

## Write That Essay!

Were we to meet in class on Tuesday the 28th, you would all be sitting in the room with your laptops open in front of you. We would be up in front of you, giving you a single writing prompt about once every fifteen to twenty minutes. This type of in-class writing can be incredibly effective, and can lead to the creation of the remainder of your essay in just a few days.

However, we will not be meeting in class tomorrow. Instead, here is our set of expectations. We are absolutely serious about these expectations; if you do not follow them, you may not finish your essay on time.

Note: no late essays will be accepted; no exceptions. Your essay is due on Monday, June 3, first thing in the morning, PRINTED OUT. Do not wander in saying "I couldn't get the printer to work." Do not e-mail the essay to either of us. This is your responsibility.

### Schedule for Tuesday, May 28:

At 9 am, open your computer file and start up a new Word document. Title it "Fieldwork." Between 9 am and 11 am, answer the following questions in prose form (not as a list). Write it as if we are sitting in front of you and asking you directly.

1. What did you do? Spend about half an hour writing out a timeline of what you physically did during your fieldwork. This includes attending concerts (where? whom did you see/listen to?), going to or participating in rehearsals, being at dances (if applicable), engaging in conversations, reading, note-taking... all of it. Fill out your activities for the month of May.
2. Discuss three stand-out moments during your fieldwork. Look over your timeline and select three events to discuss. Be very specific about the musical and contextual information; talk about who, what, where, when. Describe the instrumentalists/vocalists, what they're playing, where they're playing, what time they're playing, etc. Describe the audience members and the event staff, if any. For this information you can draw on the notes you took during and after these events.
3. Describe in detail at least one conversation you had that enhanced or altered your understanding of the genre you studied. Who was the other person in that conversation and why did the conversation change your understanding? What do you know now that you didn't know beforehand? Note: you might have been wrong about something but then you were corrected.
4. Describe yourself, the fieldworker: name your age, race, gender, social class, and experience as a way of giving the reader a sense of what kind of lens you are leading them through. This will appear in your final essay as an endnote, and you need to develop it now so you can plug it in.

E-mail what you've written to yourself to save it. Now take a break. Please, please, go outside and stretch your legs. Eat a decent lunch that doesn't include too much sugar because you'll fall asleep in the afternoon and you need your full brain capacity to do this job! Resume your work at 2 pm.

1. Welcome back! Write about one failure you had. Be honest with yourself: why was it a failure? What could you have done differently? How did you handle it? (as an example, I [Sean] was falsely accused of having an affair with my [male] zither teacher, whose wife threatened to have me deported and ordered her husband – my teacher – to stop teaching me. It disrupted my work for three months.)
2. Now write in detail about a success. Why was it a success? How did this success come about? What did you learn from the experience?
3. Consider the issues that you wrote about in your preliminary essay before you began your fieldwork. Open that other document and look at those issues; think about their relevance to the real-life application of your work and your interests. Is it possible that another issue became much more important and ended up dominating your work?
4. What didn't you find out?
5. What would you do differently?
6. What did you learn from this experience?

Now, e-mail what you've written to yourself to save it. You think we're joking?

Schedule for Thursday, May 30:

Bring your laptop to C1105. You don't need to have anything printed out (but do bring your plug; there are plenty of places to plug your computer in right there on the tables). In the first part of the day we will be focusing on sharing your experiences in small groups. Be prepared to listen, to describe, to ask questions of each other, and to recognize that everyone's experience is necessarily different. It's all about the talking and note-taking for the morning.

In the afternoon we will be walking with you through the process of putting together the theory of your preliminary essay with the practice of your fieldwork. We have written directly on your preliminary essays, and we will hand them back to you at this time. It is **ESSENTIAL** that you have answered all of the above questions in detail before Thursday morning. That must be on your laptop or printed out in front of you if you can't bring a computer in (or prefer not to write on a computer). We will also be discussing your presentations for next week (June 3, 4, and possibly 6), and signing up for times.

Schedule for the weekend of June 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>:

Fine-tune your work. Get a rough draft together on Saturday and come up with a working title for it. Take note of the faculty comments on your preliminary essays

and start drawing from your “Fieldwork” file that you created on Tuesday to fill in the missing sections. Create an introduction that states what the paper is about in the clearest of ways. Set the paper down and get some sleep. On Sunday, finish breakfast and read the paper from start to finish. Ask yourself these questions: does this give a reader an accurate, effective picture of the genre, the location, and the important issue(s) associated with the genre? Is the bibliography consistent? Are the points I make leading smoothly from one paragraph to another? Did I try to discuss the entire history and multiple sub-genres of this one style, rather than narrowing it WAY down (if so, narrow it down dramatically)? Are the pages numbered? Is the title in place? Is my name on the essay?

Check to make sure you understand and apply the following grammatical points from the Captain Grammar Pants Hall of Shame:

1. Don't use an apostrophe to make a plural. Saying “there were three musician's” is so terribly, laughably wrong that you could miss out on a job interview because the interview committee can barely stay in their seats from laughing so hard. For singular possessive, it's apostrophe S, as in “the musician's gear.” For plural possessive, it's S apostrophe, as in “the musicians' gear.” Mess this up and you're gonna fry in Hell. That's right; Hell.
2. its = possessive; it's = it is
3. whose = possessive; who's = who is
4. their = possessive; they're = they are; there = a place
5. All sentences must be complete.
6. Do not capitalize genre names or instruments. It's reggae, not Reggae; jazz, not Jazz. Similarly, it's guitar, not Guitar; soprano, not Soprano.
7. Capitalize the names of businesses (Jazz Alley, for example).
8. Use a semicolon to separate two related clauses. For example: I hope Sean and Andrea like my essay; I worked really hard on it. A comma would NOT be appropriate there. Instead, use commas to group ideas. For example: In my essay I described the bands I saw, listed my successes and failures, and included both an introduction and a conclusion.
9. Avoid the use of superlatives (“This was basically the most awesome band ever in the history of music!!!!”) Describe it; don't just praise it.
10. Be consistent in your spelling of people's names, tune titles, and locations.

Finally, print out your completed document and staple it together neatly. Bring it to class on Monday, secure in the knowledge that you have done the best paper in your college career.