

Bakersfield College • SUMMER 2008 • K. Tiner
MUSIC B27 • History of American Popular Music

RESEARCH PAPER ASSIGNMENT

From the class syllabus:

Research Paper - 20% of Final Grade (200 pts.)

Students will each write a research paper on a contemporary musical artist or band. The paper should effectively discuss the artist's music in a critical and creative way, using the terms and methods that have been presented in class. More details and full content guidelines will be provided in a separate handout. Each research paper will consist of at least **five full pages** plus a cover page and Works Cited page in MLA format, **TYPED in 12-point font and double-spaced**. Research topic proposals are due on Monday, July 14. **Research papers are due no later than Monday, July 28.**

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 we 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, Billie Holiday, Bob Dylan, Brian Wilson, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Marley, etc.), your research paper will be a profile of a contemporary artist or band (they must have **debuted since 1980**) 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/biographical info on the artist or band. Don't go overboard here; keep it brief and to the point.
3. Discuss any earlier groups or musical styles that influenced this artist.
4. Discuss the musical development of the artist over the course of their performing career: mention significant performances, albums, career milestones, personnel changes, stylistic changes, etc.
5. Discuss the musical and artistic significance of the artist and how you feel their music relates to the history of American popular music as discussed in class. What is it that makes them unique? What do you think they are trying to say with their music? *This is the section where I expect the most detail - this is your chance to impress me!*
6. Brief analysis of two or three important songs from different periods of the artist's musical development (use the "language of music" as we do 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.
7. Conclusion: why do you think this artist's music is important?

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Your paper should cite **at least TWO books** (magazines and periodicals are OK, but not general encyclopedias like World Book) **and TWO Internet sources**. These, along with any additional sources you use (such as CD liner notes, artist interviews, videos or music 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://www.ccc.commnet.edu/mla>
<http://www.liu.edu/CWIS/CWP/library/workshop/citmla.htm>
<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/legacylib/mlahcc.html>

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

<p>Title of Your Paper Your Full Name Music B27: History of American Popular Music Professor Tiner Summer 2008</p>
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Your paper should consist of five full pages plus the cover page and Works Cited page. Staple all seven pages together. No report covers, plastic folders, binders or other “bling,” please. Papers must be submitted by the due date of Monday, July 28. ***No late papers will be accepted.*** Your research topic **MUST** be approved by the instructor by July 14 or no grade will be given.

This assignment is worth a total of **200 points**, which will be broken down into two grades:

- **100 points** for grammar, spelling, punctuation, proper MLA format for citations
- **100 points** for organization of information, adherence to content guidelines (see above)

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):

<p>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>:</p> <p>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</p>
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FOR YOUR IN-CLASS PRESENTATION: Plan to spend about five minutes presenting your research topic, and bring ONE song (on CD) by this artist 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 makes for a good representation of the artist’s music. The presentation is worth an additional 100 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!