace *difference*. This reconfiguration of the course requires an explicit discussion about the power structures that exist in a symbiosis of mutual enablement within those constructions.<sup>3</sup>

The work of decolonization goes far beyond diversifying a syllabus or flipping a classroom. It is not a facile statement of progressive values; it is hard work. Within the constraints of a Western university—with its curricular requirements, heavy investment in Western civilization, institutionalized legacies of slavery and colonialism, recent memories of exclusionary policy and practice, and physical presence on settled indigenous land—this is easier said than done. Decolonization, in other words, is beyond the capability of any individual actor and requires a collective vision that currently eludes academia as a whole. This claim might strike readers as pessimistic or cynical—and many of us have cause to feel that way—but I see coming to terms with this reality as an important first step toward recognizing one’s own agency within the system. Anthropologist Nayantara Sheoran Appleton urges us to recognize our limitations; we may do “anti-colonial, post-colonial, and de-colonial work in the academy,” but we should not “make claims to a ‘decolonized programme,’ ‘decolonized syllabus,’ or a ‘decolonized university.’” According to Appleton, recognizing the entrenchment of colonization in the academy “allows you to be honest—about who you/we are and how you/we are situated within certain privileges.”<sup>4</sup> So let’s be honest about the colonial structures inherent to “Intro to World Music.”

The very concept of the course is highly ideological: the name suggests that one discrete curricular unit can provide a sufficient introduction to the musical diversity of the world’s cultures, in all places and times. To be clear, this is not a characterization of how instructors actually teach the course today, but rather an acknowledgement of the historical tokenization of “world music” within music curricula. The existence of the course is redolent of past dominant stakeholders’ begrudging inclusion of the non-European in the interest of promoting an image of liberal multiculturalism while at the same time reinforcing the primacy of European culture and institutions. Meanwhile, the “broad methodological drift” in historical musicology and ethnomusicology has made—in

3. Edward Said long ago recognized the symbiosis between colonial power and cultural representation in his *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

4. Nayantara Sheoran Appleton, “Do Not ‘Decolonize’... If You Are Not Decolonizing: Progressive Language and Planning Beyond a Hollow Academic Rebranding.” *Critical Ethnic Studies* (blog), January 21, 2019, <http://www.criticaletnicstudiesjournal.org/blog/2019/1/21/do-not-decolonize-if-you-are-not-decolonizing-alternate-language-to-navigate-desires-for-progressive-academia-6y5sg>.

theory—the curricular distinction between musicology’s sub-disciplines less self-evident than in the past.<sup>5</sup> But as Georgina Born cautions,

Rapprochement will require cumulative expansion of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks within which music scholarship proceeds. It will require a commitment to certain arduous passages by which we might eventually arrive on new epistemological and even ontological terrain, backed by serious commitment to changing music pedagogies.<sup>6</sup>

Even with the convergences of musicology’s sub-disciplines over the past three decades, there have been few major attempts at “worlding” music history in a way that renders obsolete the curricular separation of traditional musicological and ethnomusicological subjects that we continue to organize according to the logic of colonial-geographical partition (what Eric Wolf calls “Europe and the people without history”) rather than on, for example, the different methodologies or skillsets involved.<sup>7</sup>

It is worth pointing out that the title of the “Intro to World Music” course itself is derived from one of the most precipitous moments when colonial thinking and the apparatus of global capitalism intersected. One result was the music industry’s invention of “world music” in the 1980s. As Timothy D. Taylor argues, “‘globalization’ and then multiculturalism, its domestic face in the (post)industrialized countries, are new incarnations of an older set of conceptions of difference, but...they entail a greater degree of the commodification of difference, as well as its consumption.”<sup>8</sup> Herein lies the pedagogical predicament: How can curriculum designers and instructors be inclusive of difference in a way that actively disrupts its commodification at the axis of neo-colonial political and economic relations, both of which unavoidably inform student (and instructor) worldviews in a US-based classroom?

The classroom context itself inevitably affects how one begins to answer such a question. Although there are many different kinds of settings in which

5. Georgina Born, “For a Relational Musicology: Music and Interdisciplinarity, Beyond the Practice Turn,” *Journal of the Royal Music Association* 135, no. 2 (2010), 224.

6. Born, “For a Relational Musicology,” 210. For other opinions about the supposed convergence of musicology’s sub-disciplines, see Nicholas Cook, “We Are All (Ethno)musicologists Now,” in *The New (Ethno)musicologies*, ed. Henry Stobart (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008); Martin Stokes, “A Worldly Musicology?” in *The Cambridge History of World Music*, ed. Philip V. Bohlman (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Laudin Nooshin, “A Rose by Any Other Name . . . : ‘Cultural Musicology’ and Its Premises,” *Cultural Musicology iZine* (2014), <http://bit.ly/2brUd10>.

7. Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

8. Timothy D. Taylor, *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 123.

survey courses such as “Intro to World Music” are taught, in this essay I focus on the large lecture format, as it is the context in which I developed the curricular insights and pedagogical techniques discussed below. Like other survey courses, often “Intro to World Music” involves “warehousing several hundred students in a lecture hall to be talked at by a distant professor on the stage. Then they are farmed out to ‘discussion sections’ to—theoretically—engage more actively with the material under the care of a graduate student.”<sup>9</sup> At my institution, “Intro to World Music”<sup>10</sup> is set up as a 180-student course, and weekly meetings consist of two 50-minute lecture sessions with the lead instructor (usually a full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty member), plus a 50-minute recitation section, in which students break out into groups of twenty for small classroom teaching by a graduate teaching assistant. The size and organization of my class is in many ways beside the point; as historian Kevin Gannon writes in a recent essay for *Chronicle Vitae*, “It doesn’t matter if there are 20 or 200 students in a classroom; if the course design and dominant pedagogy are predicated on merely transferring chunks of content, then the class itself will be—to use a technical term—a dud.”<sup>11</sup>

Curricular changes to the survey—even those aimed at lofty, politically driven goals—should scale to a variety of classroom settings. But the large lecture format, which is a structural reality of the neoliberal university and its drive toward higher FTE numbers, is set up precisely for content delivery and not for the kind of radical re-organization and questioning demanded by a decolonial pedagogy. It therefore requires a special set of considerations to account for the forms of instructor-student engagement that are peculiar to the setting and, it must be said, that are bizarre in comparison to the dialogical nature of most other forms of human communication. In short, I ask: How can instructors work within a large lecture format to move beyond content delivery and toward a form of student engagement with course materials that actively resists the de-humanizing logics of both the classroom setting and the survey-oriented curriculum?

9. Kevin Gannon, “How to Fix the Dreaded Survey Course.” *Chronicle Vitae*, 7 May 2019. <https://chroniclevitae.com/news/2195-how-to-fix-the-dreaded-survey-course>.

10. The course title at my institution is actually “Introduction to World Musics,” with “musics” in the plural form to indicate ethnomusicology’s embrace of a plurality of culturally formed notions of music in the world. This usage of “music” in the plural form has been paradigmatic since at least the publication of Alan Merriam’s *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964). In the body of the current essay, however, I use the more common “Intro to World Music” title, with “music” in the singular form, in order to avoid distracting from the general application of my findings for teaching such courses at other institutions.

11. Gannon, “How to Fix.”

Bearing in mind these observations about the course's existential flaws within an endemically flawed academia, the structural limitations of the large lecture format, and the problems/opportunities presented by students' potential access to many of the sounds and traditions normally included in the curriculum, I have identified three major, interconnected pedagogical challenges inherent to the "Intro to World Music" survey course:

1. Large lecture courses create specific pedagogical challenges related to both student interest and the physical setting of the classroom. Students who enroll in the "Intro to World Music" survey are not generally self-selecting based on an interest in the course material, except perhaps a general interest in music. Rather, the majority of students are enrolled in order to satisfy a general education or "diversity" requirement. Fulfilling a "diversity" requirement in a lecture-based environment with minimal dialogical process does not allow for a level of engagement that sufficiently prepares students (or instructors) for holding difficult conversations about cultural difference.
2. The course topic itself, although it provides music departments and students with "diversity credentials," emanates from Eurocentric thought. Relatedly, student diversity presents a challenge in terms of mitigating cultural difference between student learners and musicians/traditions that compose the curriculum. It is not the case that all students are white, US-born, and Christian, and that all musics studied are created by brown and black people *somewhere else*, but this is the perception of many students entering the course.
3. In spite of their apparently rich listening experiences, students have a perceived lack of expertise and attendant lexicon to discuss musical sound or cultural phenomena; they often profess an ignorance of "music theory" and the "correct" language for producing insightful analyses. In cases where music majors or other student musicians have prior formal training, it is usually in "Western" music, and this places them in a mindset for analogous thinking (e.g., using concepts applicable to Western music) rather than a challenging engagement with the music of others on the terms of others.

In light of these challenges, it is clear that the large-lecture classroom environment—with its logic of herding masses of students for capitalist efficiency in an institutional context where European epistemologies masquerade as universals—is not set up for successful decolonial work.

## Modeling Representation in Curriculum Design

No amount of pedagogical innovation or instructional technology is capable of rehabilitating a fatally flawed curriculum design. I have had to re-examine how my own colonized thinking about music and its geographies has manifested in my organization of the “Intro to World Music” course. Should the course focus on discretely bounded, colonial produced geographies (“sub-Saharan Africa,” “the Middle East,” etc.) or break from the geographical mode entirely and attempt to capture the “soundscapes” of global, cultural flow?<sup>12</sup> One pitfall of the latter approach is that an overriding concept (such as “Music and Politics”) may obscure the distinctiveness of local histories and sounds discussed within the same unit. The geographical approach, however, runs the risk of reinforcing colonial conceptions of space and time while poorly attending to processes of cultural exchange ushered in by the age of globalization, or that pre-date modern globalization (e.g., the Silk Road).

