**Assignments**

**Thesis statements and structure**

A good essay has a point, or an argument. Your essay is 'saying' something. This is called a thesis statement. "This essay will discuss how three or more scholars explore gender in popular music" **is not**a thesis statement.

Better examples would be:

* X, Y, and Z show how popular music perpetuates "traditional gender norms".
* In popular music, race very much still operates, with many genres falling into racialised categories.
* Some scholars argue that popular music has been a site of political and cultural opposition, despite music industry monopolies and control.

Your introduction would then consist of your thesis statement and an outline of what the sections of your essay will be.

**X, Y, and Z show how popular music perpetuates 'traditional gender norms'.**

* X looked at punk and showed how despite it being very radical, it ended up being male dominated, just like the stadium rock music it objected to.
* Y showed how the Spice Girls appeared to be promoting a form of ‘girl power' but they actually maintained stereotypes of females as sexual objects.
* And Z looked at how emo was rejected by the rock press for being ‘too female' because of the show of emotion.

**In popular music race very much still operates, with many genres falling into racialised categories.**

* A showed how Soul music represented the black community in the 1960's and used its ‘blackness' to market itself to white audiences.
* B looked at how Michael Jackson combined white and black genres to create a ‘trans-racialism' and appeal to both black and white audiences.
* C showed how Asian artists have very little success in the United States unless they conform to racist stereotypes of Asians.

**Some scholars argue that popular music has been a site of political and cultural opposition, despite music industry monopolies and control.**

* L looked at the punk subculture and showed how they used commodification as bricolage to disrupt consumerism and fashion group identities.
* M showed how despite hegemonic racial and cultural controls, rap music and hip hop became mainstream music, disseminating minority politics and stories.
* N looks at the phenomenon of independent record labels and how they have been a constant source of creativity, rebellion and innovation in the popular music landscape

Your conclusion would then basically say the same thing: "this essay showed that 'abc is true' by looking at how 'x' happens, and 'y' was happening in the 1960s and how 'z' was actually very sexist depite its pretence of being revolutionary."

So as you do your course readings, see if any points emerge (they can also be points of contention, for instance you feel some of them say the opposite to each other). Even though the readings may appear to be on specifically different topics and musics, they might make similar arguments about music in relation to race, gender, subculture or the music industry. You can also look at their bibliographies to see if there are other readings that link well with the broad thesis statement/argument you see emerging.