

Short Writing Assignment #1
Due Date: Upload to Moodle by Sunday, February 12, 11:59 p.m

J.S. Bach's immense output of sacred music comprises not just cantatas and motets, but also large-scale compositions including two settings of the Passion narrative, a Christian story recounting Jesus's crucifixion. His setting of *St. Matthew's Passion*—a monumental work more than 2 hours long—was composed in the late 1720s for Good Friday services at the St. Thomas Church in Leipzig. Bach carefully structured the story of Jesus's crucifixion in this large-scale musical work, devising a new way of setting the Passion story through the alternation of a solo singer as narrator, solo singers as Biblical characters, double chorus, and orchestra. Your *Norton Anthology of Western Music* includes a small excerpt from part II of Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion* (numbers 36-40) as **NAWM 104** (page 812). These portions come from two dramatic moments in the story—the judgement of Jesus's guilt by the religious authorities, followed by the disciple Peter's denials that he knows Jesus.

Following the guidelines and questions below, **you should complete a typed response of around 700 words**. Automatic deductions will be in place for any response under 550 words; please do not exceed 1200 words. It does not need to be a formal paper, but should be a **thoughtful, well-written response in complete sentences with proper grammar**. You will not need any extra research (besides the *Norton Anthology*, the course textbook, and the online streaming audio) to complete this assignment.

- Writing **will** count towards to your grade—be concise and watch out for unnecessary filler!
- This should be an **essay**—any use of numbering, bullet points, or other list-making elements (instead of prose) will result in an automatic deduction of a letter-grade.

Questions? Bring them to office hours this week or next week.

Guidelines:

Please complete the five parts below. You should write **at least** one paragraph for each. Do NOT number your paragraphs or use bullet points—write an ESSAY with these five elements.

1) Please introduce the *St. Matthew's Passion* as a composition to your reader. You can mention a bit about the story it sets, who wrote the text, how/why Bach composed this piece, and some general comments about the way he structures the overall composition. You might think about alternation of forces (soloists, double chorus, orchestra, etc). You could also discuss some of the ways performance practice of this piece has changed over time (how many people performed it in the 1700s versus later performances). You can largely use your textbook and *NAWM* as sources, but please rephrase carefully in your own words—no direct copying from the book OR any Internet sources. There is really no reason to use Internet sources for research on this piece.

This first section should absolutely take up no more than 1/3 of your overall assignment.

2) Second, please listen to Peter's aria, *NAWM* 104d, No. 39 "Erbarme dich." This aria is on page 822-827, and is available on our online streaming. The text translation is on page 831 of the anthology. Please discuss how Bach reflects the meaning/emotion of the words in the music of this aria. You might think about things such as form, word painting, specific gestures in the instrumental parts or vocal part, key and harmony, scoring, dynamics, etc. Try to think carefully about this very famous and beautiful aria from *St. Matthew's Passion*. This will require multiple listenings and should require some careful thinking on your part. Please make specific references to measure numbers when discussing particular music features.

3) Third, please select a choral portion (36b, 36d, 37, 38b, **or** 40) of the *St. Matthew's Passion* (something other than "Erbarme dich") and note how Bach sets the meaning/emotion of these words. You can think of some of the same questions as in #2, it's possible you just may have a slightly shorter response.

4) Fourth, please select a third portion of the *St. Matthew's Passion* (something other than what you discussed in numbers 2 and 3) and note how Bach sets the meaning/emotion of these words. You can think of some of the same questions as in #3, you just may have a slightly shorter response.

5) Finally, write a concluding paragraph for your essay

Short Writing Assignment #2
Due Date: Upload to Moodle by Wednesday, April 5, 11:59 p.m

Your *Norton Anthology of Western Music* includes a small excerpt from Beethoven's *String Quartet in C-Sharp Minor*, op. 131, as **NAWM 127** (page 343). Following the guidelines and questions below, **you should complete a typed response of around 700 words**. Automatic deductions will be in place for any response under 550 words; please do not exceed 1200 words. It does not need to be a formal paper, but should be a **thoughtful, well-written response in complete sentences with proper grammar**. You will not need any extra research (besides the *Norton Anthology*, the course textbook, and the online streaming audio) to complete this assignment.

- Writing **will** count towards to your grade—be concise and watch out for unnecessary filler!
- This should be an **essay**—any use of numbering, bullet points, or other list-making elements (instead of prose) will result in an automatic deduction of a letter-grade.

Guidelines:

Please follow the guidelines below.

1) Please introduce Beethoven to your reader. Do not engage in superlative statements about how he was the “greatest ever,” but provide some thoughtful commentary on Beethoven. You might include his relationship to other composers of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, his general style, and his approach to changing roles of patronage and the music market. In this section, **one required element** is that you discuss the stylistic changes throughout Beethoven's “three periods.” You can use your textbook and *NAWM* as sources—note that the relevant pages are 560-585. Please rephrase carefully in your own words—no direct copying from the book OR any Internet sources. There is really no reason to use Internet sources for research on this piece.

This first section should take up no more than 1/3 of your overall assignment.

2) Second, please listen to the first and second movements of Beethoven's *String Quartet in C# Minor*, op. 131, NAWM 127. This composition is on page 343-352 of the anthology, and is available on our online streaming. **You should absolutely read pages 577-583 in our textbook, as well as the accompanying text in the anthology.** Note that while the first and second movements are the ones you will be expected to listen to and discuss, listening to the entire quartet may be a good idea. I've provided the score and a listening link for the rest of the quartet on Moodle.

After listening carefully and taking notes, **please discuss how this string quartet is a good example of Beethoven's late style (or third period).** You might think about things such as form, specific gestures in the instrumental parts, key and harmony, scoring, dynamics, etc. Much of this is explained in the textbook or accompanying text in the anthology, so your job here is to carefully and clearly synthesize information and

then provide it to me in your own words in a succinct and well-thought-out manner. Please point me to **specific** elements in this string quartet that are good examples of Beethoven's late style and provide a clearcut, detailed explanation of places in this string quartet that are examples of these stylistic elements. Please make specific references to measure numbers when discussing particular music features.

While there are a number of elements of Beethoven's late style that you should mention in your essay, you should pick at **least three** elements to discuss in **CLOSE DETAIL** (presumably each with their own paragraph). You should explain to me how this string quartet differs from earlier examples we've examined (Haydn in particular), and how Beethoven's late style differs from his earlier two periods. You might also note how some of the elements you point out in this string quartet are echoed in **other** works from his late period (which is mostly explained in your textbook).

3) **Finally**, write a brief concluding paragraph for your essay