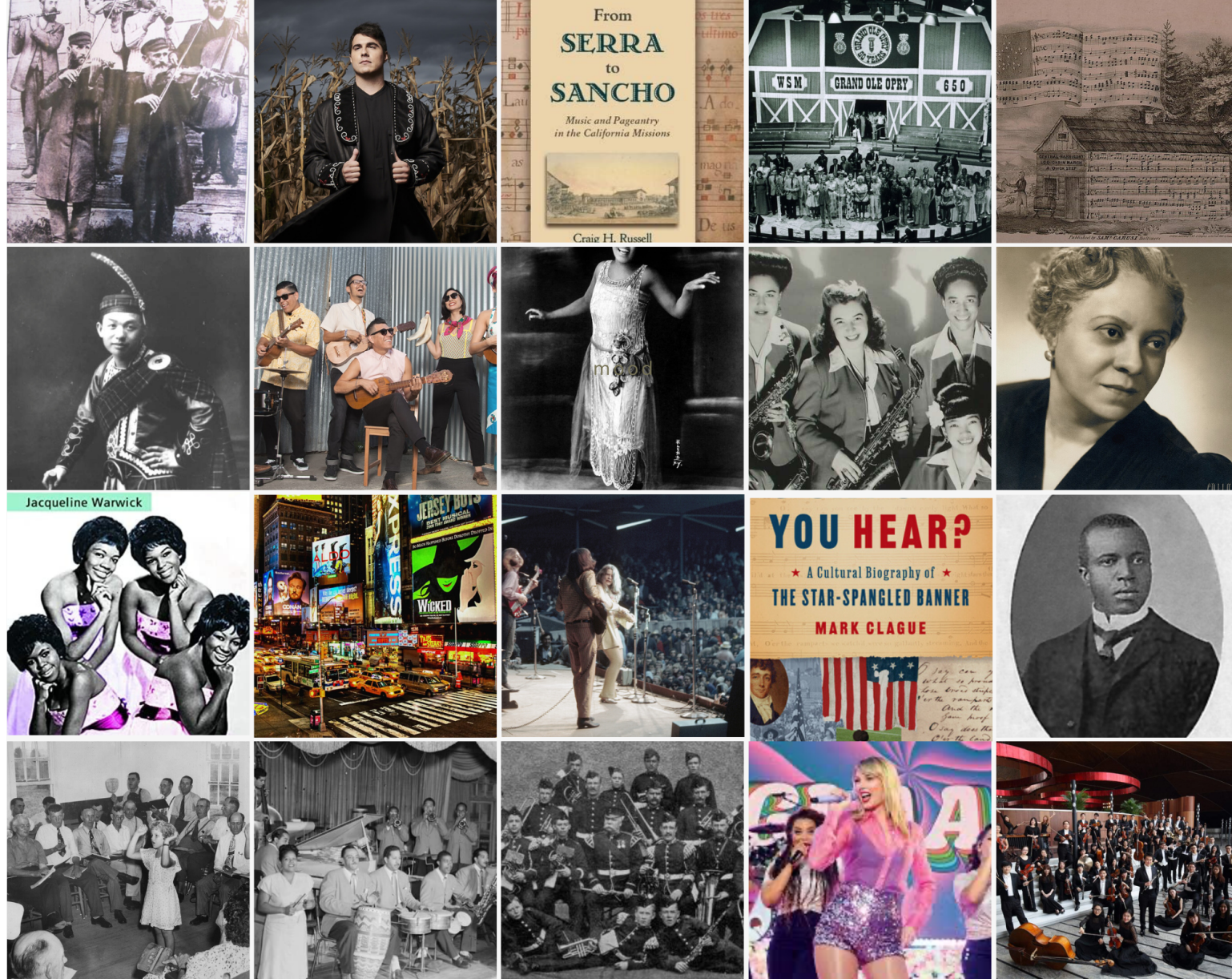




MUCH 695: Music, Politics, and Power, post-1945

Summer 2025—session runs June 30 to July 31

Class Times: Section 001, 8:30-10:30am; Section 002, 11:00-1:00. Location: Schuette A323

Instructor

Dr. Erin Brooks

Email: brooksem@potsgdam.edu

Office: Schuette Hall A102

Office hours:

Office hours can be in-person or via online meeting or by phone—any office hour is scheduled by appointment in order to maximize the overlap between your schedule and mine. Please email or message me to set up these office hour meetings; I'm very happy to discuss course material or just offer a supportive ear for anything you'd like to share in a safe space.

