SOCI 2002 - Music in Contemporary Society
Instructor: Peter Johnston

Podcast Assignment

**Format**: MP3 (128 kbps)

**Length**: 5-10 minutes (solo), 8-12 minutes (group)

**Evaluation**: 15%

**Late penalty**: 10% per day late, counted from 11:59 pm each day.

**Submission:** Upload your MP3 file through Blackboard. <u>For group projects, please upload a PDF with the names of all the group participants to accompany the MP3 file</u>

**Format**: This assignment can be a group project or a solo project.

**Group Project Structure:** You are to self-select a group of 2-4 people to put together this podcast. It is advised that you work with colleagues who share similar musical taste so that you might all agree on a subject. Each student will receive the same grade for the podcast, so it is essential that everyone work together to create a compelling document. <u>Every group member should take a turn speaking in the </u>podcast.

As in a band situation, in this kind of group project it is everyone's individual responsibility to contribute their fair share to the project, and the group's responsibility to monitor contributions so that each member is properly engaged. Should problems arise - such as a group member not pulling their weight on the project - please try first to work it out within the group. If there is a serious problem with a group member that cannot be resolved within the group, please contact the instructor.

Remember that like in an ensemble, each member of the group will have different skills and experiences that can be used to create a strong project. The key to success of any group is efficient, equitable, and thoughtful distribution of labour. Examples for this assignment could be that one member has a lot of recording experience, one might be a skilled writer who can take charge of the script, one might be familiar with audio editing, and one might have the best "radio voice". Although each member of the group is expected to speak in the podcast, the amount of "air time" for each member is less important than the sense among the group that everyone has contributed equally based on their skills.

**Assignment Details**: The purpose of this assignment is to summarize and analyze the topics and arguments presented in a music-related podcast, and then to apply the ideas explored in that podcast to a musical example of your choosing. The submission format is an MP3 "response" podcast, so you are expected to use basic sound-editing software to create an audio document - links to tutorials for making podcasts on Mac and PC are attached below. Like the podcasts you are analyzing, your response podcast should have a mixture of talking and relevant musical examples, and you should compose a "script" in advance based on notes taken while listening to the podcast you are reviewing.

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This assignment is intended to help you develop skills in digital audio editing and digital content generation. You are not expected to have any previous digital audio experience; there are plenty of resources online to help you create a professional-sounding document. The primary evaluative criteria will be the quality of the ideas and analysis you present, but you will also be rewarded for the creativity and imagination displayed in your work.

Your response podcast should be structured as two basic sections:

**Section 1**: Summarize the content of your chosen podcast, addressing questions such as:

• What are the main themes and issues raised in this podcast?
• What are the opinions expressed by the host and/or guest, and how do they support these opinions?
• How is the podcast structured? Is it mostly talking? Is there music integrated into the content? Are there guests or interview subjects? In other words, how did the producers tell their story?
• How do the music and ideas in the podcast connect to the themes of the course?
• Did the podcast make you think differently about a particular kind of music, or the role of music in society?
• Is there anything missing that you would have liked to see addressed, or did you disagree in any way with the content?


**Section 11**: choose an artist/song/video/genre that connects to the basic themes of the podcast, and develop a brief analysis of your choice using themes and ideas derived from the podcast. For example, if the podcast is about product placement, present an example of product placement by an artist that you have noticed, and describe how it relates to the themes and ideas developed in the podcast. Or if the podcast is about feminism in pop music, present an analysis of an artist of your choice who has a connection to feminism. Support your analysis with brief musical examples and descriptions of relevant videos/performances. Do not play full songs, only relevant excerpts - the main content needs to be talking, with music as support for your analysis, as it is in the examples.

Please begin your response podcast by stating your name, something like: "My name is _____, and this podcast is a response to the *Between The Liner Notes* podcast episode titled "I Want My MTV".

**Please strive for a professional tone in your delivery, as if you were creating content for a general audience, like the above models.**

**Example Podcasts:** Choose one of the following podcasts to analyze and respond to (Dropbox link to podcasts posted on Brightspace):

1.  *New York Times Podcast* - "Techno's Dual Identity" (The evolution of electronic dance music)

2.  *Switched on Pop* - "Made in America - Toby Keith and Jay Z" (Race and politics in popular music)

3.  *New York Times Podcast* - "Blurred Legal Lines: Robin Thicke and Plagiarism in Pop Music" (The story of the copyright case involving "Blurred Lines")

4.  *Pitch* - "Take A Little Ride With Coors Light" (Product placement in pop music)

5.  *Radiolab* - "Nicki Minaj and the Crisis of Modern Hip Hop" (Race and gender issues in modern hip hop)

6.  *Between The Liner Notes* -"Jingle Brains" (The story of advertising jingles and how popular music is used to sell us things)

