

Final Research Paper Assignment

For your final paper, you will write a research essay (length: 6-7 pp.) on a **musical work, artist, or movement of your choice from the 1960s or early 1970s**. Your paper will advance an argument about the meaning or significance of a particular artist, musical work or movement, and it will do so *in conversation* with other **secondary sources** that you will find in the course of your research.

In the final few weeks of the semester, you will plan, research, and write this paper through a sequence of steps, beginning with a **prospectus** and **annotated bibliography**, a “big picture” **outline**, a **rough draft** and a **final draft**; each of these steps will have its own due date. It is very important that you do all you can to meet the deadlines along the way, as they are intended to both make the process less onerous for you and to make your final paper better. (Note the due dates on the Moodle syllabus.)

Phase One: Developing your idea and researching a relevant connection

Choosing a Topic: During the course of the semester, we’ve looked at (and listened to) a variety of songs, albums, artists, and movements, and we’ve studied them in a variety of contexts, from the civil rights and Black power movements to the rise of student activism, drugs and the hippie counterculture, the Vietnam War protests, and the rising movements for women’s and gay rights. For this essay, you will choose a musical topic and research it, determining the scholarly and journalistic “conversations” that have taken place around your topic, and contributing your own “take” or argument to that conversation.

As you consider possible topics, you might choose an artist or a single album, or you might choose a theme or pattern found in music by more than one artist. Whatever you choose, you will want to do some research into the connection between the music and one or more events or social developments of the 1960s. You may revisit an artist or work we have already discussed (so long as you don’t cover the same material as we covered in class), or you may want to explore an artist from the time that we did not cover. You may explore some of the broader social, cultural and historical issues we discussed or explore a fully different context. And while you may of course focus on Britain or America, you might be interested in music from Jamaica, Latin America, Africa, or Asia. The only limit is historical: the subject matter must take place, at least in part, during the 1960s or early 1970s.

It’s best to choose something that you are interested in enough to work on it for several weeks, but perhaps something you don’t love “too much” because you will want to be able to treat your topic in a critical and unbiased way.

Figuring out what to explore: As we've seen, music can be analyzed in a variety of ways, which means that there are different directions you can go in your research.

- You may want to do something along the lines of what we did in our Motown essay, where you develop an argument about the significance of your topic and present it in critical “dialogue” with other arguments about its significance (in this case, you will research what other critics or readers have said, and develop an argument that is distinct from the other sources).
- Alternatively, you may want to do something along the lines of what some of you did in the journalism essay: to analyze a text, artist, or movement in a broader cultural, social, or historical context. In this case, your research will likely involve finding out about an important historical development or event taking place around the time of the creation of the music or researching a belief system or ideology that the music seems to be responding to.
- Finally, there may be other possibilities that arise once you figure out what you want to study or interpret. For example, you might want to do some research on gender- or race-based theories about art and bring those sources to bear on your chosen topic. I will be there to give you feedback on your ideas as you develop them.

Phase Two: Conducting Your Research

You will conduct your research using a variety of different tools. Our class's research librarian will be visiting our class to introduce you to our library's resources and give you tips for using Catalyst and other research databases. Using those tools, we will devote some class time to helping you find helpful and relevant secondary sources.

The requirement for sources will be that you include at least one scholarly source (either an academic book or book chapter or an article from an academic journal). Because of the nature of your topics, it is also likely that you will find relevant journalistic sources (newspapers and magazines, as well as respected journalistic websites). We will talk during the library session and during the research phase about how to determine if a journalistic or web source is reliable.

Phase Three: Organizing and Writing the Paper

Outlining and Drafting

Once you have an idea for an argument and you've done some research into the text and/or its contexts, you will need to figure out what you want to say and in what order you want to say it. We will use class time and conferences to plan and execute these stages of the process. We will share our ideas and our prospecti; we will review each other's broad outlines; and each of you

will meet with me during the rough draft stage. Your final version of the paper will be passed in on the last day of class for this course (May 13).

See our Moodle syllabus for due dates for each stage: Prospectus, Annotated Bibliography, Outline, Rough Draft, Final Draft, Abstract. See the document “Research Paper: Guidelines for Each Step” for more information about what expected.

Citation Method and Mechanics

Part of what we learn about in the process of doing this paper is how to use one of the common academic citation forms. You will choose between the MLA style (parenthetical citation) or the Chicago (footnote) style, and both are described in detail in our online text, “Writer’s Help.” Your final paper will be double-spaced, Times New Roman, and will include a title, page numbers, and proper citation.