Course Description and Objectives:

MUCH 695 covers music from 1945 to today, and includes consideration of stylistic and formal elements together with aesthetic principles and historical perspectives. You will engage with primary sources, current scholarship, scores, and reference materials to gain knowledge of context, history and understanding about how such knowledge is created and revised. This course provides opportunities to hone intellectual skills such as close listening, score analysis, interpretation of original historical documents, critical thinking, and writing that requires synthesis. The focus of this course is analytical discussion of theoretical concepts, group discussion and consideration, and an independent project, which will be shared in class with peers during the various stages of research and development.

Special Focus: Music, Politics, and Power, post-1945

While we will cover a broad swath of twentieth and twenty-first century music in this course, this class will focus specifically on **the relationships between music and formative political events of the past eighty years.**

Our class discussions will include connections to art, popular, and vernacular musics.

We will analyze a number of issues, controversies, and questions, including:

- How do composers, critics, and audiences forge musical meaning, particularly in terms of linking music to external events? How does this differ in an untexted work versus a composition with lyrics or programmatic titles?
- How did music serve not just as response to the cataclysms and controversies of the past eighty years, but also as an active participant in these events?
- The past eighty years have been a fraught period for the relationship between art musics and their audiences, encapsulated in Milton Babbitt's famous 1958 article "Who Cares if You Listen?" (or perhaps "The Composer as Specialist"). To what extent do various compositional strategies post-1945 attempt to retreat from political implications, or conversely, seek continued relevance through associations with extra-musical events?
- While this course syllabi includes works by women and people of color, compositional training, art music, and the concert halls of the 20th century are famously places of exclusion, dominated by the works of white men. How do intersectional characteristics of race, class, gender, and sexuality affect the bodies and reception of politically inflected musics?
- How do selected works representing the various "isms" of twentieth-century art music—such as total serialism, neo-Romanticism, minimalism, pluralism, etc—interact with political meanings, albeit in radically different stylistic ways?
- To what extent have works of music—such as Britten's *War Requiem* or Penderecki's *Threnody*—served as musical memorials for 20th century atrocities?
- What narratives do composers foreground about the political implications of their works? Why are we told what we are told? How do we critically assess politicized claims by composers and critics?

Learning Objectives:

Upon successfully completing MUCH 695, you should be able to:

- Recognize vocabulary, styles, genres, forms, individual works, and larger-scale philosophical debates from our class units on various aspects of music and politics in the 20th and 21st centuries
- Think creatively about how the legacies of the 20th century influence your twenty-first-century relationships with music as an educator, performer, consumer, and audience member
- Demonstrate facility with resources for music history research
- Frame research topics related to the course theme
- Identify appropriate sources for exploring such questions & critically read secondary literature related to such topics
- Communicate your ideas to peers at various points in the research and writing process
- Engage in peer feedback with your colleagues, honing strategies for providing such feedback in a constructive manner

Course Prerequisites and Requirements:

In the summer session, if you're enrolled in this course you should have successfully completed an undergraduate degree and be admitted to the graduate program. For more information on graduate degree requirements, see the graduate catalog at <https://www.potsdam.edu/sites/default/files/17-19Gradcatalog.pdf>

Recommended Materials and How to Access Reading/Assignments:

There is no required text for this course. All readings and recordings for this course will be available to you through Brightspace. Visit <https://brightspace.potsdam.edu> for your course resources; we'll do this together starting Week 1.

What kind of stuff might be assigned as homework?

