

“Theorizing African American Music” book series  
Oxford University Press  
Philip Ewell  
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Colleagues:

I’m pleased to announce a new Oxford University Press book series, “Theorizing African American Music” (TAAM), for which I am series editor.

African American music, with its numerous genres and styles, is one of the most important musics in American history. Rap and hip-hop are currently two of the world’s most popular genres, with local varieties in virtually every country on the planet, while jazz has arguably been America’s most historic and significant homegrown music and musical export. TAAM will be the first academic book series that focuses exclusively on the theory and analysis of African American music writ large. In centering the theory and analysis of this music, TAAM will also foreground previous work done by BIPOC scholars with this music, as well as work done on African American musicians and composers. TAAM includes explorations that might typically fall under the purview of music theory, but it also includes (ethno)musicological, jazz, or other relevant academic explorations that could reasonably be called theoretical or analytical.

The need for such a series has never been greater. As has been discussed widely in recent years, American music theory has historically been, from a racial perspective, unremittingly white. What this means for the many rich genres of music that can rightly be said to have roots in or ties to African Americanism—genres such as blues, boogie-woogie, classical, concert, disco, doo-wop, folk, funk, gospel, hip-hop, jazz, Motown, R&B, ragtime, rap, rock, soul, and techno, among others—is that virtually all attempts to analyze and theorize these genres in the field of American music theory were undertaken by white persons, usually men, and strained through a filter of the field’s white racial framing. This has resulted in the appropriation and assimilation of African American musical genres into mainstream music theory with the intent of legitimizing the music in question to the field so that it can be further mined for its musical resources.

TAAM pulls the discussion of these African American musical genres away from whiteness and (re)engages black and BIPOC voices, thus moving beyond the narrow confines of what has, historically, constituted music theory in the United States. Importantly, everyone, of any identity imaginable, is welcome to contribute to this book series, but a commitment to foreground BIPOC voices in the conversations about African American music shall remain paramount. By engaging with the theory and analysis of this music, TAAM will broaden and enrich the field of American music theory while providing inspiration to a new generation of musicians and scholars. In so doing, African American music will rightfully be placed alongside any and all other great musics of our planet, as an example of outstanding music theoretical ideas worthy of our collective attention and an exemplar of American music for the whole world to see.

At this point we are seeking well-developed book proposals that adhere to OUP’s guidelines on [submission](#) and [manuscript preparation](#). Any questions about content can be addressed directly to me at my Hunter College work email address.