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COLLEGE READING AND WRITING II
ENGLISH 201

ESSAY 1: THE MIX TAPE ESSAY

GOALS/OBJECTIVES

The goal for this essay is four-fold. First, this essay is to allow me to assess your writing for the first time so that I may begin offering you feedback. Second, this essay should allow you to use the knowledge that you have already learned in writing courses. For instance, at this state in your writing education, you should have some familiarity with telling a story and with analyzing various types of media. Third, this assignment will allow you to get to know some of your fellow classmates as we begin a course that will rely heavily upon peer-interaction. And, lastly, this assignment is intended to allow us to have some fun with writing.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Our lives are like little boxes filled with pieces of our selves that we share with those close to us and sometimes with people not so close to us. Sometimes we put ourselves “out there,” and we risk everything to be the person that we are, representing an ideology that we are born into or that we have adopted. One way we do this is through the music we listen to. Like our writing, people can deduce significant information about us simply by knowing what kinds of music we enjoy. We all listen to music. We all have a song or a band that we are embarrassed to admit that we like. We all like at least one song because radio stations have bashed it into our heads. We all listen to some songs that seem out of character for the type of person we are. And this music that embarrasses us or seems so uncharacteristic of us can be as revealing, if not more so, about who we are than the music that seems natural to us. Individual songs, however, can only tell so much about us. It is when we arrange and juxtapose a series of songs together, a playlist of ourself, if you will, that a clearer picture of who we are can come together.

Drawing upon the current assumption within composition studies that we (writers/communicators) can use a variety of media to represent ourselves (images, sound, alphabetic text), your assignment is to write a 3-4 page essay in which you represent yourself as a playlist of 12 songs divided into four categories of three songs each. Each of the four categories should represent some aspect of who you are and/or how you want others to perceive you, and each of the three songs in a particular category should function as the supporting connections that establish/explain the bonds between you and the category in question. Throughout your essay, you will want to explain how the songs you include in this playlist represent you, and you will want to explain why you have made the choices that you have made, from the categories you choose to the order of your arrangement of each song in those categories.

This assignment, in short, asks you to write well, analyze thoroughly, and try to take a risk.

THE PROCESS

Choose four categories that represent different aspects of who you are and/or how you want others to perceive you and include in those categories three songs. To do this, you may want to start by brainstorming categories that represent aspects of yourself and after narrowing down those choices, then choosing three songs to for each category. Alternatively, you may wish to begin by brainstorming songs that you believe belong in a playlist that represents your life, looking for patterns and groupings you can use to establish your four categories. Either way (or any other way you choose to start), you will likely need to be selective and you will sometimes need to forego a category or song you really wish to include. There are two aspects of this process of choosing categories and songs. One part of this process of choosing categories and songs involves deciding what you want and do not want to reveal about yourself and your musical tastes. And the other part of this process of choosing categories and songs involves being able to explain how your chosen songs both support and develop the categories you choose and how the songs and categories represent you. **For this assignment, it is not enough to just choose your favorite songs, you must**

explain how the songs represent who you are and support that explanation through evidence from experience and the song/s.

FORMAT

In addition to conforming to general MLA research paper guidelines your Mix tape Essay should do the following in the introduction, the body, and the conclusion:

Introduction: Introduce your project, identify your four categories, and explain why you chose the categories you did and how you believe they represent you. While you want your introduction to be functional (it should serve as a preview of your larger essay by explaining, in brief, your purpose and how you intend to develop that purpose), you also want to catch your readers' attention by providing an interesting hook, by contextualizing your project in a thought-provoking way, by offering an insightful comment, by providing an attention catching anecdote, etc.

In addition to catching your readers' interest and providing them some incentive to keep reading, a good introduction provides a road map for readers to help them navigate the various sections of your essay. Generally, in academic and professional writing, readers want, even need, to know what your purpose is and how you plan on achieving that purpose from the start so that they can better make sense of what they are reading and how it relates to your larger purpose.

Body: Use subheadings to indicate each of the categories, and in each section, discuss the three songs included in that section. Explain why you chose those songs for your mix tape and what each of those songs says about the kind of person you are. In your explanations you want to use examples to illustrate the connections between the category, the song, and yourself. If it is the lyrics that make that connection for you, paraphrase and/or quote them. If it is the music, explain the mood, the emotion(s), the theme, or the effect of the music that establishes the connection between the category, the song, and yourself. Likewise, if a particular song is important to you for another reason, explain the significance of the song and its connection to the category and yourself. (Remember, while this assignment asks you to draw from the personal, it is not a tell-all or confessional piece. There are aspects of your life that you need not, even should not, share with the class.)

