

PAUL ALEXANDER AITKEN

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(Revised April 2010)

EDUCATION

Ph.D. (expected fall) 2011, Institute of Communications Studies, University of Leeds.

Thesis Title: *Criminal Gifts: Critical Theories of the Gift and Online Music Piracy*.

M.A. (2007), Department of Music, School of the Arts, McMaster University.

Thesis Title: *Online Music Communities: Challenging Capitalism, Sexism, and Authority in Popular Music*.

B.F.A. (2002), Department of Music, York University.

Additional studies at King's College, University of Western Ontario (1993 – 94), The University of York, UK (1997 – 98), The University of Western Ontario (1998 – 99, 2001), and Dalhousie University (2004 – 05).

RESEARCH INTERESTS

culture and technology; popular music aesthetics; popular music culture; cultural theory; critical anthropology; theories of the gift; music and criminality; media analysis; communication theory

TEACHING POSITIONS

Instructor

“Political Economy of the Media,” McMaster University, Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia, 2009.

As the sole instructor of this undergraduate level course, I was responsible for introducing students to the analysis of political and economic aspects of media in Canada and around the world. The goals of the course was to enable students to understand and evaluate the basic principles of a political economy approach to mass media, and be able to enter into a debate around key issues of power and control over resources. Students were taught to understand the philosophical and historical influences on contemporary debates on the regulation and role of the mass media. Areas of concentration included Canadian cultural dependency, globalisation, media convergence and consolidation, public space, citizenship and democracy in the context of new media, and censorship. *NOTE: for this course I was nominated for the*

McMaster Students Union Humanities Faculty Teaching Award.

“Popular Music Since 1960: The Rock’n’roll Era and Beyond,” Dalhousie University, Department of Music, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009.

As the sole instructor for this undergraduate-level course, I have been responsible for creating a course that addressed issues of race, gender and sexuality, class, power, and resistance in popular music spanning from 1960 until the present day. Students are encouraged to think broadly about the position of popular music in modern society, and how music can be read as both a form of critique and as an expression of socio-cultural tensions in the twentieth century. Students are assessed via listening tests, historical tests, and an essay.

“Popular Music Until 1960,” Dalhousie University, Department of Music, 2009.

As the sole instructor for this undergraduate-level course, I was responsible for creating a course that addressed the history of popular music prior to WWII. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century with Minstrel Shows, and moving through Parlour Song, Vaudeville, the popularisation of dance, Tin Pan Alley, and swing, students are given the opportunity to rethink problematic assumptions about the nature of high- and low-art, and to view the “pre-history” of rock’n’roll not as a reified narrative, but as means to examine the complex socio-cultural and economic tensions of rapid industrialisation and modernisation as expressed through popular music. Students are assessed via listening tests, historical tests, and an essay.

Seminar Leader

“Social Communications: Process and Effects,” University of Leeds, Institute of Communications Studies 2009.

As the seminar leader for this undergraduate-level course I conducted small group seminars in which I led discussions on Frankfurt School critical theory and related social theory, with specific attention paid to the notion of the “Culture Industry.” Theorists addressed included Theodor Adorno, Sigfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, Leo Lowenthal, Guy Debord, and Jean Baudrillard.

“Introduction to Communications Theory,” University of Leeds, Institute of Communications Studies 2008, 2009.

As the seminar leader for this required first-year undergraduate course I conducted small group seminars in which I led discussions on a variety of approaches and theories related to the study of media. Topics addressed were semiotics, media effects, active audience theory, genre and moving images, critical theory, political economy, and gender.

“Research Methods,” University of Leeds, Institute of Communications Studies MA Programme, 2008, 2009.

As part of a required MA Research Methods module, I created two seminars to assist students in using the Internet as a research tool and approaching the Internet as an object of study. Students were encouraged to think critically about overly celebratory discourses that posit the inherent “openness” of the web and reflect upon their position as researchers with privileged (and costly) access to normally restricted databases of information. They were further encouraged to examine their own assumptions about the validity and usefulness of a variety of web resources (including blogs, open and closed access knowledge, and “citizen journalism”) and include in their research a critical assessment of their chosen methodologies for conducting online research.

“Communication Sciences and Technologies,” University of Leeds, Institute of Communications Studies 2008.

As the seminar leader for this required second year undergraduate course I led discussions on the social history of communications technologies. Students were encouraged to think critically about traditional narratives of technological development as “progress” and asked to consider the relationship between communications technologies and industrialisation, modernisation, political economy, class, gender, race, and globalisation. Further, it was demonstrated how *at the technical level*, technologies themselves are often expressive of the social and historical context in which they were developed.

Teaching Assistant

“Film Theory and Aesthetics,” University of Leeds, Institute of Communications Studies 2009.

“Popular Music In North America and the United Kingdom: Pre-World War II,” McMaster University, School of the Arts, 2006, 2007.

“Popular Music In North America and the United Kingdom: Post-World War II,” McMaster University, School of the Arts, 2006.

“Music for Film and Television,” McMaster University, School of the Arts, 2005.

“Popular Music Since 1960: The Rock’n’roll Era and Beyond,” Dalhousie University, Department of Music, 2005.

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-reviewed

(co-authored with Christina Baade) “Still ‘In The Mood’: The Nostalgia Aesthetic in a Digital World,” *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 20.4: 353-377 (December 2008).

