

Student Blog Post

Online reference for all pertinent information: <https://drjonesmusic.me/student-blog-post/>

Due dates (note different submission media):

	<u>F1 (Mondays)</u>	<u>F4 (Thursdays)</u>
Proposals due via email by 11:59pm	March 17	March 12
Proposals returned in class with instructor feedback	March 20	March 16
First draft due in class – hard copy	March 27	March 23
First drafts returned in class with instructor feedback	April 3	March 30
Final draft due (online submission) with revision reflection (via email) by 5pm	April 9	April 11
Student Blog Posts are live (5 one-week discussion periods)	April 10-May 14	April 12-May 16

Overview:

Blogs are a common, lively, personal, and flexible form of online self-publishing. The largest writing project this semester will be the Student Blog Post, which is an opportunity for each student to curate an online discussion centered around a piece of music. For your Student Blog Post, you will choose a piece of music to share with your readers (i.e., other members of your section of Mu 110), engage in musical analysis of that piece, and think more broadly about its context in the world (i.e., musical, social, political, economic, or artistic). Each student's post will be made available to other members of their section (either F1 or F4) for one week, and while his or her post is live, the author will help lead the ongoing discussion.

This project will last several weeks and includes several assignments and grades:

Assignment	Portion of final grade
Daily participation grades (in-class daily averages and all drafts)	15%
SBP proposal (required for your first draft)	
SBP first draft	
Formal writing (4 assignments total over the semester)	30%
SBP final draft	
Blog Response Essay (based on SBP and Online Discussions)	
SBP discussion leading (while your post is live)	5%
Participation in SBP discussions (while your post is not live)	15%

The websites where SBP will be submitted and discussions will take place:

F1 (Mondays): <https://spring2017f1.wordpress.com/>

F4 (Wednesdays): <https://spring2017f4.wordpress.com/>

Proposal:

Using the prompt below and the in-class lesson on musical analysis and Franz Schubert as a guide (F1: March 6; F4: March 9), you will choose **two** potential pieces of music to be the topic of your SBP. Your proposal, submitted to me via email (music.drjones@gmail.com), will contain the following information for **each** piece of music:

- 1) The name of the piece of music, the artist performing it/the composer, and the date of the recording/composition. You do not need to include a link to a recording or video.
- 2) The three musical features you will focus on in this piece of music for the basis of your musical analysis (text, melody, harmony, rhythm, meter, dynamics, tempo, texture, instrumentation, or form)
- 3) What do you hope to gain out of exploring this piece of music? Why do you think it will be a fruitful topic of discussion for the class?
- 4) What problems or difficulties do you foresee with choosing this piece of music?

Based on the content of your proposal (i.e., how well you explain your ideas and intentions), I will choose one of your proposed pieces for you to write about for your SBP. The more robust or thorough your proposal, the better prepared you'll be to write about either topic.

This portion of the assignment is a participation grade (counted in your daily average), but you **cannot** submit a first draft of your SBP without an approved topic. Late or incomplete proposals will receive a grade of 0 (see rubric).

Student Blog Post first draft (hard copies submitted in class):

Use the feedback you've received on your informal writing (in-class writing, in-class discussions, assigned reading, instructor-led online discussions), formal writing (course intro essay), and anything else you've learned this semester to add depth to your writing.

Submission and formatting requirements:

- 1) Typed, 12-point font, double spaced. Staple the first draft rubric to the front of your essay.
- 2) Use bracketed place holders for links, photos, etc. in the text of your draft: [insert photo of pregnant Beyoncé here] or [supporting link here on the words "confectionary tycoon"] or [YouTube link goes here]

Student Blog Post final draft (submitted online):

Based on the feedback you receive on your first draft, revise your SBP, submit it to the website for your section of Mu 110, and email me your revision reflection.

- 1) You'll receive an email invitation from WordPress to become a contributor to the website for your section of Mu 110. This is in addition to the one you already accepted for www.drjonesmusic.me. Accept this invitation. You do not at any point need to create a website.
- 2) Submit your SBP to the website for your section of Mu 110 (see separate instructions).
- 3) Email me your revision reflection (attach as .doc, .docx, or .pdf only – not a google doc or pasted in the body of the email) by the same 5pm deadline as your SBP submission. I will not post your SBP without a revision reflection,

Student Blog Post Prompt:

Your SBP will be an engaging introduction to a piece of music for your readers: what sounds it contains, why they matter to your ear, and broader issues or context that help you understand the piece. The meat of this post will consist of the task of musical analysis (describing musical sounds and saying why they matter: description + “so what”), but blog posts are often lively, personal, and personable.

The exact format of your SBP will vary depending on your approved piece of music, your perspective as a listener, and your personal style, but your SBP must do all of the following (listed in no particular order; do not restate prompt questions in the body of your SBP):

