Foster, Guthrie, & Walden:
Three Case Studies in American Music Copyright and Cultural Depictions of the White Working Class
Dr. Jason Lee Guthrie  |  Clayton State University  |  JasonGuthrie@Clayton.edu
OVERVIEW

• Supported by a MEIEA Faculty Research Grant
• Popular Music as a Cultural Lens
• Cultural Depictions of the White Working Class
• Case Study Coverage
• Copyright and Cultural Meaning
• Contribution to Intersectionality
STEPHEN FOSTER

- First American to make a living as a songwriter
- “Oh Susanna!” creates the U.S. Music Industry
- Publishing Industry offers favorable contracts
- Mismanagement of copyright interests
- The “sentimentalization” of Blackface Music
- Foster’s music in the Public Domain
WOODY GUTHRIE

- Folk Singer, Print & Radio Journalist, Activist
- Blue collar, working class ethos
- Early ambivalence to copyright
- Evolution of copyright understanding
- Recent copyright cases and the discourse surrounding the Public Domain
PHIL WALDEN

- Band Manager, Record Executive, & CEO
- Managed 60s R&B acts in his twenties
- Signed The ABB and other Southern Rock acts
- Combatting southern “bootlegging”
- Used political connections to influence the 1976 Copyright Act
CONCLUSION

• Romantic Notions of Class and Race
• Shrewdness of Discourse
• Evolving Understanding of Copyright
• Less Privileged than Industry Elites
• More Privileged than Women and Minorities
• Possible Title: “Poor Man’s Copyright”