Music & Humor

Music 175-0

Fall 2020

Project Timeline (proposal, peer-review, abstract & bibliography, presentation, final project)

Project Proposal – 10/16

What music and humor-related topic do you want to learn more about? Please submit a proposal that engages with both music and humor by October 16 as an upload or text entry on Canvas.

In your paper, you will write about music with discussion of musical examples, historical context, and other relevant information to make an interpretation based upon your original research. The final paper is an 8- to 10-page assignment about a topic of your selection, due at the end of finals week. Here is the project timeline:

- 10/16 - proposal due, receive feedback from me
- 10/23 - edited proposals due, give peer feedback
- 11/06 - abstract and draft bibliography due, receive feedback from me
- 11/19 - presentations (day 1)
- 11/24 - presentations (day 2)
- 12/08 - final project due

In this proposal, please include the following three things:

- **A two-sentence description** of what you want to write about, including things like specific musicians, songs, scenes, music videos, memes, and relevant context. You should select more than one musical work. If you have a primary work you want to analyze, find supporting works that will help you make your argument. Be concise and focused.
- **The title and author of a scholarly source that you would use to write this paper.** This should be a book or a journal article that is directly related to you topic. A scholarly source is written by an expert and peer-reviewed. In the bibliography, I invite you to include both scholarly and non-scholarly sources, but I want you to start with one that's reputable. Here are some places to look (note: not everything you find in these places will be scholarly):

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      - Search on NUsearchLinks to an external site.: You might search by "subject"— located in the drop-down menu to the left of "contains words"— or simply enter key terms

- Search on [WorldCat (Links to an external site.)](#): Use this to find resources anywhere in the world, including our library
- Search a term on [Oxford Music OnlineLinks to an external site.](#): Browse the bibliography for additional sources, located at the bottom of each subject entry

- **2 questions about your topic** that you would like to consider in your paper. These should be open questions that you would like to spend time considering and answering. Think of "how" or "why" questions beyond "what" and "whether" questions.

Tips:

- If you're not sure about all the details, that's fine—but the more you can share now, the better I can advise you.
- It will benefit you in the long run to devote time to finding a topic that will hold your interest, given the length of time you'll be stuck with it.
- You're welcome to look widely when selecting your topic: movies, mockumentaries, short films, sketches, musicals, comics, books, periodicals, songs, albums, music videos, TV (episodes, shows, commercials), video games, or anything else. And mix and match – it might make sense
- While you must discuss something musical, humor is relative. Know that you don't need to write about something that you find funny, per se.
- The primary goal of your paper should not be to explain why something is funny.
- If you want some inspiration, scroll through some of the [films (Links to an external site.)](#) and [music (Links to an external site.)](#) I've collected. Both lists are very incomplete.

I will read and reply to each of your proposals with comments, suggestions, and questions to help direct your paper-writing process. I'm looking forward to reading your ideas!

Project Proposal Peer-Review – 10/22

This Friday, 10/23, you will submit your project proposals again. This time, you will be reviewing and commenting on one another's proposals in small groups.

Each group has a shared Google Document formatted with space for you to post your proposal. Your group's document will be accessible to you under the [collaborations tab on our Canvas site.](#) The number next to your name in the chart below is your number within the group. In the document, you will paste your proposal and write your feedback next to where that number appears.

[Here's a sample Google Doc to show you how this should work. (Links to an external site.)](#)

Regarding your proposal 2.0: Paste your proposal by Friday, 10/23.

Your proposal 2.0 should follow the [project proposal guidelines.](#) Depending upon the feedback I gave you, you might want edit your first draft. You might also choose to add to your description if doing so clarifies your goals. Think of this as an opportunity to present a proposal that you want feedback on. Make sure that your writing is clear and that you define your concepts. You might provide links for songs so your group members can easily listen to them too.

Regarding giving feedback: Write feedback by Wednesday, 10/28.

Please write feedback for each of the other group members. In addition to writing in your designated area below each proposal, you might also use comments -- whatever you think is best.

When reading a proposal, imagine how the final project will grow from it. Then, in about 100 words, give feedback, answering the following questions:

- What does the proposal do well?
- What do you think can be clearer in the proposal, or what of the proposal would you hope to be clarified in the final project?
- What questions or comments do you have about the topic, the author's approach to that topic, or their argument?
- Other thoughts and recommendations -- helpful resources, music to consider, etc.

After receiving feedback on your proposal, you will respond to what each of your peers have written-- directly on the shared Google Doc. I don't really mind when you get this done. This was initially due on Monday (11/2), but please just have it done by the time the abstract and draft bibliography is due (Friday, 11/6).

After these peer-reviews, the next stage is writing a two-page (double-spaced) abstract and draft bibliography, due 11/6.

Abstract and Draft Bibliography – 11/6

Abstract and draft bibliography, due Friday, November 6 (upload to Canvas by end of day)

This is the next stage of the project process. For this stage, please expand your proposal to be a 2-page doubled-spaced abstract. Along with this abstract, include a draft bibliography with at least 6 sources.

