

MHST 519: Jazz Outside the United States Response Paper Assignment

Due: October 30, 2013

Summary

Choose one of the assigned readings from Weeks 1 – 9, and develop a 500-word analysis of the paper. You may choose any of the assigned readings *except* whichever paper you were assigned to present in class. In your response paper, summarize the material presented and present a parallel discussion addressing the author's position (from what time and place is the author writing, and for which reasons), the limitations of the article, and other directions of inquiry. The material presented by Jill Gatlin in class on September 18 will be helpful to you as you prepare your response.

Grading

This assignment is worth 15% of your final grade. I will grade this assignment on a pass/fail basis. Passing papers are those that show understanding and engagement with the subject matter, and thorough, well-developed arguments, and carefully edited writing. Failing papers will be returned with suggestions for improvement and may be revised and re-submitted for a passing grade.

How to Write Your Response Paper

- (1) Read the article more than once. Come back to it a few times over a few days' time. Give the ideas time to develop in your mind.
- (2) Take notes while you are reading. What is the topic of the paper? Why does the author think it is important? What are the author's goals in writing this? What would the author like you to understand? What argument is being made, if any? What are the author's methods (e.g. historical analysis, musicological analysis, transcription, ethnography)? What sources are being used? What are the main points made in each section?
- (3) Summarize the article. Describe each of the main points in your own words. Be very careful to avoid plagiarism.
- (4) Evaluate the article. Highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the author's argument. Did the author do what he or she claimed to do? Draw attention to those areas where the author successfully delivered an argument or opinion as well as those where the author fell short. Are you convinced of the author's claim? Are the claims backed up with enough information? How reliable were the sources used? What position is the author writing from, and how might this position limit his or her understanding?
- (5) Present your response. Did you find the author's approach interesting or valid? Why or why not? Is there another approach that might be productive? Where do you stand with respect to the topic, the author's arguments, and methods? Can you think of another topic that might shed light on the processes under consideration? Can you propose an alternate analysis? How does this make you think about your own life and work in music?

- (6) Edit your work. 500 words doesn't leave you a lot of room. Know what you want to say, and say it clearly and authentically. Resist the use of adjectives. Pare down your writing so that each sentence makes a single, useful point. Edit your work carefully.