

# History of Western Music III, 1730 to 1850: Home

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## Research Paper

Develop an original research project in which you attempt to answer your own research question related to Western music between approximately 1730 and 1850 and connecting to themes of the course. Write a paper that contributes to a conversation among scholars and students by offering your own insight, perspective, theory, or interpretation.

**Present a single, clear, persuasive central argument and support this argument with evidence** from musical sources, documentary sources, and secondary scholarship. Every paragraph should begin with a topic sentence that clearly connects the ideas and evidence presented in that paragraph to your central argument.

**Musical analysis** should be a substantial component of the paper (e.g., talking about notes). Try to find the intersections between **the sonic and the social** aspects of music-making.

Provide a full and responsible **citation** for every source that you use in any consistent style (Chicago notes-and-bibliography style recommended, see *Chicago Manual of Style* online via UR library website). There must be a citation with page number for every direct quotation. Every use of someone else's literal words must be quoted and cited; every use of someone else's thoughts must be acknowledged and cited.

The writing should be **free from mistakes like spelling and punctuation or grammatical errors**. See below for notes on style.

**Submit the document on paper, 12-point font, 1-inch margins.** With this format the paper should be between four and six pages in length, **1,600–2,000 words**.

The **draft** should be a complete, finished document with all citations and text complete. The **final version** should incorporate revisions based on feedback from your professor and teaching assistant and should be as polished as possible.

## Tips for Finding Sources

- Search for general information in encyclopedias/dictionaries like
  - *Grove Music Online* (search Oxford Music Online),
  - the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*,
  - *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Music* and other volumes for other centuries and topics, e.g., *The Cambridge History of American Music*
  - references in other languages like the *Diccionario de la música española e hispanoamericana*, *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*
- Use their bibliographies and those of the assigned texts for class to find more focused scholarly sources; also search

- RILM database (via UR library) for all publications and dissertations on music
- The Music Index database, the IIMP (International Index of Music Periodicals), for journal articles about music
- JSTOR for articles on a wide range of subjects, other databases like ATLA for religion
- UR library catalog, and ask for help from a research librarian
- WorldCat to find books not in our catalog and use Interlibrary Loan to get them

## Tips for Effective and Engaging Writing Style

Tell me what you have to say, in as direct and plain a way as you can. Writing for an academic research paper on music should be more formal than a blog post but less stiff and objective as a lab report. Feel free to use the first person when necessary. Your argument should be logical and based on evidence, but in the end this is your interpretation.

Make a specific, concrete argument that contributes to a scholarly discussion. It's not enough to say "This paper is about Schubert's music and physical height." or even "This paper explores the way that Schubert's music is linked to his physical height." Instead, write "Scholar X claims that you can tell Schubert was short based on the way he wrote for the bassoon. But this argument uncritically applies modern concepts of shortness and tallness and ignores important evidence about Schubert's actual relationship with the bassoon. On the basis of Y evidence, however, I argue that Schubert wrote as he did for the bassoon because of reason Z."

Everything in the paper, then, should relate directly to that central argument. Don't waste time on generalizations like the famous "dawn of time" introduction: "Music has been an important part of human life from the dawn of time. Among the many humans who have lived on the earth and done music, Beethoven is one of them." Leave this sort of thing to Perd Hapley. Be as specific as possible, at all times. Refer to specific measure numbers, words, musical structures, people, and institutions, in specific places and on specific dates.

Tell a story about people. Use active verbs with human subjects: instead of writing "Passive voice is avoided by effective writers in the humanities," write "Effective writers in the humanities avoid passive voice." When writing about music, keep your reader's attention on music as a performance happening in time, in a social context: instead of writing "*Son' qual nave* features many trills," write "In *Son' qual nave*, Farinelli seized the attention of distractable opera audiences and thrilled them with long trills on high notes and fast runs from one end of his range to the other."

For the perfectionists: No paper is ever really finished. You cannot find every source or think through every possible orientation. Just write something up that represents what you have to say about this right now. Write all the way to the end before you go back and revise.

For everyone: Write about something you care about. Let your love of music shine through in the paper. Don't be afraid to make a bold claim. Have fun with it and be creative.