- 1) Include an interesting catchy title— this should be unique, enticing, and make be people want to read more from the post.
- 2) Word count: 1,200-2,000
- 3) Include somewhere in the body of the post a working link to a recording of the piece of music that you've chosen (youtube or similar).
- 4) Analysis of 3 different musical features that you think are essential to having a meaningful listening experience with this piece of music (only one of these may be the text):
 - a. Describe each musical feature, providing at least one example from the piece, and say why it matters for your sense of meaning in this piece. This isn't a play-by-play chronological recounting of the sounds you hear in the piece, but a prioritized presentation of the three features/details you think are the most important.
 - b. Musical features you can choose to analyze: text, melody, harmony, rhythm, meter, dynamics, tempo, texture, instrumentation, or form.
 - c. Your analysis should answer these questions about the musical details you describe: What do these features communicate (or, what ideas would a listener miss or misinterpret if they didn't pay close attention to those features)? How do they reinforce each other and/or undermine each other—how do you make sense of how these musical features interact?
- 5) Provide some background information about the music that tells someone who's never heard it before what they should know and listen for. You cannot say something along the lines of, “No information needed, just listen”—you must provide some context for the music. You can do so by answering questions like these (not all of these are relevant for all pieces of music, so use your best judgment), providing information that adds depth to

your listening experience and that is necessary for the path you want to guide your readers along as they think about this piece:

- a. When is it from?
 - b. Where is it from?
 - c. Why was it made?
 - d. Who made this music and why?
- 6) Contextualize this piece of music by answering at least one of these questions, and show how the musical features you've analyzed help you draw these connections: the musical details you analyze in your SBP should explicitly support the big picture thinking you do. (The music video, if there is one, might be part of how you address this portion, but you are not obligated discuss any visual aspects, since this is a music course and not a visual arts course!)
- a. What broader issues does this piece of music bring up for you?
 - b. Does it make you think about gender, race, class, national identity, economics, politics, other art, philosophy, or belief systems?
 - c. How does this music reflect the culture or society from which it comes?
 - d. How does this music influence that culture or society?
- 7) Cite sources as embedded links to back up or illustrate your ideas, just in case not everyone reading is familiar with the allusion or connection you're making (we will go over how to do this in class, but examples are found throughout all of the instructor-led Online Discussions and in the how-to-submit instructions). These outside sources should verify the information and allow your readers to delve deeper into the ideas you've included in your blog post.
- 8) A narrative arc to tie all of your thoughts together and that helps you answer a broader thesis-like question: What does this piece of music mean?
- a. Your autobiographical contact with this piece (how did you first encounter it, why has it stuck with you); or
 - b. Your journey as a listener with this piece (what did you used to think about with this piece and how has your listening experience changed as you've delved into it?)
- 9) Pose at least one open-ended question to get the conversation started for your peers. Think of this like a free write that we do in class, but this time *you* get to come up with the writing prompt for your colleagues. Open-ended questions usually begin with a word like "how" or "why". The opposite of an open-ended question is a yes/no question or a leading question that provokes a specific response.
- 10) Sign your name at the end of your post.

In terms of style, blogs are often personal, like journal entries made public. Think of this assignment not as an essay or report, but instead as a forum in which you gather your thoughts and share them with others—you're sharing yourself, and the best way to do that is to be yourself. You can be funny, personal, quirky, and informal in a blog post—the goal is to keep people reading by keeping them interested in you and your ideas. The rules of grammar and spelling still apply—they are the shared standards by which we know what someone else is communicating, and that's the point here: to communicate!

Other common blog stylistic features (optional, but try them out and see if they work for you):

- 1) Headings for major sections
- 2) Pictures to break up the text

Leading the discussion:

Your SBP will be made live and available for comments for one week along with SBP from 3 or 4 other students in your section of Mu 110. You'll receive an email from me the day before it goes live so that you know your post will be available.

If you are an author of a post that week, you do not have to comment on any other blog posts that go are available for discussion during the week yours is live (although you may choose to read them, and I encourage you to do so!). Instead, your task is to curate the discussion on your post by responding to classmates' comments and questions, offering follow-up answers, and adding information or links to the ongoing discussion (see rubric).

Discussion participation:

Similar to the instructor-led Online Discussions from the first 9 weeks of the semester, in all weeks that your SBP is not live, your task is to comment on **all** of the posts available for your section of Mu 110 (4 or 5 per week). There are four discussion criteria for SBP discussion participation (see rubric), each worth 25 points, with the possibility of 5 points extra credit for exceptional contributions to each criterion (i.e., 120 points total per SBP discussion). Comments must be posted during the comment period; late comments will not be accepted.

SBP examples:

There are links to several past SBP available online, professional music blogs, as well as think-piece essays from professional authors in which they incorporate musical analysis and social commentary. Although none of these examples is an exact template for your SBP, they can give you a sense of the kinds of ideas you can bring into this assignment.

Suggestions for effective brainstorming, writing, and editing:

- Give yourself enough time to come up with weak ideas, mess up, and start over. No one writes a good essay the night before. Really. Begin this essay **today** so you have time to revisit your work with fresh eyes multiple times over the course of the week.
- Write the middle (body paragraphs) of your essay first, then the conclusion, and then the introduction. The introduction is the hardest place to start, because you have to know where the essay is going to write a good one!
- Talk about your ideas for this essay with other people. Just saying things out loud or trying to explain them to another person gets you through that tough first draft phase in which the right words just won't come out.
- Watch out for redundancy (saying the same thing with slightly different words, like I just did). Pick the most effective way to say something and move on!
- Read your essay out loud. You'll catch grammatical errors and notice awkward wording very quickly by doing this.

- Let someone else read (but not write!) your essay—a significant other, a family member, a friend. Sometimes just knowing that someone you care about will read it can motivate you to write more effectively.
- Oftentimes when we write drafts, we arrive at a great idea later in the essay that would be far more effective if we said it at the beginning of the paragraph or earlier in the essay. Try switching the order of your sentences or your paragraphs and see what happens to the flow of your work.
- Refer to the rubric to “grade” yourself—does your essay meet all the requirements?