7.  *Musonomics* - "Songwriting, Consent, and the Age of Discontent" (The economics of songwriting and the legal structures that affect how music is valued)

8.  *Switched on Pop* - "Searching For Max Martin" (Discussion about the influence of Swedish songwriter and producer Max Martin, who has crafted the biggest pop hits of the last 20 years)

Your response podcast will be shorter than the above professional podcasts, but you are encouraged to take this opportunity to use your imagination to create a compelling audio document within the time limit of this assignment. For example, if you know an artist who deals with the issues presented in your chosen podcast, you could interview that artist for Section II. Or you could include recordings of live concerts you have attended. There are lots of possibilities - using the example podcasts as models, be creative and have fun with it.

**Evaluation criteria**: content quality, demonstration of comprehension of issues, use of terms and concepts from the podcast and course materials, structure (concise and coherent flow of ideas), content delivery, and production value (sound quality, musical examples, general listenability). The rubric that will be used to evaluate your work is attached below.

**Technical Requirements:** Podcasts can be created using free audio software on Mac and PC, and there are plenty of YouTube tutorials on podcast creation and editing. Mac and iOS users can use the built-in software Garageband, and PC users can use the freeware Audacity (but any software that can do the job is acceptable - you will only submit the final product, so the software used to create the podcast doesn't matter).

Many tutorials suggest that you need a microphone to do a podcast - while microphones generate higher-quality audio, you can use a computer's built-in microphone to record your voice if you don't have a microphone. Just be sure to monitor the sound through headphones to avoid feedback while recording.

Example YouTube podcast tutorials:

Garageband: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBAbl-kU3mc**

Audacity: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piuMLXF2rZY**

There are many more available, so you should be able to find one that works for your computer system.

Once created, your podcast must be compressed to MP3, exported as 128 kbps, and uploaded through the "Assignment" window in Brightspace. Both Garageband and Audacity have built-in ways to render your project to MP3.

**Please name your file with your first and last name, as in: DukeAlywardSOCI2002Podcast.mp3**

**For group projects, use one person's name as above, but include a PDF with a list of the names of all the group members.**

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## Submission Check List

| | |
|---|---|
| | Did you compress your MP3 file to 128kbps? |
| | Did you use your name in the filename for the MP3? (DukeAylward503podcast.mp3) |
| | If submitting as a group, did you upload a document with all your group member names? |
| | Did you follow the basic structure outlined above? |
| | Did you strive for the best sound quality you could with the equipment you have? |
| | Did you listen back for mistakes, and play it for someone else for their feedback? |
| | Is your tone and delivery professional and clear, so that it your work would appeal to a general audience? |

## Podcast Assignment Grading Rubric

| Criteria | Highly Proficient 4 points | Proficient 3 points | Limited Proficiency 2 points | Needs Work 1 point | Unacceptable 0 points |
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| Content and Organization | Content is accurate, focused, and consistent; presented in a coherent way with a clear argument and narrative | Content is somewhat accurate and fairly clear; offers solid but less accurate reasoning; minor problems in narrative structure | Content is vague OR only loosely related to the writing task; limited support for argument; narrative difficult to follow | Content unclear; lapses in coherence or no relation to writing task; offers simplistic, undeveloped support for ideas | Work does not meet the standards of a course at this level. |
| Critical Thinking and Use of Course Terminology | Skillful use of relevant terminology, demonstrates clear understanding of course concepts and makes insightful connections | Adequately demonstrates reasonable relationships among ideas, demonstrates basic understanding of core concepts | Simplistic analysis of complex issue, demonstrates awareness of terms but lacks comprehension of their meanings | Insufficient reasoning and lacks complexity of thought; inadequate use of terminology learned in class | Work does not meet the standards of a course at this level. |
| Creativity | Podcast demonstrates significant thought and creativity | Podcast demonstrates sufficient thought and creativity | Podcast demonstrates a minimal level of thought and creativity | Podcast fails to demonstrate creativity thought, sounds unprofessional | Work does not meet the standards of a course at this level. |
| Language and Presentation | Delivery was clear, coherent, and professional-sounding | Delivery was coherent, but lacked polish | Delivery was overly casual, with inappropriate word choices | Delivery was difficult to follow, problematic tone throughout | Work does not meet the standards of a course at this level. |
| Production Values | Sound quality and editing are at a near- professional level | Minor problems in editing and sound quality | Consistent issues in editing and poor sound quality make your work a challenge to listen to | Significant issues in sound quality and editing make your work very difficult to listen to. | Work does not meet the standards of a course at this level. |
| Overall Score | Level 5 16 or more | Level 4 12 or more | Level 3 8 or more | Level 2 0 or more | |