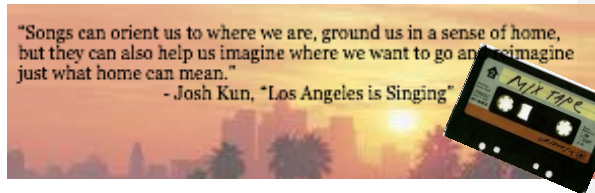


Essay 2: The L.A. Mixtape Project

First Draft Due:
Second Draft Due:



In Essay 1, we examined how texts (in various forms) provide a way of seeing - a lens that filters, represents, and asserts power. For Essay 2, we will take this further to consider how music can speak to or represent a place/community.

After reading Josh Kun's essay in *LAtitudes*, "Los Angeles is Singing," our task is to build on his project. We'll create our own discussions to analyze how particular songs reflect, influence, or speak directly to Los Angeles. Your own discoveries and research will lead you to create a **scholarly essay that discusses a selection of songs (the "mixtape") and analyzes how those songs speak to or reflect a neighborhood, landscape, culture, or community in Los Angeles.**

The Catalyst

This essay project will get us into writing moves and strategies that build on the work we did in Essay 1. Most of all, this project is original and individually unique. The analysis and larger argument that you construct will be something that hasn't yet been written. Your job as a writer/scholar is to lead readers through an **insightful discussion that examines particular songs, based on your own selection and research.** Along the way, you'll gain practice in writing a *deductive argument* with specific emphasis on selecting evidence, developing analysis, conducting research, and gaining further strategies for intros, conclusions, quote integration, transitions, paragraph development, and citing sources.

Getting Started

Think of your project as part of a **guidebook that offers a "soundtrack" to the city.** Through your essay, you'll want to offer your readers an **in-depth discussion of specific songs that reflect or represent Los Angeles in some way.** Through this analysis, your larger argument will help readers better understand how music offers a meaningful understanding (or an experience) of Los Angeles. The first step is to decide on a focus. You'll need an angle to help narrow the scope of your project. **Choose from one of the following ways to focus:**

- Pick a **specific neighborhood or community** in LA and discuss how particular songs represent or reference that neighborhood/community.
- Look into the ways specific songs represent or reflect a **particular culture (other than your own)** in LA. Culture in this case could mean ethnicity or country of origin. It could also mean a subculture that revolves around an activity or place (such as surfers, car culture, etc.)
- Investigate songs (or a musical genre) that reflect(s) a **historical moment or movement in Los Angeles.** Offer your readers an analysis of how those songs give us information about what life was like at that time and place in LA. For example, the singer-songwriter movement in 1970s Laurel Canyon, the hard rock scene in the 1980s on the Sunset Strip, the Chicana/o fusion bands emerging in East LA in the 1990s, the West Coast jazz scene on Central Avenue from 1940s-1950s, etc.

Commented [c1]: Compton/South LA. Woodland Hills, K-Town, Hollywood. LA through a recovering addict's eyes, Struggling artist, Street Racing,

Commented [c2]:

Commented [c3]: Latina/o/ Chicano, Armenian, Korean American, Immigrants, Graffiti Artists, Farmers, Haunted LA,

For the project, you will need to **include at least four songs**. Ideally, those four should not be all the

Should all of the songs specifically reference some aspect of LA in the lyrics?

That's your decision. At least one song in your mix should make direct reference to some aspect of LA. For your soundtrack, you may choose to take readers through songs that capture a mood or feeling in LA, without lyrics that specifically mention the city. If your focus is more about culture, it's also likely that your songs will move outside of direct references to LA. Doing this kind of work is a good challenge because it will call on you to analyze how the songs capture an aspect of the city or its people (without direct referencing through lyrics).

same artist (unless you have a very good reason to do so).

The Research

This project will require you to do research throughout. Certainly, your own listening and discovery of songs is an important step. *YouTube*, *Pandora*, *Spotify*, etc. will be valuable tools to use as you work on the project. Listening to the music is essential and the main source of inspiration for your writing. Close analysis of how those songs speak to or represent Los Angeles (in the way you've chosen to focus) will be the key aspect of your essay.