- **The Abstract**
    - This abstract should expand on your proposal. In these two pages, take more time to explain your media, methods, and questions.
    - **Media**: What media are you writing about, who made it, when, where, why, and for whom? Contextualize the media you will analyze in your project.

- o **Methods**: What is your approach to this media, humor, and music? Are you doing lyrical analysis, reception history, comparing music videos, something else, or some combination of approaches?
  - o **Questions/Argument**: What questions do you want to answer through your research? Why are your methods fitting to answer the questions and hypotheses you have put forth? You might not yet have a clear argument/interpretation, as you have not yet delved into the bulk of your research. That's totally fine – but please share your hypothesis in this abstract.
  - o **Integrate peer feedback**: This abstract is a good place to consider and integrate the questions and ideas of your peers. Define concepts and terms that are important for your analysis that might not have been clear in your proposals.
  - o **Do some analysis:** You can begin to analyze some of your media in this abstract.
  - o **Do some literature review:** You can begin to write about some of your scholarly sources, and how they are helpful for your analysis.

- **The Draft Bibliography**
  - o This bibliography should expand on the source(s) you listed in your proposal.
  - o At least 3 of them should be scholarly peer-reviewed sources.
  - o You may include course readings if they are relevant to your topic or approach.
  - o You may include non-scholarly sources – reviews, newspaper articles, documentaries, or anything else that you might use in your final project.
  - o All sources in your bibliography should be relevant and useful to your project. I do not expect you to have read everything you include in your draft bibliography or to use everything you include in your final project. But please avoid including irrelevant sources.
  - o Please list them alphabetically by last name of author/creator.

- **Resources**
  - o Northwestern Library Search: https://search.library.northwestern.edu/primo-explore/search?vid=NULVNEW&sortby=rankLinks to an external site.
    - ▪ Our library is willing to scan excerpts from items in the NU collection
  - o Northwestern Interlibrary Loan: https://www.library.northwestern.edu/find-borrow-request/requests-interlibrary-loan/Links to an external site.
    - ▪ To request materials unavailable at NU—books, CDs, anything. They can send digital copies of chapters and articles
  - o Research librarians and research support: https://www.library.northwestern.edu/research/index.htmlLinks to an external site.
    - ▪ Check out our library's research assistant page. NU has many subject-specific research librarians who can help you with research projects. The more focused your questions, the faster and more helpful their answers.
  - o Oxford Music Online: https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/Links to an external site.
    - ▪ This is a scholarly source with music-related encyclopedia-like entries
    - ▪ Each article has a bibliography with relevant scholarly work

- - WorldCat: https://www.worldcat.org/ (Links to an external site.)
    - Use this to search for all media types across all libraries
  - Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/ (Links to an external site.)
    - Use this to search for articles, books, and books/articles that cite other books/articles
  - Discogs: https://www.discogs.com/ (Links to an external site.)
    - Use this to search for album/single/music releases of any kind
    - User-generated content
  - Ben: benjaminweissman2017@u.northwestern.edu
    - I'm pretty good at finding resources, books, and other things online. If you are struggling to find something you need, let me know.

Project Presentations - 11/19 & 11/24

The class periods of 11/19 and 11/24 will be devoted to each of you giving a 5-minute presentation about your project.

Presentation Instructions:

Please think of this time as an opportunity to share your work, and to both give and receive feedback on your project. Your presentation should cover the following points in some way:

- Present your topic, and the questions you are asking of this topic
- Discuss how are have gone about answering them - what are your methods, concepts that you're using, and approach to your topic
- Some of your analysis - perhaps with a media example
- Conclusions you've drawn

Your presentation should be clear and concise, and demonstrate your knowledge and research of your topic. Five minutes goes by quickly, so you might practice and test your tech beforehand to ensure you keep time.

You're presenting work-in-progress, and our mini-conference should be approached a bit like a workshop. I don't expect you to be finished with your paper (due 12/8) at this time, so your arguments and analysis might still be in-process too.

When you aren't presenting, I ask that you be active listeners and thoughtful question-askers. There will be time for a couple of quick questions per paper, if you have feedback in the moment.

Feedback:

You will each be assigned two papers, and asked to give some written feedback to their authors' presentations. You should respond to the following prompts in your feedback, in about 100 words:

- What did the presentation do well?
- What could have been clearer or clarified?
- What questions or comments do you have about the topic, the author's approach to that topic, or their argument?

How to give presentation feedback, via Canvas mail. Please send your feedback to me, in addition to the presenter.

Final Project – 12/8

Due December 8, 2020 (upload to Canvas by end of day)

Topics in this document: instructions for the task, anatomy of a research paper, rules for citation & style, a rubric, a list of resources.

This project represents 25% of course grade, in 50 possible points. In your proposals and abstracts, you presented a topic, specific pieces of media you will analyze, and questions you want to answer. Here are recommendations and requirements for how to realize your proposals.

I encourage you to approach this project creatively. As long as your structure and your analysis are thoughtful, your content and your arguments are clearly articulated, and you use the required minimum of resources, you're really free to explore here. If you wish to create a documentary or podcast-style pre-recorded presentation, or something else in lieu of a written paper, please let me know.