- Throughout the course of the session, you'll usually have to do some work to do before coming to class—maybe some pages to read, music to listen to, a video to watch.

How much?

- I've tried to be as humane as possible: while this is a reading-intensive course (it's a graduate music history seminar!), I have often tried to vary the length of work you'll do per week. Sometimes this will mean a long article one day and a more activity-based assignment another; occasionally this will mean that I'll split the class up into two groups, and you'll only do the reading one day a week.

How to get to it?

- Course content and activities are structured using a weekly format on Brightspace
- You'll see a module for a week, then individual modules for each day.
- All of the specific reading / listening / viewing instructions will always be provided on the day's module.
- Each day's module on Brightspace will contain the exact assignment of required page numbers, and (if applicable) PDFs and listening links

When can I access the homework?

- I generally will have the work for the following week posted by the end of business on Friday, so you can do it as it fits into your schedule. The first week will be a bit more variable as we're getting ourselves accustomed to class function.
- You should likely have a look at Brightspace every day for listening/reading assignments, discussion questions, and any possible updates/changes.
- Anything that's listed for a day, please do it **BEFORE** I see you in class that day.
- Once modules are opened, they will remain visible for the rest of the session.

Gentle reminder:

- Given the pace of this course, keeping up on assigned work in advance of every class is essential.
- As a general rule, SUNY guidelines assume at least 2 hours of study time per hour of class time or credit. For this 3-credit class—which during this summer session meets 8 hours/week—that calculation would expect potentially 16 additional hours a week outside of class (studying, listening, reading, researching). These rules of thumb work a bit differently for summer sessions: therefore, I've carefully set up the course to maximize our workload within the class times of 2 hours each day, and there are other workarounds I've included which assist in shortening the required work hours outside of class time each day. Nonetheless, it's good to remember that summer sessions are compressed and therefore include considerable work in a short amount of time. Please feel free to schedule an office hour chat if you need guidance on how to organize your work time most effectively
- It is your responsibility to make sure that you can access the class materials; please let me know as soon as possible if you are having any problems. I may be able to help, but it's also possible I might not be able to troubleshoot some

issues— if you’ve got problems with your setup, campus Computing & Technology Services (CTS) helpdesk is (315) 267-4444 or helpdesk@potsgdam.edu

- For additional help with your assignments, the Crane Music library has a vast variety of resources. The url <https://library.potsgdam.edu/music> will take you to a page with essential resources such as links to audio/visual databases, articles, the library catalog, etc. We’ll talk more about specific resources as the class progresses.

Course Evaluation:

Please note: it is my intention that you do a great deal of self-assessment in this course. The general principle is, where possible, to eliminate overly specific grades on individual assignments and instead foster an ongoing process of self-assessment in dialogue with me.

Hopefully, this course can be an opportunity to creativity, exploration, and new thought. I want you to challenge yourselves and each other to get something helpful and thought-provoking out of the experience—

For every assignment, I’ll provide some things you should think about, and some guidelines on length, sources, etc.

For your weekly assignments, I will give you a prompt and some feedback, and will typically assign a 0, 1, or 2. (zero=not submitted, assignments that do not adequately respond to the prompt or specifications are a 1, adequate responses will receive a 2).

For larger assignments, I will always give you some additional things to think about, some ideas of where you might continue your work, etc. My feeling—generally speaking—is that we all serve as a community and set of resources for each other, not that I am “punitively grading” your work! So take everything that follows with a grain of salt, but for form’s sake:

Assessment will be based on five overall categories: weekly short assignments, in-class work (attendance, participation in in-class activities, discussion, in-class writing, etc), short “open the door” projects, a mid-size “deeper dive” project, and reflection questions. For more details on specific categories, see below:

1. Weekly assignments/forum posts on Brightspace	20%
2. Class attendance, Participation, Preparation	20%
3. “Open the Door” mini-research projects [4]	40%
4. A Deeper Dive Project	15%
5. Reflection questions—we’ll work on these together during the last week of class	5%

