

Sabbatical Report Fall 2025

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During sabbatical my research evolved in exciting and, frankly, unexpected ways. What started with an intention to exclusively work toward completing *Flippin' Channels*, my book-length manuscript on the interconnectedness between Black popular music and television grew into a much more robust research agenda. While on sabbatical, I wrote a chapter on a children's television show about Black folklore and folkways that aired on PBS starting in the late 1970s and continued in reruns until the mid-1990s. While writing and researching the chapter, two related but diverging threads of research developed. First, my work on the children's television show planted the seeds for a larger project that situates the show within a broader history of Black people's creative influence—particularly that of writers, on-air talent, directors, and producers—on educational television. I have become particularly interested in how television was used to augment what Black children learned in traditional schooling settings. Secondly, because my research object was never officially released on DVD or VHS nor is it currently available on streaming services like Hulu, Netflix, and Amazon Prime and it is largely absent in institutional archives, I performed textual analyses of homemade VHS recordings of the show that fans uploaded to YouTube. This work has sparked the development of a separate research project centered on Black people's engagement with the VCR with a specific focus on how the technology was deployed to preserve programming that was unavailable to audiences through more official channels. This project is guided by questions that interrogate the very nature of the archive and points to the structural and systemic challenges of accessing particular forms of television from the past.

Additionally, I have drawn on the research and writing I conducted on sabbatical, specifically related to the aforementioned projects, to reshape the content for my courses. For example, I have revamped a lecture on soul iconography in 1970s children's television to include a more sustained conversation on programming that existed outside of the Children's Television Workshop's umbrella. I have also included a reading about the history of the VCR on the syllabi for my course focused on Black screen cultures. I am currently reworking a lecture on Black people's participation in video game cultures to include recent scholarship about the Black press's coverage of arcades in the 1990s. I also continued to advance my publishing goals as I

reviewed proofs for a chapter that I wrote that will be included in the edited collection, *Rebooting Inequality: Critical Takes on Film and Television Remakes*, which will be released in March 2026, New York University Press.

In November 2025, I participated in a roundtable discussion on R&B music as pedagogy at the annual conference for the American Studies Association in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Specifically, I discussed my experience teaching the most recent iteration of my elective course focused on 1980s and 1990s R&B music cultures. I also applied for and was accepted to present my research on 1970s Black educational television at the Critical Approaches to Black Media Conference at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Furthermore, I prepared and ultimately submitted an application for a Special Collections Research Fellowship through the Michigan State University Visiting Scholars program. The fellowship will allow me to continue the work I conducted on sabbatical, granting me access to papers that belonged to the content consultant for the television show I'm studying. The consultant's papers include scripts and formative evaluations for the show that will be vital in my attempts to better understand the substantial labor required to produce an educational television show.