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Transcript for On-Demand Video Presentation

**Beyond Feminist Oeuvre:** How Beyoncé's 2016 "Lemonade" Album Inspires HBCU Undergrads Through Sisterhood and Redemption

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VideoIntro1: Hi, my name is Angie Hattery. I'm Affiliate Faculty in School of Integrative Studies, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Criminology, Sociology, Cultural Studies, and formerly the Director and Professor in Women and Gender Studies. It is a huge pleasure and privilege to be with you today and to be presenting alongside my colleague, Karen Rice, who is an Associate Professor of Music at Winston-Salem State University. Karen and I have been working together for the last year under the auspices and funding and guidance of a Mellon grant that was received at Winston-Salem State and designed to increase and improve undergraduate experiences with research in the Humanities. Karen and I hit it off immediately—we have very similar interests, although very, very different talents, Karen is a fantastic pianist and just does all this amazing stuff with music. But we brought together our interest in feminism and her interest in music in the courses that she was teaching, including a course called Women in Music—I believe that's the right title—and Karen decided to develop a CURE, a Course-based Undergraduate Research Experience, using that course. And so together we came up with a research program around examining Beyoncé's visual album, *Lemonade*, and to engage undergraduates, especially Black women on an HBCU campus, in examining Beyoncé's visual album as a representation, perhaps a feminist text. And those students did a bunch of research across two semesters. They created some deliverables, some ways to disseminate their findings—and that really creates the basis of our presentation today. Karen's gonna lead off the presentation, so I'm gonna toss it to her, but I wanna say sit back, relax, and enjoy, because it's gonna be a smoker. Thanks, Karen!

VideoIntro2: Thanks so much, Angie! I'm really excited to share with you all about my experiences creating this CURE and how students performed and grew and what they shared about their experiences in the class, especially relating to this CURE. One unique aspect of the Women in Music course this past year was that the whole course was both online and asynchronous for both the fall and spring semesters. So that change in format, and the introduction of the *Lemonade*-based CURE, were both very influential in how all of the course content was presented and evaluated. I was frankly a bit nervous about how engaged and interactive the students would be in that format, but I'm happy to report that it really turned out to be successful. I'll use this opportunity to share now about the evolution of this course, what we cover, how the project was presented to the students, and what we found to be the biggest takeaways.

1. When Angie and I first started this project, we wanted to investigate if students felt the album was "feminist," but we also found that its significance for the students moved even beyond that, in a number of ways. Hence, the title of this presentation. Now, for a little bit of background...
2. Medieval to Modern Women in Music is a general education course I created in 2011. Not only do we look at specific women musicians, but we also explore the unique challenges women face in the industry along with how women as a whole are portrayed in musical works of art.
3. The class has evolved from a chronological exploration of women musicians in various genres of music to a topic-focused approach, which allows us to discuss subjects like Feminism, media representation, and social justice—all through the lens of music...especially, music by women.
4. Students engage in discussions about subjects like pioneers, misogynistic lyrics, social activism, Intersectionality, the MeToo movement, and music as a tool for healing. The final project used to be a student presentation about a female musician of their choice.
5. However, being part of the USH Faculty Learning Community inspired me to assign something more thoughtful and collaborative this past academic year. So now, we spend the first half of the semester laying the groundwork exploring our topics, and then we take a deeper dive into one significant work of art by a woman musician.
6. This year's choice? Beyoncé's 2016 album *Lemonade*, and its accompanying visual narrative film. *Lemonade* inspired an enormous response in the form of academic articles, blog posts, and mainstream media pieces. Students were asked to read many of these and to weigh in themselves in evaluating the album's effect.

7. The songs on *Lemonade* journey from anger to forgiveness as they imply her husband's infidelity. Beyoncé includes a variety of collaborators and music genres. The film is labeled in sections based on the different stages of grief. The stunning visuals explore American Southern, Voodoo, and Afro-futurist utopian imagery.

