Essay 1: Music As Identity
ENGL 1102 (Josh Sewell)

Length: 2-3 pages minimum (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12-point font, MLA format, works cited page doesn’t count toward page length)

Due Date: Wednesday, June 19 at the beginning of class (submit an electronic copy to the appropriate CourseDen folder before coming to class; bring stapled hard copy with you to class)

PURPOSE:
Develop an original argument directly in response to the argument of another writer or text.

Specifically, this assignment asks you to…

• practice critical reading skills
• present a clear and precise argument in your thesis statement
• support your thesis with effective body paragraphs that follow the 3 I-ed Monster model
• incorporate sources by effectively and properly quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing
• correctly utilize MLA format (in-text citations, works cited page, etc.)

DESCRIPTION:
So far this semester, we’ve discussed articles and interviews that focus on modern pop music and its connection to individual identity, as well as larger societal issues like mass-produced art and sexuality. In this essay, you’ll respond to the main argument of ONE of these texts (The New Yorker Radio Hour’s “A Father-Son Education in Top 40 Hits,” John Seabrook’s “Blank Space: What Kind of Genius is Max Martin?,” or Rachel Brodsky’s “From Madonna to Janelle Monáe: How Female Sexuality Progressed in Pop”), using it to support your own analysis. Remember, the author’s argument isn’t simply what the text is “about,” but what the author is trying to actively persuade you to think or feel about a particular issue or subject. Sometimes, the argument is explicit, but often it is implied. Be sure to review your notes on the article.

PROCEDURE:
1. Introductory Paragraph
Your introduction should present an original summary of the author’s main argument and key points (you don’t need to give examples from the text here; you’ll do that in the body paragraphs).

Your summary should…

• be no more than 5-7 sentences
• be written entirely in your own words, followed by an in-text citation
• eventually contain a thesis statement (you may write this at the beginning and revise it as your ideas develop, or you may find that you “write yourself to it” and it emerges later; either way, it should be moved to the last sentence of the intro paragraph before the essay is completed)

2. Supporting Argument/Body of Essay
Next, develop 3-5 body paragraphs that develop claims responding to the text. While your introduction is objective and factual, your supporting paragraphs will each develop a different claim about the text’s content, based on your engagement with it.

Each body paragraph should include…

• a clear topic sentence that can be debated
• specific supporting examples from the text; yes, you will need to quote correctly and directly from the text at times
• a brief explanation after each example stating how and why that example proves your topic sentence

3. Conclusion
Re-emphasize and expand upon your own argument. Reflect on why this topic is important beyond the scope of your own essay. Why should your reader care? What is at stake? In other words, leave your reader with a sense of the larger issues relevant to your topic. If your argument responding to the text is true, and if you’ve proved it well, what is the “takeaway” for someone reading it?

RESOURCES:
1. **Overall Help:** In addition to office hours, the University Writing Center is a great resource for all your writing assignments in any class. I cannot emphasize how important it might be for you to make appointments there.

2. **Help During the Writing Process:** Remember the PDFs and links in the Unit 1 folder! Just because we’ve moved on to other units doesn’t mean they’re not still important. Use them as tools to brainstorm a basic structure for your argument, but feel free to adapt (please adapt!) as needed in order to maintain logic, clarity, and correct grammar in your writing.

3. **MLA Help:** Be sure to use the Purdue OWL website in formatting both your in-text citations and works cited page. Remember you must cite every reference to your source, including any material summarized or paraphrased. Accidental plagiarism is still plagiarism!

**No outside research, please.** Your essay should be an original response to your selected text.

**Grading rubric available on CourseDen.**