

REFLECTION PAPER: A CRITICAL ‘TASTE BIOGRAPHY’
MUSI1000B: ISSUES IN POPULAR MUSIC
(SUMMER 2019)
Due Date: August 11

Length: 5-6 pages (1250-1500 words)
Weight: 30%
Format: 12-point Times font, double-spaced

Background

Carl Wilson writes:

Everyone has a taste biography, a narrative of shifting preferences: I remember at age twelve telling people I liked “all kinds of music, *except* disco and country,” two genres I now adore. My hometown was a very white, Ontario-rustbelt city in bad decline. I was a middle class bookworm who started with the Beatles from my parents’ record collection but soon hit the harder stuff, heading out on the great expedition of the avant-garde. It was only after I moved away that I began to grasp that my blind spots were a regional and cultural bias. My tastes were reshaped by social experience: dancing in Montreal gay clubs where body-rocking techno mixed seamlessly into disco classics; making friends from Texas or the country-loving Canadian Maritimes; visiting the US South. They were also altered by musical information - by realizing how many hip-hop samples came from disco, for instance, or by following the links from Bob Dylan to Hank Williams to Johnny Cash and the 60s Nashville Sound, and finally back to contemporary country. I realized my easy scorn had betrayed an ignorance of whole communities and ways of life, prejudices I did not want to live with. The epiphany was ethical, but it led to musical enjoyment. (17)

Description

Following Carl Wilson’s example in chapter 2 of *Let’s Talk About Love* (please re-read), this assignment will take form of a “taste biography”. **Your job will be to reflect on your own musical tastes, drawing on themes from the course to analyze why they’ve developed as they have.** In other words, you will: (a) write a narrative of your changing musical interests; (b) draw on themes/concepts from the course to *contextualize* those shifting likes and dislikes; (c) include specific musical examples (via YouTube links) in your discussion.

NOTES: Every case study in this course has focussed on the *context* within which popular music happens (social, historical, technological, ideological, etc.). Your paper should take the same approach, drawing on any ideas from the course that you find helpful in doing so. If you need to refer to an example, please read the Wilson excerpt closely. Take note of the factors he identifies as contributors to formation of his tastes. Also notice his growing ability to see the broader cultural context and ask himself difficult question about his own values.

continued...

Structure:

1. INTRODUCTION

Begin with one or two paragraphs that give a *succinct* outline of what is to come. You should use your introduction to identify what you will be discussing later in the paper: the time(s), and place(s); the styles of music; the course themes you will incorporate into your analysis. You do not need a standard thesis statement. Also, please avoid broad generalizations (“Since the beginning of time...,” etc.). This is a short paper, so please use the available space efficiently.

2. MAIN BODY

Develop your narrative, analysis and examples.

3. CONCLUSION

End by summarizing what you discovered in the process of writing this paper and, more generally, any aspect of the course material that you found especially helpful in better understanding your own experience of popular music.

General Guidelines

Your paper should meet the following requirements:

- Speak from personal experience
- Although the paper is a personal reflection, the writing should be scholarly, using professional and not colloquial language
- Write with clarity, avoiding grammatical and spelling errors
- Explain and elaborate on points sufficiently
- When discussing concepts from class and course material, you must demonstrate your knowledge of the concept by explaining it - i.e. you must show a thorough knowledge and engagement with the course material you have chosen

Citations and Audio Links:

Your paper should adhere to the usual academic referencing standards. When you quote, paraphrase, draw ideas from, or otherwise make any use of other materials, you must reference them. Not doing so constitutes plagiarism.

The choice of style (Chicago, APA, etc.) is up to you, as long as you use it correctly and consistently. You should include a bibliography (for texts) and a discography (for music, including video links).

When discussing musical examples, please include a clickable YouTube (or other) link in the text, in parentheses.

Submission:

Submit your paper as a PDF or Word .doc to the module for this assignment in CU Learn.