

2010

MCAPM1013

RESEARCHING POPULAR MUSIC

MODULE HANDBOOK



"Just which heavy metal did you say Edwards is researching?"

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MCAPM1013 Researching Popular Music

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Level/ Credits: Level 1 (Year 1)/ 12 credits

Pre-requisites: None, just an interest in popular music

Semester/ Year: Summer 2010

Day/ Time: Friday, 2 – 5pm

Venue: Dean Walters, 110



MODULE AIM

This module will introduce students to research strategies used in popular music studies, whilst building upon the knowledge gained from the module Approaches to Studying Popular Music. It will explore the applicability of certain research approaches for studying popular music as text, examining music institutions or exploring popular music audiences. Students will be introduced to the process of research while considering its importance and problems, grasping the steps taken and skills necessary by researchers in the process of research, and identifying ethical issues. Students will also learn the basic characteristics of quantitative and qualitative research together with the procedures for implementing the two approaches at each step of the research process.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this module, students should be able to:

- 1 employ a combination of research methods;
- 2 critique research approaches used to study popular music as text;
- 3 evaluate research approaches used to examine the workings of music and culture industries;
- 4 assess research approaches used to study and understand the fans and audiences of popular music;
- 5 communicate effectively in writing, showing evidence of reading.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The course will be delivered by a combination of lectures, seminars and workshops. **Lectures** will provide students with the underpinning theoretical knowledge and understanding about subject-specific issues and academic skills. **Seminars** will enable students to apply theoretical knowledge that involves problem-solving through tutor-led discussion and debate. Students will be actively encouraged to develop skills and knowledge progressively, and seminars will facilitate gradual development of key academic skills, including communication and interpersonal skills. **Workshops** will provide opportunities for students to conduct practical work individually and in small groups with tutor-input to develop a deeper understanding of subject-specific knowledge. **Individual tutorials** will provide opportunities for students to discuss their research/ essay writing with their personal tutor. Students' learning will be supported through using the Virtual Learning Environment Blackboard, which serves as a resource bank for course materials, and as a platform for student-student and student-tutor **online** interaction (with its inbuilt communication tools, including email and discussion board). Students will also engage in **self-directed study** to acquire knowledge and skills independently and autonomously, whilst taking own responsibility for the quantity and quality of their learning.

	Lectures	S/ WS	Tutorial	Fieldwork	Other	TOTAL
Contact hours	12	24	N/A	N/A	N/A	36
Non-contact hours					84 (self-directed study)	84
Timetable	Friday 2 – 3pm	Friday 3.15pm – 5pm	TBA	Flexible	Flexible	N/A
TOTAL						120

SYLLABUS

Week 18: 15 January 2010

Introduction to the module. What is research, and why do it?

This module is designed to guide students through the early stages of developing a research project, from designing a question to submitting a proposal and completing a small-scale original research project. In this first session, we will begin thinking about what is research and why research is important. We will move on to identify the steps in the process of research and reflect on the skills that you already bring to the research process.

Recommended reading:

Creswell, John (2005). 'Chapter 1: The Process of Conducting Research' in *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Pearson, 2-15.

Krüger, Simone (2008). 'Chapter I. Introducing Research' in *Ethnography in the Performing Arts: A Student Guide*. Lancaster: PALATINE, 9-20. [available online at <http://www.palatine.ac.uk/development-awards/1133/>]

Note: there exists currently no research guide or textbook for students on researching popular music.

In-class seminar:

The module aims at high-level interaction in small groups and in this session, you will tackle the following tasks:

- In small groups, think about the 'typical' researcher and imagine what he/she may look like. On a flipchart, make a drawing of the 'typical' researcher. You are not allowed to use text/words to describe what you wish to depict. Upon completion, each group will then explain their drawing to the rest of the class. Are there any preconceived stereotypes emerging when thinking about 'research'?
- The second exercise aims at identifying the skills required for research and that students already possess or still need to develop. Each student should complete the below table; the results should be shared in small groups and

later presented to the rest of the class. Are you surprised to realise that you already possess a range of skills that enable you to conduct a research project? What do you need to do to develop new skills needed to conduct research?

