

MUSIC B27 - History of American Popular Music - Spring 2012

Kris Tiner - krtiner@bakersfieldcollege.edu - www.kristiner.com

RESEARCH PAPER ASSIGNMENT

From the class syllabus:

Research Paper and Presentation – 20% of Final Grade (200 pts.)

Students will research a contemporary (1970s-present) musical artist or band. Each student will submit a two-page paper (typed, 12-point, double spaced) that highlights their artist's background and details the more innovative or unique aspects of their music via an analysis of one representative song, using the terms and methods that have been presented in the lectures. More details and full content guidelines will be provided in a separate handout. Research topic proposals are due on Thursday, February 16. Research papers are due on **Thursday, April 19**. Late papers will not be accepted. Students will also discuss the subject of their paper during a 5-minute class presentation. These presentations will take place during the final four class sessions.

Considering that since the late 1970s the music business has been increasingly transformed into a multi-billion dollar global market that is controlled from the top by just a few powerful media corporations – where do YOU look for true modern-day musical creativity and originality?

In line with our in-class study of musicians who expressed a unique and personal creative vision in their time, often despite contrary trends in the marketplace (think Skip James, Johnny Cash, Ray Charles, Sam Cooke, Bob Dylan, Brian Wilson, Jimi Hendrix...), your research paper will be a profile of a contemporary artist or band (they must have **debuted since 1970**) who you feel contributes a unique, honest, and powerful voice to American Popular Music.

Your paper should be organized according to the following content guidelines (in this order):

1. Introduction: explain why have you selected this artist.
2. Pertinent background and biographical info on the artist or band. Mention any earlier groups or musical styles that influenced this artist, and describe their musical evolution over the course of their career. You can mention significant performances, albums, career milestones, personnel changes, stylistic changes but don't go overboard here - **keep it brief and to the point**. Please do NOT give me lists of album titles, song titles, awards, Billboard chart rankings, etc.
3. Discuss the musical significance of the artist and how you feel their music extends the development of American popular music as discussed in class. What is innovative about their music? What do you think they are trying to say or achieve with their music?
4. Analysis of **one song** that you feel best demonstrates what makes this artist unique, using the analytical methods and musical terminology we use in class. You may quote song lyrics if it helps your case. Your analysis should back up and clarify any claims you made in the previous section.
5. Brief conclusion.

Continued...

Your paper should cite **at least ONE print source** (magazines and periodicals are OK, but not general encyclopedias like World Book) **and TWO Internet sources** (other than Wikipedia). These, along with any additional sources you use (such as CD liner notes, artist interviews, videos or documentaries, etc.) should be *properly cited within your text* in MLA format and included in a separate “Works Cited” page stapled to the back of your paper.

Examples of MLA citations are available at:

<http://simplebib.com>
<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/legacylib/mlahcc.html>
<http://www.liu.edu/CWIS/CWP/library/workshop/citmla.htm>

Please also include a cover page with *only* the following information:

Title of Your Paper Your Full Name Music B27: History of American Popular Music Professor Tiner Spring 2012

Your paper should consist of at least two full pages plus the cover page and Works Cited page. Staple all four pages together. No report covers, plastic folders, binders or other “bling,” please. Papers must be submitted by the due date. **No late papers will be accepted.** Your research topic **MUST** be approved by the instructor or no grade will be given.

This assignment is worth a total of **200 points**, which will be broken down as follows:

- **75 points** for grammar, spelling, punctuation, and proper MLA format for citations.
- **75 points** for substance, organization of information, and adherence to content guidelines (#’s 1-5 above).
- **50 points** for your in-class presentation.

THIS IS IMPORTANT: Use italics for album titles and double quotes for song titles. When you quote several lines of a text (including lyrics), indent that text. Here is an example (a silly one, but you get the point):

An excellent indication of MC Hammer’s lyrical genius can be found in the lyrics to the song “U Can’t Touch This” from the 1990 album <i>Please Hammer Don’t Hurt ‘Em</i> : So wave your hands in the air Bust through the moves, run your fingers through your hair This is it for a winner Dance to this and you're gonna get thinner

FOR YOUR IN-CLASS PRESENTATION: Plan to spend about five minutes discussing your research topic, and bring a copy of the song you analyzed in your paper (on a CD, CD-R, iPod, or any other mp3 player with a standard headphone jack) to play for the class. Be prepared to discuss the musical and lyrical aspects of the song you’ve selected as well as explain why it is a good representation of the artist’s music. The presentation is worth 50 points, and you will be graded on how well you appear to understand and express the subject of your research.

Students who do not submit a research paper by the due date will not be eligible to give a presentation!