To be sure, then, neither approach to organizing the curriculum is inherently de-, anti-, or post-colonial; indeed, the solution is not to be found in curriculum organization. Any curricular design requires conversations with the students that expressly identify potential problems inherent in a given approach. In other words, an early-semester discussion about the limitations of the very conception of the course can have great pedagogical value, as it undermines the idea of the curriculum being automatically authoritative. Without careful attention to pedagogy, both of my proposed organizational schemes can reinforce the very colonial narratives that I believe world music instructors are charged with disrupting. I have taught the course both ways and find that I prefer to embrace overarching concepts while attempting to mitigate some of the challenges presented by a lack of sustained contact with easily digestible (though problematic) cultural geography. Other instructors will find ways of mitigating the challenges presented by the geographical approach when they choose to organize their curriculum using that method.

I base the semester-long curriculum around bi-weekly, themed units. The topics and case studies vary year-to-year based on a number of variables, including past success with certain lessons, newly published scholarship, and

12. The formative work of the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai offers a conceptual (as opposed to geographical) framework for the study of music from a broad, global perspective. See *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). For a textbook that approaches the curriculum in a similar way, see Kay Kaufman Shelemy, *Soundscapes: Exploring Music in a Changing World*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015). Although I feel this is a very well conceived textbook, I no longer require the purchase of expensive textbooks due to the economic diversity of my institution's students.

current events. Recent iterations of the course have included the following units: “Locating Music” (space, performing contexts, globalization), “Music’s Materials” (theoretical building blocks [e.g., rhythm, mode], music and/as material culture), “Sound and the Sacred” (ritual, liturgy, theological debates), “Music and Politics” (protest, ecocriticism, postcolonialism), and “Music and Identity” (race, gender, intersectionality). There are many other units that one could plug in to this structure, such as “Music and the Body” (disability studies, embodiment, entrainment). The point of structuring the semester this way is to privilege a conceptual approach but still allow for more than a fleeting exposure to music via repetition and recall; for instance, students will encounter and then return to a certain tradition, such as Shona mbira music, in the context of multiple course units (“Music’s Materials,” “Sound and the Sacred,” and “Music and Politics”). Dispensing with the pretense of “coverage” has been incredibly liberating for me, as it has freed me to focus on topics that motivate me as a scholar and instructor, and that I feel have staying power for the students’ intellectual development after the semester’s end.

I draw the reading materials for these units from peer-reviewed articles from journals such as *Ethnomusicology* and *Ethnomusicology Forum* and excerpts from monographs and edited volumes based on their relevance and accessibility for mixed-level undergraduate readers. Although a few of these materials are classics of the ethnomusicological canon, such as Paul Berliner’s *The Soul of Mbira*, the majority of readings come from the past decade.<sup>13</sup> Committing to a focus on recently published materials not only keeps me up-to-date on the latest scholarship, it allows me to include new scholarship from authors who identify as women, queer, black, indigenous, and people of color. It allows the students to access contemporary, cutting edge scholarly research, even in an “intro” course.

As an example, Meredith Schweig’s 2016 article, “‘Young Soldiers, One Day We Will Change Taiwan’: Masculinity Politics in the Taiwan Rap Scene,” is an effective resource in the “Music and Identity” unit of the course.<sup>14</sup> Schweig’s study serves as an excellent primer for students learning about music as a locus for gender performance, masculinity politics, homosociality, and the association of gender and genre, all while focusing on the specific context of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Taiwan. It is written in accessible language that clearly articulates relationships between musical practice (and style) and social history; thus, students are not left guessing why the extramusical

13. Paul Berliner, *The Soul of Mbira: Music and Traditions of the Shona People of Zimbabwe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993; originally published in 1978).

14. Meredith Schweig, “‘Young Soldiers, One Day We Will Change Taiwan’: Masculinity Politics in the Taiwan Rap Scene,” *Ethnomusicology* 60, no. 3 (2016): 384–410.

context is relevant to their understanding of hip-hop, and vice versa. The reading even introduces broader ethnomusicological concepts, such as Mark Slobin’s “micromusics,”<sup>15</sup> and gives the students the opportunity to talk about the globalization of a musical tradition that emerged from a very specific US context with which the majority of them are already familiar. In short, there is a lot that one can do with such a reading.