Skills needed	Skills already developed

Week 19: 22 January 2010

Quantitative versus qualitative research methods

This session aims at introducing students to the two broad research paradigms, depending on the type of problem needed to be researched. Each approach shapes the procedures used in the research process, and we will discuss the characteristics that distinguish and are similar for quantitative and qualitative research in each step of the research process. We will move on to identify the types of research designs used as procedures in each paradigm. Finally, we will think about how to decide whether to use quantitative or qualitative research when conducting a project on pop music.

Recommended reading:

Creswell, John (2005). 'Chapter 2: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches' in *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Pearson, 38-57.

Krüger, Simone (2008). 'Chapter I. Introducing Research' in *Ethnography in the Performing Arts: A Student Guide*. Lancaster: PALATINE, 9-20. [available online at <http://www.palatine.ac.uk/development-awards/1133/>]

Seminar:

- In small groups, conduct the following multiple-choice test: http://wps.prenhall.com/chet_creswell_educational_3/70/18052/4621342.cw/index.html.
- You are provided two scenarios. In small groups, decide whether the researcher should use a qualitative or quantitative approach and why. Also, specify what data a researcher should collect. [available at http://wps.prenhall.com/chet_creswell_educational_3/70/18052/4621342.cw/index.html]

Week 20: 29 January 2010

Designing a research project in popular music

This session will focus on the design and development of a research question, which is a crucial stage in the development of any research project. We will specifically distinguish between a research problem, the topic, the purpose and the research questions. We will move on to develop a workable research question by thinking about the object of analysis and the theoretical paradigms you wish to work within or develop. To this end, we will begin thinking about which methods are appropriate

to researching pop music as text, as well as the industries and audiences of popular music.

Recommended reading:

Creswell, John (2005). 'Chapter 3: Identifying a Research Problem' in *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Pearson, 60-73.

Stokes, Jane (2003). 'Getting Started' in *How to do Media and Cultural Studies*. Sage, 7-37.

Seminar:

In this seminar, we will read a research article in popular music and identify the parts of the "statement of the problem" section. Answer the following questions:

- What is the topic for the article and where do you find it in the article?
- What is the research problem and where do you find it in the article?
- What is the justification for the research problem and where do you find it in the article?
- What are the deficiencies in the literature (what do we need to know more about) and where do we find them in the article?
- What are the audiences for this study? If none are mentioned in the article, what audiences would benefit from reading this study?
- What is the narrative hook? How might you re-write the narrative hook to better introduce this study as a quantitative study?

We will also think about how to design a research proposal and the points that it should contain by starting to develop a suitable research problem for a potential research project.

Week 21: 5 February 2010

Reviewing the literature

This session introduces students to five logical steps in reviewing the literature so that students can locate useful literature and write it into a literature review section of a research report. To this end, we will discuss what a literature review is and why it is important in a research project. We will also consider the differences in a review for quantitative and qualitative research. Students will then practise writing a literature review, whilst following the five steps introduced in this session.

Recommended reading:

Creswell, John (2005). 'Chapter 4: Reviewing the Literature' in *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Pearson, 78-114.

Seminar – Drawing a Literature Map

You will be given a literature review on a research topic in popular music (Ewoodzie "The New White Negro in Hip Hop: A Critical Study of Eminem"), which you are required to read in-class. After you have finished, work in small groups on the following task:

- Use a separate sheet of paper to draw a literature map using the box hierarchical structure (provided in-class). Make sure that you title each box and include at least the first reference as an example in the box. Take the map to as many levels as is needed.

Week 22: 12 February 2010

Ethical considerations

Every research project involving humans raises ethical concerns, and this session is designated to discuss and raise awareness of ethical codes of conduct so as to ensure that no participant would be harmed, be it physically, emotionally, financially, professionally, etc. In doing so, we will read the university's own code of practice and discuss the requirement of completing an application for ethic approval prior to a research project.

Recommended reading:

Creswell, John (2005). Pages 11-12; 225-227; 171 in *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Pearson.

Krüger, Simone (2008). *Ethnography in the Performing Arts: A Student Guide*. Lancaster: PALATINE. [available online at <http://www.palatine.ac.uk/development-awards/1133/>] specifically pages 19-21, 62-64, 98-102.

