

## Course intro essay: final draft

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### **Due dates (all submitted as hard copies in class):**

	<u>F1 (Mondays)</u>	<u>F4 (Thursdays)</u>
Final draft due with previous draft and revision reflection	March 13	March 9

### **Submission requirements, all stapled together in order:**

1. Final grading Rubric (with your name and section #, F1 or F4),
2. Revision reflection (1p) – I will not grade your final draft without it
3. Your final draft
4. First draft reflection (printed Google form, returned with your first draft)
5. Your first draft

### **Revision reflection:**

Write an essay (no more than one page) in which you explain how you thought about and incorporated feedback into this draft. In your reflection, you must answer these two questions: 1) what specifically did you do differently for this version of the essay, and 2) what have you learned about yourself as a writer in the process? Even if you did not turn in a first draft, you can (and must) still complete this portion of the assignment.

This reflection is required and I will not grade your essay without it.

### **Late policy:**

Formal writing assignments will lose one point per day that they are late; after two weeks, late assignments will not be accepted. Assignments are incomplete until revision reflections have been submitted.

### **Formatting requirements:**

- Basics: 12-point font, double spaced, 1" margins, no extra blank lines between paragraphs, indent (tab) the first line of each paragraph
- Length: 2-3 pages (no fewer than 2, no more than 3)
- Do not include a heading (e.g., your name, the instructor's name, date, course #). The first thing printed on your essay should be your title (something catchy, interesting, and descriptive, not "Course intro essay").

### **Overview:**

This essay will be an opportunity for you to gather and explore your thoughts as you begin this class: about music, about yourself, about your academic career, and about this course.

Use the feedback you've received on your in-class writing (such as questions written in the margins of your papers), in-class discussions, assigned reading, online discussions, and anything else you've learned so far this semester to add depth to your ideas. Whenever possible, use specific examples as you draw upon your own experience, knowledge, and insight to make it clear what it is that you're basing your ideas upon—you might not have thought about these

ideas thoroughly before, but this essay is an opportunity to explore the *why* behind your opinions, ideas, and feelings.

**Prompt:**

Write a well-crafted 3-page essay in which you explore four main ideas in whatever logical order you choose: music in general, yourself, your academic career, and this course. The exact structure of this essay may vary depending on the content of your essay, the shape of your story, and your comfort level with various kinds of writing. The crucial thing is that your essay addresses all four topics in the prompt, includes an introduction and a conclusion, is well-written, and provides specific examples to illustrate your ideas (at least one for each of the four topics).

Here are some brainstorming questions (similar to free-writes we've done in class) to get you started on the four main ideas in this essay. You do not have to answer all of these questions, you do not have to answer them or address these four topics in a particular order, and you should not feel limited to the scope of the questions listed here—use them as a starting point and as a means to keep yourself focused on the essay prompt.

- 1) About music: What role does music play in your life? How do you listen to music (where, with whom, what medium)? What do you listen for (musical features), and why do you listen to music? What, if anything, have you already learned in class that's surprised you or altered the way you think about music?
- 2) About yourself: How do you identify yourself? What do you do well? What do you struggle with? What kind of person do you want to become? How do you think those things will affect your musical experience(s) and/or your experience in Mu 110?
- 3) About your academic career: What do you do well academically? What challenges do you face in your academic career? What role does your academic career play in your future goals? How do you think those things will affect your experience in Mu 110, and what's your plan to face them?
- 4) About this course: What aspect of the course described in the syllabus/course calendar are you most excited about? What aspect are you most nervous or apprehensive about?

Once you've brainstormed about these four topics, try to find a common thread between your ideas—what coherent story do they tell about you as you begin your journey in Mu 110 in the spring of 2017? The connections between these four topics will help shape your **introduction** (which sets up the narrative you're about to tell) and your **conclusion** (which looks beyond your essay to the future, other aspects of your life, or other people—it's not a repetition or summing-up of the ideas you've already stated).

**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?

#### **Assignment-specific suggestions (based on submitted rough drafts):**

Make sure your essay is coherent. Your responses inspired by the four sections of the prompt should clearly relate to each other and tell a connected story.

This essay is about you: your ideas, your experiences, your goals—the common thread is you. Look for sentences about “people” or generalizations about the world: do they support the central idea of exploring yourself and your experience? (Hint: probably not.) Remove them and see what holes remain or what space you’ve freed up for specific examples, answering implicit questions, or following a line of thought more thoroughly.

If there’s a pattern of error in your writing but you’re not sure how to fix it on your own (e.g., run-on sentences, sentence fragments, past participles, subject-verb agreement), make an appointment at the Writing Center (Library, 1<sup>st</sup> floor) so you can learn the skills that will make all of your writing more effective. They can also help you with brainstorming or organization of your thoughts if that’s a roadblock for you.

#### **Editing techniques:**

1. Read your essay two sentences at a time (e.g., first sentence and second sentence of a paragraph; second sentence and third sentence of a paragraph)—do these two sentences repeat each other? Remove the weaker one.
2. Your best editor is an imaginary, insatiable three-year-old who says “How do you know” or “Why does that matter” after every single sentence. Does the narrative you’re telling pass the “three-year-old test”? If not, then there’s still more critical thinking to be done in order to fully flesh out your ideas (and make them toddler-proof!).