In planning the biweekly units, I try to include a variety of cultural settings, musical styles, and traditions, in relation to the topic. By way of example, the unit on “Music and Politics” from the latest iteration of the course highlighted multiple political/politicized uses of music. The unit is mapped out below:

- In preparation for the first day, we read an excerpt from David McDonald’s 2013 book, *My Voice Is My Weapon*, related to Palestinian hip hop and the poetics of resistance.<sup>16</sup> Students arrive already conversant on issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian crisis and the region’s multi-faith religious soundscape after an introduction to it during the prior “Sound and the Sacred” unit. Engaging with McDonald’s ethnographic writing, an assortment of music videos, and televised interviews with musicians, we discuss the specifics of how Palestinians use music to express political traumas and grievances. We also cross-examine the widespread association of hip hop with political resistance, discuss the routes of hip hop’s globalization (and the media forms that enable that process), and assess how people localize global musics in order to satisfy their own social and/or political needs.
- On the second day we study how climate activists in Japan mobilized a local musical practice for political purposes, while broadcasting that message to global audiences. After reading Marié Abe’s 2016 article, “Sounding Against Nuclear Power in Post-3.11 Japan,”<sup>17</sup> we learn about *chindon-ya*, a practice of musical advertisement dating to the nineteenth century. Twenty-first century practitioners of *chindon-ya* politicized their musical instruments, sounds, and costuming for sound demonstrations protesting the Japanese government in the wake of the Fukushima disaster in March 2011. In thinking about music at the axis of the global and local, we make contrasts between the Palestinian and Japanese examples—not by drawing false equivalences for the sake of comparison—but rather by drawing attention to the historical and political specificities of the respective contexts.
- On day three we turn toward cultural politics in India, specifically investigating how intergenerational discourses are affected by the circulation of anti-colonial and anti-capitalist ideologies. Jayson Beaster-Jones’s 2009 article

15. Mark Slobin, *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1993).

16. David A. McDonald, *My Voice Is My Weapon: Music, Nationalism, and the Poetics of Palestinian Resistance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 231–261.

17. Marié Abe, “Sounding Against Nuclear Power in Post-3.11 Japan: Resonances of Silence and Chindon-ya,” *Ethnomusicology* 60, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2016): 233–262.

“Evergreens to Remixes”<sup>18</sup> provides an introduction to Hindi film song and the Bollywood film industry, with its unique distributions of artistic labor. It also inspires a review of the aesthetics and nuts-and-bolts of remix, broadly conceived, all the while grappling with Indian commentators’ notions of musical originality, nostalgia, and anti-colonial politics.

- The “Music and Politics” unit ends with Suzanne Cusick’s important 2006 article, “Music as Torture / Music as Weapon.”<sup>19</sup> Not only do we discuss the specific case of the US military use of music for the purpose of torturing prisoners of war, but also the agency of US soldiers in implementing this violence.<sup>20</sup> To conclude, we discuss how the study of music—or, if you like, musical expertise—might create special opportunities to speak truth to power in the age in which we live.

### Inside the “Lecture” Hall

My remit as instructor of this large-enrollment course is to lecture, but I try to break out of that mode of communication whenever possible. For my part, I try to connect students to the course material through not only “delivering” information about music traditions from around the world, but also by opening up a large-group conversation about the nature of the research involved (e.g., ethnographic fieldwork) and about how music scholars represent culture, often the culture of others, in their scholarship. In lecture, in other words, I see my role as facilitating a meta-level conversation about how we come to know the very material we are studying.

During parts of lecture, students spend some time as listeners—both to my voice as lecturer and to the various musical examples I have prepared for the day. But during much of the time, students are speaking. Often, after a few minutes spent introducing the topic for the day, I will pose a discussion question to the students that requires them to break into discussion in various configurations (two, three, or four to a group, or groupings with people they haven’t met yet). These prompts are always clearly projected so that students can continually refer to the prompts during discussion. For example, during

18. Jayson Beaster-Jones, “Evergreens to Remixes: Hindi Film Songs and India’s Popular Music Heritage,” *Ethnomusicology* 53, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 425–448.

19. Suzanne G. Cusick, “Music as Torture / Music as Weapon,” *TRANS - Revista Transcultural de Música / Transcultural Music Review* 10 (2006), <https://www.sibetrans.com/trans/articulo/152/music-as-torture-music-as-weapon>.

20. This discussion is shaped by J. Martin Daughtry’s book-length study, *Listening to War: Sound, Music, Trauma, and Survival in Wartime Iraq* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

a class dedicated to the Black Pacific in the “Music and Identity” unit, I begin class with the following prompt: “Turn to a neighbor and discuss the following question: What is race?” I intentionally leave the opening question broad in order to solicit the greatest variety of responses when I ask students to come together to share their definitions. After collecting five or six responses, I share some scholars’ published attempts to define this nebulous concept or else reconfigure it. One such example is philosopher Adam Hochman’s definition of racialization as “the process through which *racialized* groups, rather than ‘races,’ are formed.”<sup>21</sup> The conversation thus moves from ontological givens to thinking about power and process.