Once you have decided upon the categories and songs you want to include in your essay, you will want to decide the order of your mix tape, both the order of the categories and the order of songs within each category. As you develop your arrangement, you might decide to switch out specific songs or even entire categories and replace them with others. That is a normal part of the composition process, regardless of whether the composition is a mix tape essay or an academic essay.

Nothing about your mix tape should be random: neither the order of the categories nor the order of the songs within those categories. You should have reasons for your arrangement and you should explain those reasons within your essay. You want to have clear reasons for the choices you make (the categories you choose, the songs you include, the order of the categories, the order of the songs within each category, and the supporting evidence you provide), and you want to articulate those reasons and support those reasons with evidence.

Through this process of selecting categories and songs and articulating the reasons for the choices you make along the way, you are engaging in the compositional arts of selection, analysis, arrangement, explanation, and self-expression, all important components of personal, academic, and professional writing.

Conclusion: Finally, in the conclusion remind your readers' of your categories and mention two or three of your all-time favorite songs that most represent you, songs which may be in your mix tape or songs which you may have left out, and briefly explain how and why those songs represent you. While your conclusion should remind your readers of your purpose, it should do so by provide a strong mnemonic that reminds your readers of your purpose long after the specifics of your essay have been forgotten. In other words, a good conclusion does not just sum up an essay; it encapsulates the essay in a memorable way so that your readers' can remember your purpose and why that purpose is important.

NOTE: Keep all prewriting and drafts of your essay. If you are in the habit of revising and proofreading from the computer screen, save each version of your essay before you begin the revision/proofreading process. Not only do I require all drafts of an essay to be submitted with the final version, saving multiple drafts of your work can be just as important as saving your work often (you do save your electronic work often as you work on it, don't you?). The more you write, the more often you will find yourself wondering if an earlier version may have said something better or taken a more fruitful direction. If you have saved those earlier versions, you can return to them; whereas if you have deleted or overwritten them, you have to start again from scratch. Saving multiple versions of an electronic project requires a strategic file naming system. My own system is adopted from the software industry. I will begin with version 1.0. While a minor revision/edit might result in changing the version suffix from 1.0 to 1.1 or from 1.3 to 1.4, a major revision or substantial/final proofreading will result in changing the version suffix to the next whole number (e.g., a version 3.4 would become version 4.0).

Due Dates for Peer Editing, Drafts, and Final Version will be clearly illustrated in the online schedule.

You will submit at least one rough draft and the final draft in Blackboard. **No less than 4 pages and no more than 6 pages**

For Final draft: Drafts will be submitted within Blackboard.

Grading Rubric

Clarity, Grammar, Punctuation, (3 or more errors)	1/3 letter grade deducted for every 3 errors
Typographical Errors (2 or more errors)	1/3 letter grade deducted
Late (more than 24 hours)	1 Letter grade
Peer Edit (be sure you have completed your peer edit by due date and have done a thorough job)	Did not peer edit: ½ letter grade Did a poor job of peer editing 1/3 letter grade
Wrong Format (headings, page numbers, MLA format); this also includes Microsoft Word—no “word perfect” or “microsoft works” documents. Cite music lyrics properly in your text. You must have a Works Cited if you have cited music lyrics in your essay.	Depends on exact error and number of them, but in general as much as 1 letter grade or as little as 1/3 letter grade.
Follows directions (4 categories, 3 songs in each category). This includes submission directions and inclusion of sub-headings.	Not following the directions may cause a 1/3 letter grade deduction
Title/Introduction/Conclusion (explain your essay in the introduction and be sure to conclude your essay). Be sure to give your essay a unique title.	Lacking a sufficient introduction or conclusion may cause a 1/3 letter grade deduction.
Other Considerations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Transitions between paragraphs and sub-headings • Use strong verbs and adjectives • Use logic and clear metaphors (make sense) • Use good descriptions 	Lacking transitions, poor word choice, and sentences that are tough to understand or follow poor logic may lose as much as 1/3 letter grade.
What is 1/3 letter grade?	If you earn an A on your essay but lose 1/3 of a letter grade because of errors, your final grade would be A-. If you were to lose 2/3 of a letter grade, your grade would be B+, and, of course 3/3 of a letter is a full letter grade which would equal B.