Seminar:

In this session, we will practise completing an application to an ethics committee for ethical approval for research projects with human participants, as required by the university. You will be provided the following sources:

- The topic and brief description for a research project in pop music;
- Ethics application form;
- LJMU Research Code of Conduct

Week 23: 19 February 2010

Review week: Planning an original Research Project

There will be no formal class in this week. Instead, this session is designated as a general review week during which students can book individual tutorials with the module leader to discuss plans for their own original research project. You should prepare a rough outline of your planned research, using the conventions for writing a research proposal.

Week 24: 26 February 2010

Collecting data: quantitative and qualitative approaches

The next three sessions are concerned with data collection techniques, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection, and this first session will set the scene for both paradigms. In semester 1, you already learnt about content analysis, semiotics and genre studies, which are suitable means for understanding pop music as text. In this semester, you will be introduced to the ways in which we can research and better understand the audiences and industries of popular music. To do so, this session aims to introduce students to the steps in data collection and the different types of data that

can be collected in quantitative and qualitative research, for example survey, observation and interview.

Recommended reading:

Creswell, John (2005). 'Chapter 6: Collecting Quantitative Data' and 'Chapter 8: Collecting Qualitative Data' in *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Pearson.

Seminar:

Read the article 'More friends and emotional security – how northern children top the happiness league' (Guardian, 8 January 09), which reports the outcomes of a major study of children's happiness. This is an example of quantitative research based on a score on five measures.¹ Quantitative research is useful to explore general trends and seek broader explanations by including large numbers of participants (here, 150,000 children completed the survey).

Scenario: The DfES now wishes to understand more concretely the reasons for Northern children's happiness. Whilst the survey revealed that teenagers in the North are emotionally more secure due to strong friendships, what exactly does this mean? The DfES also feels it important to consider young people's use of the media (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, etc) for establishing and maintaining friendships.

Task: You are a group of researchers (4 – 5 students) contracted by the Department for Children, Schools and Families to conduct a qualitative research project with young people in the city of Liverpool. Consider the following questions:

- What is your overall research question or problem, and why?
- Who are your research participants, and how do you recruit them for your study?
- What methods will you use, and why are these most appropriate?
- What do you wish to find out from your participants (via questions, observations, etc)?
- Are there any ethical considerations for which you must account?
- What are the advantages/ disadvantages of qualitative modes of enquiry in media studies?

Week 25: 5 March 2010

Researching the music industry: archival, observations and interviewing techniques

This session will show students how to undertake an investigation into the music industry. We will discuss what research methodologies, methods and skills are needed to conduct the research, considering how best to collect relevant data and to present it in a competent manner. In researching the music industry, we will specifically focus on archival, observations and interviewing techniques.

¹ 1) the emotional health of children (how many friends they have and how much they feel able to talk to them about problems); 2) levels of bullying; participation in sports and volunteering; 3) substance misuse; and 4) how happy they are with their access to parks and play areas.

Recommended reading:

Stokes, Jane (2003). 'Chapter 4: Researching Media Institutions and the Culture Industries' in *How to do Media and Cultural Studies*. Sage, 7-37.

Seminar:

In small groups, design an original research project that aims at investigating an area of concern relating to the music industry. For example, your group may (but does not have to) focus on one of the following cases:

- a) The music industry is facing many problems with illegal downloading on the internet.
- b) The music industry is inherently sexist, with women being under-represented and/or exploited at all levels of the industry.
- c) The music industry is exercising global control over musical taste with the four major corporations being situated in the West. Commercialised music around the world is therefore 'Western' in orientation.

Discuss the following questions and present them in-class:

- What is your overall research question or problem, and why?
- Who are your research participants, and how do you recruit them for your study?
- What methods will you use, and why are these most appropriate?
- What do you wish to find out from your participants (via questions, observations, etc)?
- Are there any ethical considerations for which you must account?

Week 26: 12 March 2010**Researching pop music audiences: narrative, surveys and observation research**

This session will show students how to undertake an investigation into the audiences of popular music. We will discuss what research methodologies, methods and skills are needed to conduct the research, considering how best to collect relevant data and to present it in a competent manner. In researching the audiences for popular music, we will specifically focus on narrative, surveys and observational research techniques.