- The Task
    - Conduct research using secondary sources (e.g. scholarly articles) and primary sources (e.g. reviews, interviews, audio, or video recordings)
    - Contextualize and analyze media to make an original argument or interpretation.
    - Address and analyze some components of music: lyrical, sonic, musical structure, instrumentation, how it is collected [album, EP, single], how it is used in TV or film, packaging [visual design, marketing], etc.
    - Address your media/music in terms of humor (satire, irony, parody, critique, transgression, etc.)
    - Write 8-10 double-spaced pages (about 2000-2500 words), excluding citations and bibliography

- Anatomy of a Research Paper
    - You should address many of the following questions in your set-up:

- What objects are you studying? Be specific — songs, artists, videos, etc.?
- How are you approaching these objects? Perhaps through reception history, analysis of lyrics and themes, focusing on a specific time period, comparison of objects, or some other way?
- Why is this an apt approach to answer the questions you have of this material, and what is the argument/interpretation that you can make with it?
  - After this introduction, delve into your case studies. Utilize and analyze your sources and materials, applying concepts learned in this course and from secondary sources. You have great freedom here, so build your case and tell your story.
  - Then, connect the threads, building your interpretation/argument based upon your analysis.
    - Based upon your research, how would you answer the questions you posed in your proposal?
    - What does your analysis teach us about your selected media, its creators, humor and music in a time, place, and/or a social/political/cultural situation?
  - Your argument should *not* be about your perception of the quality of music. Taste-based value judgements are not what I am looking for.

- Citations & Style
  - Use at least 4 scholarly sources.
    - Use as many course readings as you find relevant to your project. You must find and use some scholarly sources that are not course readings in your bibliography too.
    - What warrants including a source in a bibliography? Direct or indirect quotation. Direct quotation: using the words of a text exactly; Indirect quotation: paraphrasing the words or ideas of a text. Both require a footnote, endnote, or parenthetical citation, depending upon your style guide.
  - Use as many additional sources appropriate to your paper topic as you would like (e.g. magazine articles, interviews, etc.). You're welcome to use any kind of source, as long as you cite and use it appropriately.
  - You must use a style guide. Please use the style with which you are the most familiar.
    - I use Chicago style. Here's a quick Chicago-style citation guide—*author-date* and *note-bibliography*: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html (Links to an external site.)
    - Find other citation styles here: https://libguides.northwestern.edu/c.php?g=115264&p=874391Links to an external site.
  - You must cite the media that you discuss.
    - In Chicago style, here's how to do this: https://www-chicagomanualofstyle-

org.turing.library.northwestern.edu/book/ed17/part3/ch14/psec263.htmlLi nks to an external site.

- Rubric
    - This paper is worth 50 points, in 3 categories: Structure, Content, and Style.
    - Structure (15 points) — full credit will be given to a paper that…
        - shows attention to overall structure.
        - includes an introduction to the materials and questions the paper will address and consider.
        - includes analysis of these materials.
        - includes a conclusion that demonstrates how analysis yields an interpretation.
    - Content (30 points) — full credit will be given to a paper that…
        - uses clear and succinct writing.
        - demonstrates a synthesis of ideas and original thought.
        - uses and cites at least 3 scholarly resources and at least 3 additional resources (primary or secondary).
        - cites the specific album(s)/song(s) you analyze.
    - Style (5 points) — full credit will be given to a paper that…
        - uses a consistent style guide.
        - uses correct grammar and spelling.

- Resources
    - Northwestern Library Search: https://search.library.northwestern.edu/primo-explore/search?vid=NULVNEW&sortby=rankLinks to an external site.
        - Our library is willing to scan excerpts from items in the NU collection
    - Northwestern Interlibrary Loan: https://www.library.northwestern.edu/find-borrow-request/requests-interlibrary-loan/Links to an external site.
        - To request materials unavailable at NU—books, CDs, anything. They can send digital copies of chapters and articles
    - Research librarians and research support: https://www.library.northwestern.edu/research/index.htmlLinks to an external site.
        - Check out our library's research assistant page. NU has many subject-specific research librarians who can help you with research projects. The more focused your questions, the faster and more helpful their answers.
    - Oxford Music Online: https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/Links to an external site.
        - This is a scholarly source with music-related encyclopedia-like entries
        - Each article has a bibliography with relevant scholarly work
    - WorldCat: https://www.worldcat.org/ (Links to an external site.)
        - Use this to search for all media types across all libraries
    - Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/ (Links to an external site.)
        - Use this to search for articles, books, and books/articles that cite other books/articles
    - Discogs: https://www.discogs.com/ (Links to an external site.)

- - Use this to search for album/single/music releases of any kind
  - User-generated content
  - Ben: benjaminweissman2017@u.northwestern.edu
    - I'm pretty good at finding resources, books, and other things online. If you are struggling to find something you need, let me know.

If you have any questions, please email me at benjaminweissman2017@u.northwestern.edu. I am glad to answer questions about sources or argument up until the due date. If you would like feedback on your paper, please let me know at the time of submission (at the top of your paper or in a separate message).