1101 Composition 1, fall 2011, Scanlan

**Assignment Sheet**

**Essay 3: The Music Review (Persuasive Essay--15%)**

How many times have you told your friends that a band is great, or that a song is terrible, or that they missed the best show in the world last night?

Now is your chance to improve these skills as we improve our writing.

In this **4 page essay (3 pages of persuasive writing and a 1 page works cited)**, you are to write a music review. For this assignment, we will consider a music review to be a critical evaluation of an album or CD. Above all, your music review must make an argument: you need to take a stand on the music that you review. Along with your argument—which will be part of your thesis—you need to provide commentary, not merely summary. What this means is that you enter into a dialogue or discussion with the artist and with audiences. You can offer agreement or disagreement and identify where you find the work excellent or deficient. Selection is very important in the music review because you will not have time or space to write about every note, every song, or all the lyrics. Decide which parts of the album best support your argument.

Your music review must have the following parts:

(3 pages)

1. Introduction: your thesis (argument) will go here

2. Summary: overall style, content, and biographical information

 \*3. Analysis: break down an album into its parts: songs, lyrics, sounds

 \*4. Interpretation: this is the place to identify what you liked and/or disliked (analysis and interpretation are often woven together)

5. Conclusion: reconfirm your thesis and be bold

(1 page)

6. Works Cited page: a list of where you got your information (minimum 4)

Updated Schedule:

Music Review Discussion, in-class writing, citation help: **October 11**

First Draft Peer Review: **October 13**: 2 pages (at least), typed, double-spaced, with works cited

**Final Draft Due: Monday, 18: in class.**

**Getting Started: The Music Review**

**• Listen to the album more than once.**

While first impressions are important, when it comes to music, there is much to be gained from listening multiple times. Music has many layers, and a deeper understanding can be gained as one listens to a record over and over again. Take notes about what stands out as you listen. When you hear something really good—or really terrible—write it down.

**• Give readers background information about the album.**

Give readers some basic information about the musicians. Where are they from? What are their names? What instruments do they play? While this may not be as important for well-established artists, it is very important for debut albums. Pretend you have never heard of the band: what would you like to know? Keep track of where you got your information.

**• State an opinion about the album (your beginning thesis).**

Hook readers right away and give them an opinion. Be firm, and say whether it’s good, bad, or somewhere in between.

**• Back up the opinion with specific examples.**

Discuss specific tracks and explain why they are good or not so good.

**• How does the album fit into the band’s career?**

Compare, compare, compare. Readers will want to know if the album keeps in line with previous records, or if it is a departure for the group. How does this band compare to a similar group? Information about their influences can also be useful.

**• Be honest!**

What do you want your readers to do? Buy the album? Avoid it? Go see the live performance? Maybe just one song is worthwhile. Let your readers know how you feel.

If you have answered these questions, you now have a lot of material to work with. Next, we need to put your notes into some sort of order.

**Begin your Music Review with a strong sentence:**

1. (if-then) If there is one lesson that we should learn from the 1990s—with its speed metal, Goth, death metal—it is that heavy metal has more styles than Macy’s department store.

2. (the question) What were you doing in 1984? Were you listening to Michael Jackson? No? Then you might have been living in a cave.

3. (the picture) Picture this scene: 20,000 lighters glowing in a massive auditorium and the only sound is the wail of a single guitar, in perfect tune, framed by a single spot light.

4. (take a closer look) When I say the words “Choral Music,” you might not jump up and down with excitement. That’s okay. But when you take a closer look at this old and respected form of music, you might just get hooked.