* Explanations of procedures:

1. **Weekly Assignments/Forum Post/Discussion Forum Procedures and Guidelines:**

- * You'll be asked to either complete an assignment or a discussion forum post on Brightspace at *least once* each week of the class. Start early, stay on top of it, and it should help us start our discussions from a more complex and interesting place! You will also be asked to respond to a classmate’s forum posts at least once a week.
- * However many forum posts/homework assignments I give you—likely be around 10-20 of them for the summer—you can miss up to two of them with no penalty.
- * If you miss additional assignments beyond the two freebies, you will lose 10% from your weekly assignment grade for each additional missing assignment/post.
- * I will often give you some specific guidelines or things to think about to help you focus your thoughts a little.

* Your post or assignment must be completed the evening before our class, 11:59pm (so that I and others can read them before class that morning)

2. **Class attendance/Participation/Preparedness Procedures:**

This class will only be successful if it becomes an engaged, active learning community, especially because it's a seminar-style course for graduate students. Simply put, you can't successfully engage with this course if you're routinely not here. Due to these factors, attendance and participation is essential and is encouraged through multiple means of evaluation.

I've tried to build in some **flexibility** into this class—**EVERYONE NEEDS IT!**—while also acknowledging the **reality** that you can't be successful in this class without being present.

- A. Each day during our class sessions, I will track attendance and participation. Many days you'll have a discussion post to do before class, and during participatory discussions, you are expected to contribute (simply being present is not enough).
- B. Overall, we should have 19 class meetings.
- C. Just because things happen, you can miss **TWO** classes for whatever reason, no worries. **Use these as you see fit—under the weather, mental health days, whatever works. I strongly suggest you reserve some of your absences for sickness, since we all get sick.**
- D. If you miss more than **TWO** classes, I have concerns about the extent to you are participating in our communal work and discussions. **I reserve the right to subtract 10% from your participation grade for each additional absence after the two "use-as-you-see fit" absences.**
- E. If you have more extended issues—major illness, family crises, work catastrophes, or anything else that significantly impacts your ability to attend the class sessions—please schedule a time to talk to me *as soon as possible.* I want to help anyone in need find workarounds, but I can't help if I don't know the situation. It is to your advantage in these kinds of extraordinary situations to make sure to communicate with me and/or Dean Heuser so that we can help you find the right solution for your situation.
- F. **Except under specific circumstances, if you miss more than FIVE classes during the summer (that's more than 25% of our class meetings), I reserve the right to consider that you haven't been able to do enough of the work to successfully complete the course (meaning you can't "pass" the course or receive your graduate degree).** Please don't let this happen!
- G. For **any** class you've missed, I strongly suggest you contact me to discuss missed course content, as you'll still need to know it for projects.
- H. If you have a religious observance, any missed coursework during that particular class will not count against you. However, you should inform me before the absence and you'll still want to stay on top of the relevant coursework for that class date.

3. **Open the Door Projects:** To be explained in class during Week 1.

4. **Deeper Dive Project**—I'll explain this during Week 3.

5. **Reflection Questions**—important to help us pull it all together, we'll work through these together in Week 5.

Course Policies

Grading

The Theory, History, Composition department at SUNY Potsdam tends to use the following scale:

4.0: 95-100	2.7: 82-84	1.3: 68-71
3.7: 92-94	2.3: 78-81	1.0: 65-67
3.3: 88-91	2.0: 75-77	0.0: 0-64
3.0: 85-87	1.7: 72-74	

Please note that passing grade for a graduate course is a 3.0 or above.

In this class, we cannot do away with grades entirely, as we work in an educational system that requires grades. You will receive a final grade for the course. My hope is that you will have no mystery about what that grade is, and that the overall process this summer is one more of growth and discovery than anything connected to grades. Based on my experiences, I don't expect this to be an issue.

I believe that, if you put time and work into this course, you can not only earn the grade you wish to attain here but also achieve a more lasting impact from your graduate work!