I follow this with another discussion prompt: “Turn to a different neighbor and discuss the following question: Can you think of any examples where music was involved in the process of racializing a group of people?” Responses here range from the students’ pre-existing knowledge of Anglo-American pop to recollections of music discussed earlier in the semester where a racializing presence was palpable but not the main conversation topic. For example, a student might bring up Carolyn Ramzy’s work on Coptic liturgy that we discussed during the “Sound and the Sacred” unit several weeks prior.<sup>22</sup> This discussion about race is geared toward thinking about the meaning of blackness at the intersection of music, nationalism, and colonialism, priming the pump for a spirited discussion of Gabriel Solis’s essay “The Black Pacific: Music and Racialization in Papua New Guinea and Australia.”<sup>23</sup> I add to the discussion an assortment of other scholarly theories (including Paul Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic” framework and Antonio Gramsci’s “subaltern” term<sup>24</sup>), and several musical examples emanating from Australian aboriginal spaces, such as Yothu Yindi’s “Treaty” (1991) and Local Knowledge’s “Blackfellas” (2005).

Even though students often enter the classroom with considerable musical experience as listeners (and sometimes as performers and creators), they are often too intimidated to engage with the music of “other” cultures because of either a perceived lack of technical vocabulary or a fear of being insensitive or awkward. To remedy this, during lectures and recitation sections, members of the instruction team lead group listening assignments that empower students

21. Adam Hochman, “Racialization: A Defense of the Concept,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42, no. 8 (2018), 1246; emphasis in original.

22. Carolyn Ramzy, “Autotuned Belonging: Coptic Popular Song and the Politics of Neo-Pentecostal Pedagogies,” *Ethnomusicology* 60, no. 3 (2016): 434–58.

23. Gabriel Solis, “The Black Pacific: Music and Racialization in Papua New Guinea and Australia,” *Critical Sociology* 4, no. 2 (2014): 1–16.

24. Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

to think through their sonic experiences in the space of the classroom, in order to bring their own soundworlds into contact with the apparently distant soundworlds and lifeways of the people that we study in the curriculum—all the while using analogy and comparison to develop a critical lexicon for talking about sound and culture. I encourage students to use their own pre-existing vocabulary to engage with the material, often through think-pair-share exercises that present low-stakes opportunities for students to “talk it out” before sharing their insights with the group. What emerges is essentially a vernacular music theory that pushes students to use their own words to discuss what they hear; when appropriate, we support them with terminology and contextual information on which to build the conversation. Students do the great majority of talking during these moments. For the “Blackfellas” analysis, they typically focus on the meaning of lyrics vis-à-vis its colonial context, on elements of song production, and on the music video, most especially the non-verbal communicative gestures and dance choreography.

This is where critical engagement begins, not ends. As stated above, one of the main pedagogical goals of the course is to move beyond analogical thinking about difference. Minimizing sound anxiety through the above exercise gives students firmer ground on which to explore complex topics about sociocultural phenomena, many of which may seem distant from their own backgrounds or experiences. To some extent, this approaches what Sonia Seeman describes as “embodied pedagogy”: “a second level of teaching that is necessary for the students’ experience of far-near juxtaposition in such a way that they engage with a higher level of understanding.” An embodied pedagogy can function “as an effective means for conveying what music is and what music does.”<sup>25</sup> When students develop tools to articulate their aural experience, theoretical relations between music and globalization, identity, race, gender, and politics become more than hypothetical constructs. Instead of simply taking the instructor at their word, students learn to appreciate music’s meaningfulness through close attention to the processes of contextualization (e.g., religious worship, politics, gender norms) and decontextualization (e.g., globalization, commodification) that make their own musical experiences possible. This is especially important when dealing with controversial subjects, where political and ideological frameworks meet with an attention to human experience and practice. Critical listening and critical thinking thus become mutually constitutive. At the very end of the “Black Pacific” class, I leave students with a reflection question: “As you leave the class, consider the ways that your own racial identity and/

25. Sonia Tamar Seeman, “Embodied Pedagogy: Techniques for Exploring Why and How Music Matters,” in *College Music Curricula for a New Century*, ed. Robin D. Moore (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 193.

or racialized person is bound up with structures of power and circulations of culture (including music).” Such an exercise can be a powerful one for students, especially white students, who may not have considered their identity in racialized terms or reflected on the role of music or other cultural forms in their beliefs about race.

