

FIRST PAPER ASSIGNMENT

On page xliii of Soundscapes, Shelemay defines ‘musical ethnography’ as a description and interpretation of a music culture. Taking a cue from the social sciences, ethnomusicologists have developed tools for musically-oriented “participant observation,” a common form of anthropological fieldwork. Typically, a researcher spends extensive time living within a community, immersing him/herself in that musical culture. Historically, this type of research was done by outsiders, and the ‘year in the field’ is still a rite of passage for aspiring ethnomusicologists. More recently, however, much work has been done by ‘insiders,’ indigenous members of a society, who apply academic tools to their own music.

We all thus already have a vast experience as participant/observers: we have all lived within our own musical culture. Your first paper is to make an attempt at musical ethnography by giving **an account of your own musical life and culture**. Using the brief description on page xliii, and keeping in mind the overall rubric of setting, sound, and significance, analyze how music was and is used in your life, by you, your family, your community. Talk about the musical traditions in your life, both those that were explicitly construed as such and those which took on this function without being named. Some general areas to consider are:

- 1) Context – where music was found, how it was used – this can include everything from organized musical activities to passive, background listening.
- 2) Ideas about music – approved and disapproved usage, etc.
- 3) Social organization – both of the music itself and what it tells you about the culture

Your paper should be 4-5 pages long, typed, 12 font Times New Roman, single-sided, and double-spaced with standard margins (1” top and bottom – 1.25 left and right). It should also have an original title and page numbers. As with all good papers, your paper should have a clear and interesting THESIS.

The paper is due at the beginning of class on **THURSDAY, Feb. 14**. You must hand in a hard copy of your paper. Electronic versions of the paper will only be accepted after consultation with the professor. Late papers will be downgraded accordingly.

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