Recommended reading:

Creswell, John (2005). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. Pearson. Specifically chapter 16 (Narrative research designs); chapter 13 (survey designs)

Stokes, Jane (2003). 'Chapter 5: Methods of Analysing Audiences' in *How to do Media and Cultural Studies*. Sage, 128-153.

Seminar:

In small groups, think about a suitable research question to investigate the opinions and perceptions of a selected (by you!) group of pop music audiences. Design a survey questionnaire that you wish to distribute to this group.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of a survey research design? Would narrative or observational research be better suited for understanding pop music audiences? Why/why not?

Week 27: 19 March 2010

Presenting and evaluating research

This session will focus on the ways in which to evaluate research, that is, to critically reflect on the relevance of the findings within the wider context of the chosen subject. We will also consider the need for developing recommendations on future research and, where appropriate, to consider the policy implications of research findings.

Week 28: 26 March 2010

Ethnography

This lecture will begin on the basis that the media are embedded within and shaped by their cultural contexts, and must as such be studied and understood. Ethnography, with its attendant methodology of participant-observation and informal interviewing, will be introduced here as a suitable means for studying and understanding the complex social processes and relationships involved in the production, maintenance and consumption of media texts. We will discuss what ethnographic research is, and how it can be used to illustrate the social, cultural and historical specificity of people's mediated experiences.

Further recommended readings:

- Cohen, Sara. 1993. 'Ethnography and popular music studies' in *Popular Music* 12 (2), 123-38.
- Cottrell, Stephen. 2004. *Professional Music-Making in London: Ethnography and Experience*. Aldershot: Ashgate. Particularly pp. 1-31 and 183-99.
- Krüger, Simone. 2008. *Ethnography in the Performing Arts: A Student Guide*. Lancaster: PALATINE [open access at <http://www.palatine.ac.uk/development-awards/1133/>]

Seminar:

In small groups, design an ethnographic project that looks at young people's use of a specific genre of pop music. Consider the following questions:

- What is your overall research question, and why? (Remember, ethnographers do not begin with a narrow hypothesis, but instead focus on broad, open-ended questions in order to capture people's rich and intertwined mediated experiences.)
- What methods will you use, and why are these most appropriate?
- Who are your research participants, and how do you recruit them for your study?
- What do you wish to find out from your participants (via questions, observations, etc)?
- Are there any ethical considerations for which you must account?
- What are the advantages/ disadvantages of ethnographic modes of enquiry in media studies?

Weeks 29 & 30: 2 & 9 April 2010**Easter break**

HAPPY EASTER!

Week 31: 16 April 2010**Module summary**

In this session, we will review the module as a whole and assess (through self- and peer-feedback) students' acquisition of relevant knowledge on this module. There will also be time for specific questions relating to the research project.

Week 32: 23 April 2010**Directed study week**

There will be no classes during this week.

ASSESSMENT

The module enables students to demonstrate a range of academic and competency-based skills and subject-specific knowledge, and an ability to use knowledge in applied contexts. In order to complete the module successfully, students must submit the following pieces of work (to the campus centre):

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT	Duration	Timing	% of final mark
Research essay	1500 words	26 April 2010	60%
Reflexive essay	1,000 words	26 April 2010	40%

Research essay:

This assessment provides you with the opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of a chosen area in pop music and a particular research method. It requires you to design a small piece of research and present it in the form of a proposal of 1,500-words, including an ethics form. The project can be on a topic of your interest. You should provide details of the research context, a discussion of key research questions, a literature search, and details of the research methods to be deployed.

Reflexive essay:

This assessment provides you with an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the principles of good research design, management and analysis. Provide a rationale for the research proposal of 1,000 words, whilst focusing on the following:

- Articulate and substantiate the aims and objectives of your research proposal.
- Explain why certain research methodologies have been chosen, and the ways in which these approaches relate to the specific research plan.
- Why particular resources have been included.

- What ethical considerations have been accounted for, and why.

Ensure that you correctly deploy academic conventions relating to citations and bibliographical information in the writing up of research

FEEDBACK ON ASSESSMENT

Feedback is a very important part of your learning, as it is our mechanism to let you know whether you are on the right track in your work, and where and how your learning and performance can be improved. The feedback on this module will be provided in the form of formal feedback on assessment, both formative and summative.