Grade Appeals

If you have questions about a grade, please speak with me (in person) first. Please note that the graduate catalog includes the specific criteria upon which you are allowed to appeal a course grade. If we cannot come to an informal resolution, you would then complete a formal Grade Appeal Form and we would consider if additional resolution is necessary. Details about the specific steps and timelines for this process are located in the catalog: <https://catalog.potsdam.edu/index.php>

- **Emails:** I check email several times a day; if you don't hear back from me within 24 hours, feel free to try again. Please make sure to check your campus email regularly—I frequently send essential updates or class comments via email.
- **Appointments/Office Hours:** Office hours can be in person or via online meeting or by phone—any office hour is scheduled by appointment in order to maximize the overlap between your schedule and mine! Please email or message me to set up these office hour meetings; I'm very happy to discuss course material or just offer a supportive ear for anything you'd like to share in a safe space.

Trauma-Sensitive Teaching:

- In my entry ticket for the course, I asked each of you to feel free to come to me with any personal issues and/or other limitations that might impact your ability to participate in the session; please always feel free to keep me updated should your circumstances change.
- I am committed to using trauma-sensitive teaching and learning principles to support your resilience and success in this course. Trauma-sensitive principles help create a safe, transparent, connected, and collaborative classroom environment where you feel empowered and respected. Be sure to do periodic self-checks on how course material—and the ways in which material is delivered and discussed—are affecting you, and please talk with me if you are having difficulties with any aspect of the course. Getting support from friends, colleagues, family, and mental health professionals is also important, especially if you have risk factors or you find yourself becoming distressed. For additional links to campus and community services, see <https://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/wellness/counseling-center>

Accessibility:

- I'd like to borrow a few words from the wonderful scholar Mimi Khúc (scholar/artist/activist in Residence in Disability Studies at Georgetown University): "**Everyone's** access needs matter, and we will try collectively to meet them as they arise. **Access needs are needs that when met enable participation in the course to the fullest--therefore they are wide-ranging and can be met in wide-ranging, creative ways.** I am committed to making participation as accessible as possible. Please let me know if anything comes up that makes participation feel hard....We are taught not to have needs, that needs mean we are "weak"; resist this impulse. Access is relational. This means that creating access and accessibility is something we do together, in relationship and community. It requires a shared commitment to each other's wellbeing and participation in the community space, and requires communication and negotiation and flexibility. We learn each other's needs and try to meet them as best we can, so that we can all participate as much as possible in this classroom space. **Everyone has access needs, and these needs change over time. I will try to anticipate as much as possible but I cannot know everyone's needs at all times. When you become aware of your access needs, please communicate them to me.**"
- If you have any concerns about our in-class work, please let me know and I will work with you to find acceptable accommodations. I know that some of you may have a registration on file with Accommodative Services (<http://potsdam.edu/support/oas>)—you're very welcome to share these with me. I look forward to talking to all of you about your access needs as we work together this summer.

Classroom conduct:

- Active participation in this class involves taking notes, contributing questions and commentary, and challenging each other to think more deeply. Indeed, critical engagement—which should include reasoned debate, critique, and questions—is one of the best ways to learn. It is essential, however, that we be considerate in the ways we conduct these discussions; have an open mind, don't make assumptions about your classmates, have respect for different viewpoints, and hone your ability to listen thoughtfully and compassionately to each other. Anyone who has concerns about any discussions during the summer please schedule a meeting with me so we can sort it out.

