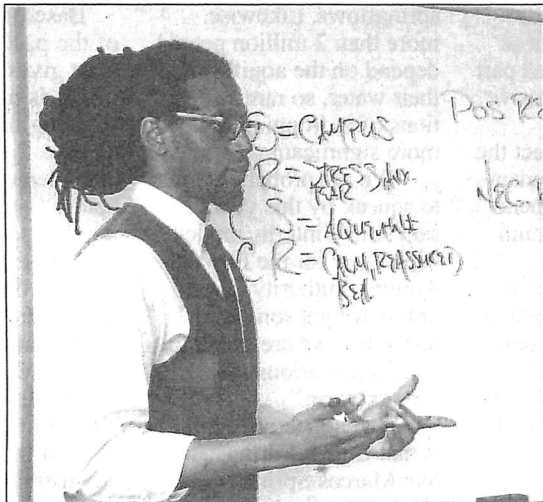


# Local professor blends hip-hop, psychology lessons

Dr. Sean Callahan speaks to his general psychology class at Georgia Highlands College about his time attending the University of Georgia and the positive and negative influences campus life and music had for him at the time.

Staff/Laura Moon



By Lindsay Field

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**MARIETTA** — Using personal experiences and a little creativity, a local college professor takes a unique yet helpful approach to teaching his students about psychology.

Dr. Sean Callahan, who teaches at Georgia Highlands College's location on the Southern Polytechnic State University's campus, uses music, specifically hip-hop, to teach various psychology lessons to his students.

"I'm trying to make sense of

the concepts, theories and ideas. ... I just hope that the students respond well to it," he said.

His teaching style came to him in 2005 while earning a graduate degree at the University of Georgia.

Callahan said he was struggling with the death of his mentor, his identity as a black student on a campus with a small demographic of black students, and trying to be a good father.

"All these different identities all had to co-exist in some type of way," he said.

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# Hip-hop

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These struggles were encapsulated for Callahan when he heard the song "Aquemini" by Outkast.

"Listening to the hook (chorus) in those Outkast lyrics helped me make sense of what I was going through," Callahan said. "It took away that stress."

The song became positive reinforcement for Callahan and helped him discover a good way to explain a number of psychology lessons to his students, specifically the concepts of implicit and explicit memories. Throughout the semester, students choose two or three songs with lyrics that relate to a memory or event in their lives and they write about it.

"I assigned these papers to get these ideas in your longterm memories," Callahan tells his students.

He said it's important for students to use their own life

stories and understands his technique isn't a cure all, but believes it helps.

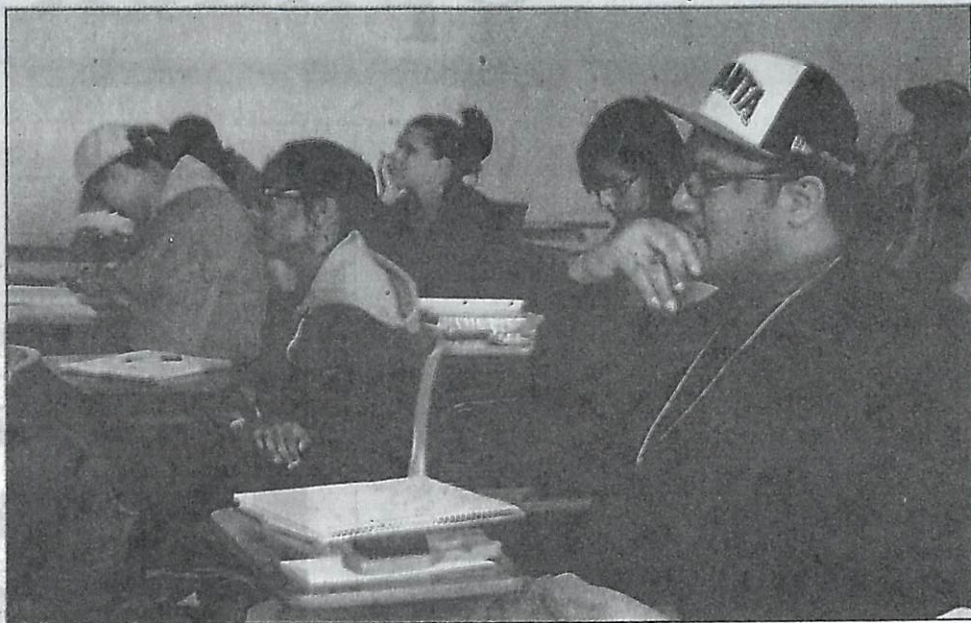
## Students relate to unique teaching style

For 19-year-old construction management major Grant Bean of Marietta, Callahan's method has worked well in teaching him the psychology lessons and to relate his life to song.

"It's pretty unique, but it's a good unique ... and definitely keeps my attention," he said. "Going into this class, I was a little worried because psychology sounds like one of those classes that are extremely hard, but he's made the entire class really easy to learn."

For one of Bean's assignments, he used lyrics from the Zac Brown Band's "Chicken Fried" to explain a past experience for him.

"It's about the things that mean the most to me," he said. "I'm from a long line of construction majors and we don't always have that much, but what we do have



Staff/Laura Moon

Georgia Highlands College freshman Mandrell Perryman of Kennesaw, right, listens to 'Aquemini' by Outkast, a song that professor Dr. Sean Callahan said helped calm him during a difficult time as he attended the University of Georgia.

is family."

Susan Fon, who is originally from Cameroon in west-central Africa but now lives in Smyrna while studying industrial engineering, used a Jason Mraz song in

one of her papers.

"When I listen to that song, it makes me think that I can do anything in life," she said. "If I just put my faith into it, I can get through it."

Fon said her parents didn't believe she would do well in her major when she first came to the United States, but that didn't stop her from doing her best, even in a class like psychol-

ogy, which was tough for her at first.

"The teaching technique is different, but as the semester has progressed, he was really good at teaching us," she said.

Mandrell Perriman, 33, is taking a second shot at college and said Callahan's teaching style has been great for him, especially since he grew up with the evolution of hip-hop.

"It doesn't surprise me that I'm able to equate music to life," he said. "Through my life, different songs at different times kind of resonate."

The song "Get Gone" by Ideal was one of the songs he used for the class. Perriman said the memories surrounding the song make it tough to listen to because it takes him back to a difficult time when his girlfriend had a miscarriage.

"It brings up kind of bad memories but it's definitely linked with that situation," he said. "Every time the song comes on, that's where my head goes to."