Sometimes, a highly effective way of bridging such the divide between listening and thinking is to bring in examples of local music making to demonstrate the effects of globalization and migration on the local cultural landscape of students’ home area. I also ask students to volunteer their own skills for class demonstrations. As Deborah Bradley sagely points out, “Where music education fails to help students make musical connections to their lives outside school, many infer that they are simply ‘not musical,’ or that their areas of musical interest lack value.” This often creates a sense of “musical inferiority” that according to Bradley, “mirrors the internalized sense of inferiority that results when indigenous cultures are denigrated in colonialist systems of education.”<sup>26</sup> One student, who had studied the Chinese pipa privately, performed for her fellow students and held a question-and-answer session afterward that brought home many of the issues that had seemed abstract to the other students prior to that class day.<sup>27</sup> Moments of direct exposure to “world musics” act as what Seeman describes as “a conscious and conscientious shifting between far and near experiences.”<sup>28</sup> These types of activities empower students for whom such traditions are familiar signifiers of home a chance to speak for themselves and to take pride in (or to take issue with!) how they are represented in the curriculum, thus taking representational authority away from the instructor and placing it in the hands of students. I have noted from course evaluations, and from one-on-one conversations with students during office hours, that this is all too rare at my institution, and I suspect at many others, too.

In order to model this approach of colonized or oppressed subjects taking charge of their own representation, I offer up my own experience as a person of color and descendent of immigrants during lectures to illustrate concepts introduced in the course units, explicitly drawing on my own families’ migrations to the US from Syria and Puerto Rico. For example, when explaining the difference between “push” and “pull” migration factors and diasporic identity, I discuss the economic migration of my mother’s family out of Syria to contrast with the current refugee crisis stemming from the ongoing Syrian Civil War.

26. Deborah Bradley, “Good for What, Good for Whom? Decolonizing Music Education Philosophies.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education*, ed. Wayne Bowman and Ana Lucía Frega (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 415.

27. The pipa is a four-stringed, plucked, short-necked lute.

28. Seeman, “Embodied,” 291.

In discussions of racial politics and whiteness, I bring into the conversation my Puerto Rican grandmother's attempts to negotiate life in her host society as an adult migrant, providing rich detail about the role of Puerto Rican cultural practices in my childhood and adult self-actualization. *Salsa* music, *telenovelas*, and *arroz con gandules* represent for the students examples of cultural continuity across the point of migration. On the other hand, my Puerto Rican father's affinity for the Beatles and his activities as an amateur rock musician complicate the picture for them and demonstrate patterns of diasporic adaptation. These narratives allow me to illustrate the personal stakes of the ethnomusicological concepts introduced in the curriculum. Ideally, they also help students reflect on how those concepts might inform their own worldviews. Like the musical demonstrations described above, such experiences provide opportunities for students to have a transformational learning experience about what it is like to be different.

Perhaps the most important pedagogical tool for integrating decolonial ideas into the "Intro to World Music" classroom is highlighting the central methodology employed in ethnomusicological research: ethnographic fieldwork. In discussions of readings, I draw students' attention to passages of interview material and ethnographic accounts of the researcher's experiences in the field. For example, in the case of the Schweig article on Taiwanese rap discussed above, students learn to read a musician's statements about gender and genre against the grain. This metacognitive approach allows them to discuss the role of differing gender concepts and relations, both in carrying out fieldwork and in representing musical experience through writing, building toward a critique of knowledge production within ethnomusicology.

In order to bring home these critiques of representation and knowledge production, I spend at least one day per semester lecturing on my own research. For instance, when I present on the religious soundscape of Jerusalem, I not only share my field recordings, videos, and photographs, but I talk about the process of collecting and creating them in the field. I focus especially on ethical issues, such as requesting permission to record when appropriate or how such materials are framed in terms of their capacity for cultural representation (e.g., "What *isn't* in frame or within earshot here?"). I also stress the importance of building relationships with research subjects, who in the classroom context I refer to as my "teachers," in order to acknowledge the intellectual labor performed by "informants" in the context of human-subject research. Discussing my own research gives a fuller portrait of musical life in the world than does simple content delivery that focuses too closely on musical objects. More importantly, however, foregrounding the politics involved in producing such knowledge prepares students to do the decolonial work that a better world would demand of them.

### Experiential Learning, Multimodality, and Empowerment

I have found that integrating experiential learning (EL) theory into course assignments can heighten the decolonial potential of the curricular and pedagogical issues described above. Educational theorist David A. Kolb describes EL theory as “a dynamic view of learning based on a learning cycle driven by the resolution of the dual dialectics of action/reflection and experience/abstraction.”<sup>29</sup> Scholars who have paired action and reflection in their classrooms include Amanda Black and Andrea Bohlman, who have written on their use of “soundwalks” on a campus fraught with toxic racial politics. They suggest that “care-oriented and site-specific ‘sonic meditations’... have the potential to reposition listening as a collective exercise in the music (history) classroom—and thus as an activity fundamentally linked with community and collective action.”<sup>30</sup> Other scholars, such as Kate Galloway, have focused on creative outputs as processes that foster students’ critical reflection.<sup>31</sup> Here, I build on these arguments and related pedagogical techniques by sharing some of the strategies I have developed for integrating EL into my own teaching in the “Intro to World Music” classroom, specifically through teaching the theory and practice of ethnography. Although ethnographic fieldwork can sometimes resemble a colonial methodology—traditionally, Western researchers have traveled elsewhere to learn from the “natives,” sometimes even in service to a colonial administration—in the context of the classroom, it can be reframed to highlight the decolonial potential of the course: as a way of holding space for musicians to speak for themselves and to explore the iterative relations between action/reflection and experience/abstraction. In particular, the experience/abstraction relation gets to the heart of representational politics when students experiment