A couple of particular notes about this class:

- We're dealing with *historical* subject matter in this course, so we will encounter earlier frameworks of thinking about race, gender, sexuality, etc (some of which will likely intrigue, surprise, aggravate, or infuriate us in turn). While these feelings are appropriate, we need to be able to discuss historical change—so don't be surprised to encounter dated terms or ideas at certain points in the semester. Some articles or readings may include as primary sources terms which may be considered offensive in modern contexts. We'll try to discuss this as needed, but also make sure we have a nuanced understanding of terminology and ideas used during the 20th-21st centuries [in addition to our modern terminology, which is itself always in flux!]
- This class material will deal with identities that are relevant to everyone. With that said, there is no chance that *all* the course material will be an identity you are part of. No one has lived experience of all identities or positionalities! :) So this entire course is an opportunity for learning and growth and listening for each of us. It's also a good reminder to be thoughtful— we don't know where a specific person may be coming from, and we importantly and inevitably don't know it all. We'll each take a pledge to be as thoughtful and compassionate as possible, but also offer apologies and learning for when we may stumble at times—that's an important thing to practice, as well.
- I may occasionally give content warnings in class about particular class dates. Please feel free to let me know (in private) if you have any concerns about any class content in this regard and we can find a solution for you.

Note taking:

- A few friendly note-taking suggestions:
 - If I use slides in the class, I will post the slides on Brightspace, no need to copy down all the info directly from the slides as you go. In particular, it will help you the most to focus on ways of jotting down important verbal content from lecture (i.e. material beyond just copying down any information directly from a slide).

Technology:

- We're likely to be using technology regularly in this class! Please feel free to come to me personal issues and/or technology limitations that might impact your ability to participate in the semester. You'll likely find it helpful to bring laptops, tablets, or phones to class—I'll let you know in advance if there's a particular class where it is especially useful to have such devices. Regardless of what we're doing during our in-class meetings (unless we're specifically using the internet to look things up) please try to help yourself focus on your classmates by refraining from multitasking (texting, being on social media, etc). Obviously there are exceptions to this—sometimes we have emergencies!—but we also know it feels good to be present and to be listened to.

Late work:

- See above, but as a general policy, all larger assignments have an automatic two day "grace period" (no need to ask for extensions, you can submit it up to two days after the deadline with no problems at all). I am unlikely to grant any extensions beyond this window, since it starts to cause problems for the upcoming week's material for both you and me! Please contact me with questions.

Academic Integrity:

- This class will strictly follow SUNY Potsdam's policies on academic integrity. Please consult the Academic Honor Code website (<http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/studentconduct/honorcode>) for more information regarding your responsibilities. In general, academic misconduct includes acts in which you seek to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation. Examples include (but are not limited to):

1. Cutting and pasting text from the web without quotation marks or proper citation.
2. Paraphrasing from the web or written texts without crediting the source.
3. Using notes in an exam when such use is not allowed.
4. Using another person's ideas, words, or research and presenting it as one's own.

***Please note that this also includes working together on any assignments that are not explicitly framed as collaborative projects.**

I encourage you to discuss class content with each other inside and outside of class. For assignments, however, submit your own ideas. Disguising words or work by others as your own undermines the academic community here at SUNY Potsdam. If you have any questions about this, don't hesitate to ask me. For specific questions on intellectual property and proper citation techniques, advice is available both at SCCS and the Writing Center.

AI/Chat GPT, etc:

- Here's a specific guide on ChatGPT: https://library.potsdam.edu/citing_ai
- While I don't have issues with you using AI as a research tool, I'll just say BE CAREFUL (it's got issues and makes a lot of weird mistakes....it may actually be getting less accurate with time, not more so!) and do not present such text as "your own" (it's not). It's not the worst idea to use Chat GPT to help you with certain ideas or research prompts, but be aware that:
- AI often helps reinforce stereotypes and provides the most obvious answer first.....like the answer that you would come up with having little to no knowledge of a subject, which is not what you're hoping for :)
- any use of an AI assist would be your first step, not your last one (otherwise it's kind of like giving a presentation that you have done no work on in front of your supervisor...not a great call).
- We will probably do some work showcasing good and bad ways AI can help us or hurt us in this kind of work this summer (so stay tuned).

**** Please ask me if you have ANY questions about what to do on assignments in terms of academic integrity—as graduate students, you're supposed to be getting to the point (especially after Intro to Grad Studies), where you know how to cite, etc—so best ask so you make sure you get all of this right before you head off this summer!**