Formative feedback seeks to improve your work in the future, which will be provided as follows:

- **Generic feedback** in-class during lectures and seminars on what you appear to be struggling with, without reference to individual assessments. This feedback will be provided verbally to the whole class.
- **Self assessment** of your own achievement in assessed work that will be returned at various times throughout the module (see below). The self-assessment is a written exercise and will be completed in-class against a checklist of assessment criteria. Your tutor will then provide individual feedback on your self-assessment via email.
- **Peer feedback** on sample work by students from previous years. Against clear assessment criteria, you will be asked to mark sample work and provide full written feedback. Your tutor will comment on your feedback verbally in-class.

Summative feedback will be given to sum up the final judgement of the quality of your work, which will be provided by your tutor **in writing** on each assessment item as follows:

ASSESSMENT COMPONENT	Summative feedback by:
Research essay	14 May 2010
Reflexive essay	14 May 2010

MARKING CRITERIA

0-20%: No command of key technological and musicological terminology; lacks ability to communicate effectively; No evidence of reading; an entirely inadequate writing style (poor essay structure, poor use of paragraphs, poor grammar and punctuation).

20-30%: Little command of key technological and musicological terminology; little ability to communicate effectively; Little evidence of reading, and/or an entirely inadequate writing style.

30-39%: Some evidence to use key; Some evidence to articulate knowledge and understanding; yet inadequate use of theoretical and methodological perspectives; very poor writing style.

40-49%: Some attempts evident in using key terminology; adequate writing style; Some attempts evident to use theoretical knowledge; poor grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as poor referencing.

50%-59%: A good attempt to apply key terminology. While some evidence of effective communication, the work displays some problems with academic writing conventions; A good attempt to apply theoretical and methodological perspectives. Some problems with grammar, spelling and punctuation. Inadequate referencing within the body of your text can also prevent essays from receiving a mark of more than 59%.

60%-69%: A nuanced and sophisticated attempt to apply and evaluate key terminology This is communicated intelligibly. While this is work of good quality, it still lacks in originality and critical conceptualisation. A nuanced and sophisticated attempt to apply and evaluate at least one theoretical perspective or methodological technique. Good referencing.

70%-79% An intelligent critical analysis which shows a thorough apprehension of theoretical and musicological key terminology. Excellent style of communication with no or very few errors in the writing. An immaculately referenced essay. No or very few errors of punctuation, grammar or spelling.

80%+ A highly original and critically rigorous analysis that breaks new ground in the analysis of world music. Excellent written communication.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Babbie, E (1995) *The Practice of Social Research*, Wadsworth/International Thomson
- Bell, J. (1974) *Doing Your Research Project*, Open University Press, Oxford
- Berry, R. (1974) *The Research Project and How to Write It* (3rd edition), Routledge, London
- Burton, D. (ed) (2000) *Research Training for Social Scientists*, Sage, London
- Bryman, A and Burgess, S (2003) *Business Research Methods*, Oxford University
- Creswell, J. W. (2005) *Educational Research :Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Krüger, S. (2008) *Ethnography in the Performing Arts :A Student Guide*. Lancaster: PALATINE.
- LeCompte, M. D. and Schensul J.J. (eds) (1999) *Ethnographer's Toolkit, 7 volumes*. Oxford: Altamira Press.
- PressCarson, D. Gilmore, A. Gronhaug, K. and Perry, C (2001) *Qualitative Marketing Research*, Sage
- Clark, M., Riley, M. Wilkie, E. & Wood, R.C. (1998) *Researching and Writing Dissertations in Hospitality and Tourism* Thomson Learning, London
- Collis, J and Hussey, R (2003) *Business Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (2nd edition) , Sage, London
- Punch, K.F. (2000) *Developing Effective Research Proposals*, Sage, London
- Saunders, M. Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2000) *Research Methods for Business Students* (2nd edition), Financial Times, Prentice Hall, Englewood-Cliffs
- Veal, A.J. (1997) *Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism* Pitman, London
- Sampsel, L. J. (2008) *Music Research :A Handbook* Open University Press
- Stokes, J. (2003) *How to do Media and Cultural Studies*. London: Sage.
- V-Resort: Virtual Resources for Online Research Training. Available at <http://www.v-resort.ac.uk/index.php>.