29. David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2015), 50–51. Several contributions to this journal have suggested ways of building EL into the music classroom, even if EL is not always explicitly referenced. James O’Leary and Danielle Ward-Griffin, for instance, demonstrate the value of hands-on archival research for undergraduate music history courses. James O’Leary and Danielle Ward-Griffin, “Digging in Your Own Backyard: Archives in the Music History Classroom,” this *Journal* 7, no. 2 (2017), 1–18.

30. Amanda M. Black and Andrea F. Bohlman, “Resounding the Campus: Pedagogy, Race, and the Environment,” this *Journal* 8, no. 1 (2017), 9.

31. Kate Galloway describes how she uses tools and methods drawn from the digital humanities in order to transform the classroom into a “makerspace.” As she argues, “By working with environmental sound and music directly and creatively, students learn how technologies and participatory approaches can be used to convey narratives and social activism, illustrating the importance of embodied knowledge to musicological scholarship.” Galloway, “Making and Learning with Environmental Sound: Maker Culture, Ecomusicology, and the Digital Humanities in Music History Pedagogy,” this *Journal* 8, no. 1 (2017), 48.

with multiple modalities for representing their experiences (textually and non-textually), as I will discuss below.

I augment the content of the course with experiential learning assignments that culminate in multimodal projects that replace some traditional forms of evaluation, such as traditional essays and exams. These assignments challenge students to engage critically with the material and reflect on the politics of learning together. Multimodality refers to allowing for research outputs that utilize multiple forms of communicating ideas, rather than upholding the supremacy of text.<sup>32</sup> As Ioana Literat et al. argue, “multimodal research is valuable because of its potential for more comprehensive and inclusive inquiries, analyses, and representations that can be socially, culturally and politically transformative” and because it can “facilitate wider and more meaningful participation in the research processes.”<sup>33</sup> Such acts of inclusion hold the greatest decolonial potential for both curriculum and pedagogy.

Anthropologist Julius Bautista argues “for a pedagogic dialogism that channels how anthropologists handle the discursive politics of ethnographic practice such that meaningful learning occurs when students ‘struggle’ with the mutually awkward, some-times uncomfortable effort to recognize the agency of the people that they encounter in the course of EL-based curricular programs.”<sup>34</sup> To this end, I not only talk about ethnography during lectures, but I actually require them to engage in the “struggle” Bautista describes by assigning ethnographic research projects conducted in the region surrounding campus. In recent iterations of the course, I have assigned three such projects, each carried out in collaborative groups and with a unique topic or output. Students typically begin with a general prompt, such as “In groups of five, attend, observe, and/or participate in any musical performance relating to the genres, practices, traditions, styles, and/or topics discussed in class. Take notes and collaborate to jointly author a 3–4-page ethnographic sketch based on your jottings.” Students are empowered to take charge of forming research teams, selecting field sites, and making contact with people with whom they might speak. In other words, the primary goal of the project is for students to experiment with methodology. Subsequent assignments become more specific, with specific research questions

32. See, e.g., Ioana Literat, et al., “Toward Multimodal Inquiry: Opportunities, Challenges and Implications of Multimodality for Research and Scholarship,” *Higher Education Research & Development* 37, no. 3 (2018); Gwyndolynne Reid, et al. “Multimodal Communication in the University: Surveying Faculty Across Disciplines,” *Across the Disciplines* 13 (2016).

33. Literat, et al., “Toward Multimodal Inquiry,” 569–70.

34. Julius Bautista, “Uncomfortable Pedagogy: Experiential Learning as an Anthropological Encounter in the Asia-Pacific,” *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 13, no. 3 (2018), 247.

guiding the project. For one assignment, for example, I ask students to attend a religious service, site, or event within a community of which a majority of the group are not members and write a 3–4-page ethnographic description of how sound functions within that setting.<sup>35</sup> For this project, the primary aim is for students to think about how they represent a sacred or sensitive cultural domain in their production of knowledge. One reason for requiring written essays as the final outputs for such projects is to get students thinking about the process of producing the ethnomusicological research that we read throughout the semester while preparing them for the multimedia project they produce at the end of term.