8. In class, students reflect on responses to *Lemonade* from Black feminist scholars they encountered earlier in the semester and are then introduced to bell hooks and her well-known critiques of Beyoncé. Students label the overall themes of the *Lemonade* album and collaboratively determine what characteristics mark a project as being "Feminist."

9. For the last few weeks of class, each student is assigned a specific track from the album to investigate in detail. Students compile their responses into an Adobe Spark presentation and share those with their classmates for peer feedback. This slide, and several to follow, show one student's song analysis.

10. I share a list of what the class has decided are the overall themes. Each student must listen to the assigned song and watch the video segment to determine the theme/themes most featured in that particular song. Then they need to explain in what ways those themes are evident.

11. The next step is investigating the collaborators Beyoncé chose, thinking about the types of music associated with these other musicians. Students should consider the style, instruments, tempo, dynamics, and other musical characteristics of the work and how all of those help emphasize the themes and message of the song.

12. After students watch the video portion of their song, they are asked to observe what visual images help to reinforce the song's themes and lyrics, and how. As they observe features like places, time period, colors, clothing, and hair, they can identify elements that add meaning beyond what is portrayed through only listening to the song.

13. As a last step, students reflect on the song's effectiveness. Does the song successfully communicate its message, according to its lyrics and themes? I ask students if their own response evolves with repeated hearings and how they relate to it in terms of their personal experiences or beliefs.

14. Amidst a challenging year, every student successfully contributed to this project. I attribute this in part to organizing the work into clear and manageable goals. One student wrote: For this course I loved how you broke everything down for us in this project because if you had given it to us all at once I would have been so stressed out.

15. Students were able to achieve all four of the Course Learning Outcomes listed here, which demonstrate their general exposure to and understanding of the course's main topics as well as the chance to understand those ideas in a meaningful way through looking at a major significant work in depth.

16. Using a CURE in a course can be a very effective way of designing student-centered programs and creating new pathways for underrepresented groups, as I discussed in a recent conference session about Inclusive Curriculum/Program Design and Assessment.

17. Most students did evaluate Lemonade as being feminist. But I have learned that, for many, this album is even more significant...it allows students to feel represented and to share experiences of connectedness. Student Renata Ely shared about the experience in her own voice.

18. Renata: Something I found both moving and impactful is the "All Night" music video, which features many prominent Black figures such as Zendaya, Chloe X Halle, Serena Williams, and the mother of the late Trayvon Martin. I found this impactful as it shows how Black women are unified, supportive of one another, and are strong.

19. Renata: I have found this semester that I have learned how to analyze a song and a album properly. I now know how to dissect the song to answer specific questions regarding its themes, hidden messages, and tones. I have truly enjoyed this course, especially since examining a prominent figure in today's time, alongside a well-known album.

20. Another student wrote: Beyoncé took the time to show women of color in a powerful and regal way, showing homage to African and African-American culture. It is impactful to me because as a woman I feel like she's speaking to me, and telling me to never give up...that I'm stronger than I believe, and I am the future.

21. Incorporating a healthy dose of undergraduate scholarship into a Gen Ed course offers many benefits for students. Not only did my students grow in achieving their critical reading outcome, but many students seemed empowered, and some even transformed, especially in how they think about music or about women's rights.

22. Student responses, like this one, demonstrate a real appreciation for this type of project and classroom experience. It speaks to their engagement and inspiration. I hope that you, too, might feel inspired to pursue similar projects, especially within undergraduate Humanities courses.

As a final note, I thought I would mention that organization, clarity, and guidance were all things I worked hard to provide these last two semesters. So the students really encountered a sense of structure. Even though they had a lot of freedom in being able to offer their own analyses and reflections and were encouraged to share about their personal responses, I was very methodical in how each question was presented. I gave a lot of guidance so they would know exactly what to focus on, and I also revealed to them parts of the project in small, manageable portions, and I think that really helped students get through all of the material successfully, in a timely manner, and with a high quality of work.

This has been a real honor to share with you in this conference, and on behalf of both Angie and myself, we want to thank you for your attention today, and we wish you a great academic year!