

Looking At the Social History of Music: Paper 2 for Writing 2

Pre-writing

You want to start by thinking about a general topic that you're interested in (say the music of Public Enemy), and then you'll want to think about the sort of materials we've read in class (primary and secondary materials) that you can use, and then you'll want to work towards doing some preliminary reading in the area. You can familiarize yourself with your subject area or areas. Read about them in our packet, and you can check out what you're interested in by reading about your subject the *New Grove Dictionary* (<http://www.grovemusic.com/index.html?authstatuscode=202>), or in other general works. Pay attention to the bibliographies of each, for these will lead you to materials that focus on your areas more specifically. Read around in the literature on your subject area or areas--quickly, without taking copious notes (there's time for that later). If a subject involves specific pieces of music (such as "Channel Zero" or "Bring the Noise" by Public Enemy again), get familiar with those pieces; if it involves a time period of a group (say you want to look at Tito Puente in the 1950s) listen to some of the work and get used to what the group or musician is doing.

After all of this, start to brainstorm and work your way towards a research question. We'll do work on this in class.

The Task

Once you've done some preliminary reading, you will want to focus in a little tighter on what your paper will be on. You will be writing about the social history of something to do with music (a song, a group, a small subsection of a genre—say Psychobilly, or even a type of musical technology), and you will want to make sure that you're writing for an audience of **your peers** who you can assume no **none of the particulars** about your topic. **You are the authority on this subject, and a close reading of our readings and your own research will help you with this.** You will also want to think about how race, class, gender, and history work in the thing you're looking at. You want to use these theoretical "lenses" to help you make sense of your work.

Format and Expectations

You will write a 4-6-page paper (you can of course go longer) that will have the following:

- A thesis,
- Well developed subtopics,
- Subheadings dividing the paper,
- A clear introduction,
- A good conclusion,
- And solid grammar and syntax throughout on your final draft.

The paper **must have a works cited or references page**, and so you will use **APA** or **MLA** citation in your paper, from beginning to end. **You must use primary and secondary sources in your piece, and you must have at least ONE OUTSIDE SOURCE that you use in your paper.** In terms of what this paper is about, it is about a narrow piece of rock history that you do more than summarize. You will analyze this paper and discuss **the social historical significance** (only to popular music) of what you write about—**using the lenses of race, class, and gender will help you do this work. DO NOT SIMPLY WRITE A REPORT—HAVE A POINT TO YOUR PIECE.** You will want to think of yourself as someone who has a point to make about music and its place in culture and history.

A hint on margins: make sure that you change your margins to one-inch all around by going to the file menu, selecting "Page Setup," and changing the margins to one inch all around before you start typing. A hint on spacing: If you use an apple, then hit open apple+2 to get double spacing before you begin typing; if you use a PC, the hit Ctrl+2 to get double spacing before you begin typing.

You will write a first draft to get peer and teacher review. All reviews will be written. Then you will write a final draft, and then you get to **choose** whether or not this piece will be graded in your midterm and final portfolios. When you turn in your final draft, I expect to see the first draft with comments staple, paper clipped, or otherwise attached to your final draft.

Criteria for Evaluation

This paper will principally be judged on how effectively you prove your thesis: **you will not be evaluated on the type of music you write about or your opinion of it.** Spelling and grammar, as well as using proper MLA or APA style, will count as well. For more specific information read the attached rubric, which will not be used to grade the piece, but it will give you an idea of what you need to do to write a successful paper.

Due Dates:

- **Draft One Due Date:** _____
- **Final Draft Due Date:** _____

Sample Elaborated Topics (Feel Free to Choose One If You're Stuck)

- **The Cultural History of Grand Master Flash:** Grand Master Flash, and his furious five, are more than just an old school rap outfit; they are the original transgressors who showed, with the amazing cut “The Message,” that Rap, in the early 80s, could be about much more than bragging and shouting out slogans. By looking at this incredibly important rap song, and its context, we can see that, from its very beginning, rap was deeply interested in the trials of the Black community and what those trials meant.
 - **Start Reading:** Re-read the “Post Soul” selection from Nelson George. Then take in the optional reading in our packet called “Hip-Hop’s Founding Fathers Speak the Truth.” Also, check out what you can find online about “Grand Master Flash” using google scholar, located at <http://scholar.google.com/>.
 - **Writing:** Make sure that you have a narrow topic, even narrower than what is above, and make sure that you use both primary and secondary source materials. Start with a research question or provisional thesis, and work with it through your writing. **It will change.** Next, make sure that you locate sources (we’ll work on methods of doing this); take notes (we’ll go over this in class); and write in your blog as a way of making sense about this topic.
 - **Before the first Peer Review:** Make sure that you have a complete draft, and, **most significantly**, make sure that you have citations in your text and a works cited page. *You will be hurting if you do not keep up with your works cited or references page from the moment you begin.*
- **The King vs. the Real King:** A close look at what Paul Friedlander calls the “second generation” of classic rock and rollers shows, particularly by looking at Chuck Berry’s Mann Act conviction and the incredible popularity of Elvis Presley, that success, both financial and artistic, was closely tied to issues of race.
 - **Start Reading:** Re-read the section in our reader by Paul Friedlander. Also, take a look at what the Mann Act was about. Also, check out the bios of Berry and Elvis on the *New Grove Dictionary* (<http://www.grovemusic.com/index.html?authstatuscode=202>).
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- **The End for Brother Ray:** Looking at the end of Ray Charles life we can see a long dormant need arise in him, personally, for a sort of Christian redemption, but long before he begin to ail, Ray Charles was deeply immersed, musically, in the legacy of the Christian church.
 - **Start Reading:** Re-read the section in our reader entitled “The Last Days of Brother Ray”. Also, take a listen to some of Ray Charles music. (Come to Chris if you need some cuts, or simply go to the music library, or even rent *Ray*.) . Also, check out Ray Charles biography on the *New Grove Dictionary* (<http://www.grovemusic.com/index.html?authstatuscode=202>).
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