This is the point at which Seeman’s “embodied pedagogy” and Bautista’s “pedagogy of discomfort” converge, and classroom discussions form a feedback loop with students’ external experiences. They start to think about music beyond a text to be analyzed in class and instead as a product of human intellectual and creative labor that is embedded in social life. But the ethnographies also serve the mission of the course in that they force students to confront the dynamics of knowledge production itself. Working in collaborative teams creates opportunities for students to engage in metacognition about writing in a different way than they would if producing a single-authored paper and, more to the point, they engage in a metacognitive consideration of how musical experience is represented in writing. This engagement in metacognition about the creation of knowledge serves the decolonial ends of the course.

Written essays are only one form of cultural representation with which students may experiment in the context of “Intro to World Music.” Multimodal learning projects can draw on the ethos of ethnographic research while decoupling it from the technology of writing (traditionally defined) and associating it with other narrative media technologies with which students may already be familiar, such as film, podcasting, photo essay, mix tape, and other formats. Film is a multimedia format that allows for parallel thinking about visual and sonic domains of representation and, therefore, encourages multimodal learning in the “Intro to World Music” classroom. To this end, for their culminating project students conceive and create a short ethnographic film connected to a specific course topic.

Students collaborate in groups of five to create a short ethnographic film documenting an aspect of the sound world of the Triangle region (Chapel Hill and surrounding towns). Groups develop the project during recitation meetings leading up to the execution of the project. Some past groups have

35. Under extenuating circumstances, in which this assignment may present some students with undue anxiety (for a variety of reasons), I have chosen to arrange for alternative ethnographic assignments that do not specify a religious musical setting.

captured the soundscape of an area of town, documented a single musical event from multiple vantage points, and conducted interviews with musicians who participate in a local scene, group, or religious community. Each project carries with it a different approach to creating narratives about music as an ethnographic subject. Students must secure permission (signed releases) from people who serve as documentary subjects. The films end up being approximately five minutes in length, edited together from a much greater amount of raw footage.

Naturally, rolling out such a project in a large class has involved some logistical challenges. In addition to spending time to develop a project concept drawn from the content of the course, students also must acquire (free of charge through our institution) the necessary software, become trained in using the software through workshops scheduled at the library during their recitation times, check out cameras and microphones, and meet in groups outside of class to film and edit the video. It is a very time- and resource-intensive project that presents the instructors (TAs included) with all kinds of potential headaches with regard to logistics and group dynamics, but the political and pedagogical value of the project trumps the professional inconveniences involved.

The technical quality of the films vary according to student ability and how thoroughly they absorbed the technical training, but across the board such projects have tended to produce truly thoughtful engagement with the politics of representation that serve as a course focal point. At the end of the course, I require students to reflect on those politics, and the relation between action and reflection, in a two-page essay on their experience making the film, focusing on how this project may (or may not) have enhanced their knowledge of musical ethnography, cultural representation, and the topical subjects we discuss throughout the semester. These responses have generally supported the idea that multimodal learning assignments allow students to think more creatively and more critically about broader discussions around methodology and cultural representation than do traditional academic assignments. The ethnographic study of music and experimentation with modes of narration can help students to theorize about cultural encounters and allow for a discussion about how colonial (or anti- or de- or post-colonial) politics are embedded in the very labor of learning about human culture. Thinking critically about cultural difference through thoughtful engagement with musical traditions and issues from around the world helps students to develop skills that can transfer to their lives beyond the class. Such work represents a signal contribution of academic music studies to the development of ethical citizens.

## Conclusion

Is the “Intro to World Music” survey course still relevant? The answer depends on how one teaches it. I remain conflicted about the overall curricular model and feel ambivalent about whether or not the course should be part of current music-department curricula. In principle, I feel that its inclusion has historically been a blatant act of tokenism. In the past the goal has been to “expose” students in a one-semester class to all of the world’s musics from all places and times, in all languages, and of all genres and modes (art/pop/traditional). All the while, a much larger share of departmental resources support specialized teaching of a limited repertoire of music from Western, Central, (occasionally) Eastern Europe, and to some extent North America. “Intro to World Music” seems to be a classic example of inclusion without equity as departments reap the optical benefits of their global music offerings without having to offer the non-European a real foothold in their curricula.

All of that said, I would not support simply doing away with “Intro to World Music” without a plan in place to overhaul the whole music curriculum and thereby achieve greater equity among world traditions across the board. This includes rethinking how we teach music history and analysis.<sup>36</sup> In place of truly aspirational macro-level curricular and institutional decolonization, perhaps micro-level curricular and pedagogical choices that create opportunities for thinking about decoloniality will have to suffice. By establishing a conceptually oriented curricular structure that creates opportunities for repeated encounters with the music of others, framed by pointed discussions about the context and content of music making, and by integrating EL and multimodal learning outputs, any course—but perhaps especially “Intro to World Music”—can create possibilities for students to develop an openness to relationality and radical self-evaluation that could be the foundation of a decolonized world.

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36. See Madrid, “Diversity.”