Along with the songs, you will want to understand more about the music, cultures, neighborhoods, and histories you are digging into. That will require research in the background as you prepare your draft. Research, in this case, should be an engagement with credible sources (we'll talk about this in class).

What you include to go with your analysis and claims about the songs will be your decision as a writer. Consider what context your readers might need and what might be helpful for you, as a scholar, to better understand your subject.

In terms of source requirements, **you must incorporate Josh Kun's essay from *LAitudes* and a minimum of four well-chosen songs**. Additional sources you bring in should help your readers understand why a closer look at your chosen songs is warranted and useful to help understand Los Angeles (and its people) in a deeper way.

Note: A key practice for any academic essay is to keep track of those sources you consult. Anything you use in your own essay needs to be correctly cited (whether it is a paraphrase or direct quote) so your readers can see the sources informing your scholarly discussion.

The Writing

For this essay, you'll want to set up an initial *working thesis* early on in your paper. This thesis should be a complex claim that explains **how music is able to speak to or reflect a neighborhood, landscape, culture, or community in Los Angeles (depending on how you've decided to focus your essay project).** Your task, as a writer/scholar, is to move readers into a deeper understanding of the ways music can offer a unique look at the city, **a stronger understanding of a culture, or a sense of history layered into the sonic power of the music.**

As you bring readers into the essay discussion, you'll want to show readers how you've come to the claim that you've set up. Leading readers through a discussion of the songs will call for your own descriptions of the songs (imagine readers don't know them), select quoting of lyrics (if there are any), and any accompanying source material that offers context to your song/soundtrack tour. The trick for this project is to not turn your essay into a list of facts or a recitation in past tense ("The first song I picked is..."). The writing that you offer should be lively and voiced in a way that engages readers.

As you bring in evidence, such as lyrics, moments in a song, or other outside source material, it will be important to pay attention to the ways you lead in and out of that evidence. As you lead out of evidence, it's especially important to offer readers your analysis of why that evidence is interesting or useful. In

Working
Evidence

Voice

other words, when you come across important evidence, keep asking “so what?” Doing so will help you make that leap to develop a scholarly argument about how the song(s) offers a window into an unnoticed layer of LA. Overall, you’ll want to make your readers think about your chosen songs in an interesting or new way (whether they are well-known or not), with particular focus on the music’s connections to the city.

Analysis

Basic requirements for the first draft:

- ☐ Your draft should be a **minimum of 6 full double-spaced pages** with **1”** side margins, **1”** header and footer margins, **Times New Roman, 12 pt font**.
- ☐ Your draft should attempt to engage in **analysis of at least four songs** using **one of the foci** listed on the first page of these directions. Analysis should be driven by your research findings and you own insights about the musical texts you encounter. Readers should be able to experience some aspect of LA that they normally wouldn’t notice through the songs that you discuss; this is your overall goal for the essay.
- ☐ Early on in your draft, you should form a **working thesis** to give your readers a main complex claim or theory that explains how music is able to speak to or reflect a neighborhood, landscape, culture, or community in Los Angeles (depending on how you’ve decided to focus your essay project).
- ☐ To evolve your thesis and add to the analysis you’re offering about your songs, **bring in credible sources** from your research (dependent on your focus). At minimum, **integrate Josh Kun’s essay**, “Los Angeles is Singing,” to help readers see the project you are building on. For your readers, you must accurately summarize the ideas, theories, terms, or concepts you are using from your source (making sure your summary is understandable to a reader who is not familiar with the source you’re introducing, but that summarizing does not take over your essay).
- ☐ **Use your sources as a springboard** for your own claims, questions, and analysis. You cannot just incorporate sources to just add “facts” to your essay. For this essay assignment, you must add to and help develop the ideas from the source you bring in to offer your own thinking about the songs you are writing about and the connections you’re making to the ways they represent or interpret LA.
- ☐ Cite all sources in **MLA format** (in text), in addition to a Works Cited page. Use *Purdue OWL* (linked on Canvas) to look up proper MLA in-text citations and Works Cited formatting.
- ☐ **Proofread** for mistakes and **edit** for clarity. Consider paragraph organization and appropriate transitions to lead your reader through your discussion.