

Unit 4 Project: Hip Hop Culture

Project description

Unit 4 begins with a discussion of the rise of hip hop as a music and as a cultural phenomenon. This begs some questions: Is rapping music? Is DJing theft? Is hip hop culture a valid expression of values or simply an excuse for misogyny and violence? Is hip hop an art? You heard answers to some of these from the perspectives of international artists and local practitioners. Now you will give your own answer a try.

For this unit's project, your group will make a hip hop music video that draws upon and features the elements of hip hop (rapping, DJing, graffiti, and breakdance). Your group's members will divide your efforts and talents by choosing specific tasks to lead and individuals can assist with multiple elements. The final product will include an audio track that includes elements of rapping, a beat, and visuals. (This can be a mix of graffiti or dance. You do not need to go paint walls, digital work can suffice or group members can collect images from where they live or visit.) The final product should be thematically linked, but the themes can be loose. Each individual member will additionally submit an essay (500 words) describing your take on the content of the final project, outlining your contribution to the process, and analyzing how the experience influences your thoughts on whether hip hop is or is not an art form.

Objectives

Through this project, you will:

- Compare, interpret, and analyze a variety of works;
- Model cultural artifacts that function as widely varied reflections of human perspectives and/or practices;
- Investigate the diversity of human experience within Western culture and appreciate the contributions of different social groups;
- Synthesize information from across disciplines to: examine existing questions and problems from a variety of perspectives, formulate novel questions and ideas, and explain these questions and ideas in written and oral formats;
- Learn, think, and solve problems independently and in teams, as is required to engage in the life-long consideration of, and the fostering of cooperative solutions to, complex problems.

Directions

Like all of our projects, this is a multi-step process. Each stage has its own deadlines, listed in the calendar.

SIGN UP: First, you will need to prepare and do some research by watching the lectures, completing the reading, and doing the listening. Check the course calendar and note the project deadlines.

Each group will have a discussion forum dedicated to your project. To begin, consider your strengths, experience, talents, and interests and decide which elements of the project you want

to contribute to. Each group may divide the work in the way that best suits its makeup. Some may want to feature dance learning to breakdance or hanging out with those communities. Others may expend spend more effort on the musical elements, if many of you play instruments and want to write and perform your own musical background (using GarageBand loops or something similar for your musical elements), while still others may focus on the visual arts (and find extant materials for the visual side of things). Finally, some will need to focus on the rap itself: an individual or team will have to take on writing, performing, and recording the text.

There are some main categories of tasks, and you may decide to help with more than one. This forum is where your group will negotiate roles. It is difficult to spread the editing between four people who live far from each other, but splitting songwriting and rapping duties may be easier, for example. Some roles to consider:

- Developing the overall concept and managing the progress made by the group;
- Writing the song's lyrics;
- Writing, performing, and recording the song (or using software instruments like GarageBand, FL Studio, Figure, Reason, or any of the app- or web-based options suggested in Blackboard and in my brief tutorials);
- Filming and/or curating video content;
- Performing and recording either visual elements (dance, drawing or painting graffiti, etc.) or the rap (individually or as part of a group, which can be collected using something as simple as a smartphone);
- Supervising the recording and editing of audio (in the case of groups spread out geographically);
- Supervising the recording and editing of video (in the case of groups spread out geographically);

Notes on equipment (worth knowing before choosing a role):

1. In terms of video and audio work, I will provide basic intro videos on using GarageBand and iMovie, both of which are available on the Macintosh computers in the libraries on campus.
2. For those of you doing the recording, you can either use your own equipment or borrow them from the library.
3. You will be graded on the content and the editing, but not on the quality of your recorded video and audio (as long as it is not so bad that I cannot discern what is going on). This means that most cell phones' recording should be sufficient, especially if you have something newer like an iPhone 5 or 6.
4. DSLR and other cameras are available from Strozier and you can contact me (cwitulski@fsu.edu) about the possibility of borrowing audio or video recording equipment.
5. Lack of access to equipment will not be a valid excuse for late or missing submissions. Similarly, if you are experienced in using these types of media, you are aware that things take far longer than you think they might. Do not wait until the last minute to try and finish this project. Get started early and work together.

Once your group sorts out roles and shares ideas, begin your work on the project! You have until the end of the semester (check due dates on the calendar), but that time will move very, very quickly.

ESSAY: At this point, you can begin thinking about your essay response. It will be short and you will not share it with your group. The 500 word essay will be due at the same time as the group project's final submission. If you draft it now, it will be easier to make relevant changes as you move through the project. Your essay will:

- Describe your personal take on the final project and your thoughts about its success (which will be difficult to do early, but begin thinking about it);
- Outline your contribution to the group, which will be graded and may (in the case of dispute or other issues) be checked against other group members' essays and peer evaluation responses;
- Analyze your thoughts on the question of hip hop's artistry. Starting this part now will make it far easier to note changes (if any), providing you with a far more nuanced final essay.

This essay should follow these guidelines for full credit:

- Include references to specific songs and links to any musical examples that are not on the course's listening playlists.
- It is not necessary to supplement the class materials, but if you need to do further research to make your point clearly and persuasively, use a standard and consistent method of citation and include a bibliography.
- Check and recheck your spelling and grammar.
- Be sure that your essay makes an overall argument about hip hop's artistry or lack thereof. Introduce your argument and return to it in your conclusion.

When your project is finished—and before the final submission deadline—submit your essay through the Turnitin link for inclusion in your final project grade.

GROUP PROJECT SUBMISSION: The third stage involves your preparation for final submission.

When your group has put together a draft of the final product, whomever did the editing should upload it to your discussion group for everyone else to see. This can be done in many ways, but two are easiest for our purposes:

- From within a new thread, the group member can choose "Mashups" in Blackboard's text editor and select "Kultura Media." From here, you have the ability to add media using the button. This keeps your content within the Blackboard site so that only course members can view it.
- You can also upload to YouTube or a similar page and provide a link. Not all services allow you to create private videos, so this gives you less control. *I do not recommend this process for drafts*, but I will accept it for your final submission since it will allow you to share your work with others outside of the course.

Group members should all take the time to review the project and make any suggestions for revision. Remember that re-editing video takes a long time, so any major changes should be accompanied by an offer to help out or otherwise alleviate the difficulty of video editing. Once you are satisfied, your group will make your final submission.

To finalize your project, you will need three tasks complete:

1. One group member will submit the project by posting it to the final submission discussion board. This is not a group board: it is for the entire class. Create a new thread, give a description of your group's project, and embed the video using Kultura (as describe above), YouTube, or whatever process your group chooses. This is the final submission for your project and allows your peers across the class to view your work.
2. Complete and submit your individual essay as described above using the Turnitin link.
3. Complete and submit the peer assessment using the link.

This project is the most interactive one of our semester. Be sure to contact me with any questions regarding equipment, technology, directions, group member issues, or other issues that may pop up as you go through the process of creating your music video.

There is no extra credit for this project. Grades will be based on your individual essay, group project, and peer assessments. The score breakdown is as follows:

60%	Final project grade (Everyone will receive the same score unless there are extenuating circumstances)
30%	Essay on hip hop's artistry (As submitted through Turnitin)
10%	Peer assessment for participation (As completed through the link)