Other

“Unity and Form in Miles Davis’s ‘Blue In Green,’” in *McMaster University Music Analysis Colloquium* 4 (2005).
http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~mus701/mmac_v4_2005/articles/paul.html.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

Peer-reviewed, presented

“Attack: System of a Down, Affective Protest, and the Armenian Genocide.” Accepted for presentation at *Spaces of Violence, Sites of Resistance: Music, Media and Performance*, International Association for the Study of Popular Music Canadian Chapter Annual Conference, University of Regina, Regina, SK, 3 – 6 June, 2010.

“Righting History: System of a Down and the Armenian Genocide.” Presented at the 36th *Annual Conference of the Society for American Music*, Carleton University, Ottawa, ON, 17 – 21 March 2010.

(with Christina Baade) “Still ‘In the Mood’: The Aesthetics of Nostalgia in the Digital World.” Presented at *Boundaries, Blockades and Bridges*, International Association for the Study of Popular Music-United States/Canada Joint Conference, Northeastern University, Boston, MA, April 2007.

“Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves: Women Musicians and Online Self-promotion.” Presented at *Reconfiguring, Relocating, Rediscovering*, International Association for the Study of Popular Music-United States Chapter Annual Conference, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN, February 2006.

Panel Moderator

“Theoretical Reflections / Réflexions théoriques.” *Going Coastal: Peripheries and Centres in Popular Music*. International Association for the Study of Popular Music-Canadian Chapter Annual Conference, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 12 – 14 June 2009.

“Jazz and Pop: Shifting Relationships / Jazz et Pop: Relations Mouvantes” *Going Coastal: Peripheries and Centres in Popular Music*. International Association for the Study of Popular Music-Canadian Chapter Annual Conference, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 12 – 14 June 2009.

INVITED TALKS

(with Christina Baade) “Still ‘In the Mood’: The Aesthetics of Nostalgia in the Digital World.” University of York, UK, Department of Music, October 2007.

“Dialogic and Discursive Elements in Online Music Promotion.” Invited talk at the *Popular Culture Forum*, Brock University, St. Catharines, ON, February 2006.

RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIPS

“Swinging nostalgia: popular music and the cultural memory of World War II.” Dr. Christina Baade, McMaster University, 2006 – 07. Funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

EDITORIAL / ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

Web Maintenance. International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Canadian Chapter. 2009-present.

Instructional Assistant. McMaster University, Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia, January – April 2010

Media co-ordinator. *Going Coastal: Peripheries and Centres in Popular Music*. International Association for the Study of Popular Music-Canadian Chapter Annual Conference, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 12 – 14 June 2009.

Co-organiser, media co-ordinator. *Communications Spaces/Places*. University of Leeds Institute of Communications Studies Post-graduate Conference, 6 June 2008.

Co-organiser, media co-ordinator. *Slavoj Žižek: The (Mis)uses of Violence*. University of Leeds, 18 March 2008. *An invited lecture by one of the world’s most pre-eminent cultural theorists that required considerable collaboration and media organisation. As a testament to our organisational success, over 550 people attended the event.

Student Representative, University of Leeds Institute of Communications Studies Web Strategy Group 2007 – 08.

Administrator. *McMaster Music Criticism Online Discussion Forum*. 2005 – 06.

Website Design/Technical Advisor. *McMaster University Music Analysis Colloquium 4*, 2005.

Assistant to the International Student Exchange Coordinator, University of Western Ontario, 1998 – 99, 2001.

Editor, Arts & Entertainment. *The Lexicon*, York University Bethune College Newspaper, 1996 – 97.

Fugitive Imagination. <http://paulaitken.com>. Personal/professional website.

SCHOLARSHIPS

University of Leeds, Institute of Communications Studies Studentship, 2007 – 2010.

McMaster University Research Scholarship, 2005 – 07.

McMaster University Departmental Scholarship, 2005 – 06.

York University Student Exchange Programme Scholarship, 1997 – 98.

PROFESSIONAL MUSIC EXPERIENCE

Performance

Freelance Guitarist, all styles, 1990 – present.

Leader, various projects including small jazz ensembles, avant-garde improvisatory collectives, funk, and rock bands, 1990 – present.

Showband Guitarist, Carnival Cruise Lines: *MS Celebration*, 2000; *Carnival Victory*, 2005; *Carnival Spirit*, 2005.

University of York Jazz Orchestra, 1997 – 98. I received honourable mention in the 1998 BBC Big Band competition for solos with this group.

York University Jazz Orchestra, 1993 – 94.

Recordings

York Sessions. Compact disc, independent release (2001).

Live at the Jack Lyons Concert Hall. Compact disc, independent release (1998).

Guitar Instruction

Private instruction, 1996-present.

The Canadian Conservatory. Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2005.

Belle Air Music. London, Ontario, 1997.

Cripple Creek Music, Huntsville, Ontario, 1995.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM-Canada).

Canadian Communication Association (CCA).

Society of American Music (SAM).

Society of Composers Authors and Music Publishers of Canada (SOCAN).

CITIZENSHIP

Canadian, British.

ACADEMIC REFEREES

Dr. Paul A. Taylor

Senior Lecturer in Communications Theory

Institute of Communications Studies

University of Leeds

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PhD Primary Supervisor

Dr. Christina Baade

Associate Professor

Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia
McMaster University
baadec@mcmaster.ca
MA Supervisor