

## Final Project: Popular Song

Due Date: Monday, May 6, 2019

*We will try to have a performance of the songs sometime during finals week (if possible, during the Monday 12:20 exam slot). I know this might not be possible for everyone. You will not have to perform your own song.*

### Requirements:

You will write a newly-composed popular song with the following features -

- At least 2.5 minutes in length
- Must mostly follow a traditional pop form (either AABA, VC, or Strophic) - you're allowed some deviations (i.e. AABACA...)
- Must contain mostly diatonic harmony based on your chosen tonality (i.e. if you chose a modal melody, you can use chords like bVII). Occasional use of chromatic chords is allowed.
- Must contain at least two emblematic pop progressions (from your readings)
- Lyrics may be newly-written OR recycled from another source but you must cite the source and have my approval (you may not reuse harmonic or melodic material from the same work).

*Note: You also have the option to work in pairs. If so, your song should be at least 3.5 minutes in length. Both participants will receive the same grade. As part of your analytical essay, you should also include an extra 150+ word description of your compositional process and work distribution.*

### What you will turn in:

1. **Lead Sheet:** Computer-formatted, including a melody and chord symbols
2. **Analytical Essay:** 500+ words; analyzing the form, tonality (harmony & melody), and text-setting of the song. You should include diagrams when appropriate (the diagrams do not count in the total word count). If you decide to work in pairs, see italicized requirement above.
3. **Separate tablature or piano notation** of the entire song (you may include repeats as needed) with lyrics:
  - › *Guitar/ukelele/etc. tablature* should include a written out tablature that includes chord symbols AND individual fretted strings. You should have actually performed these so that you're playing the most parsimonious (simplest) transitions between chords. Rhythm/strumming notation is not necessary.
  - › *Piano notation* can be simple whole/half notes that show proper voice-leading. For the purposes of this exercise, chords should be written in the common-practice style (with most chords in root position) - if you include extended tonalities (i.e. using suspended, 6th, or other chords), voice-leading techniques should ascribe as closely as possible to common-practice rules (ask if you're unsure!).
4. **Optional:** inclusion of extra instrumental/vocal parts (i.e. bass guitar, drums, etc.) and/or a recording. Some extra credit will be given for this as long as the rest of the requirements of the project are met. Theory IV will have two optional out-of-class sessions on recording/effects techniques which you are also welcome to attend. If you work in pairs, extra credit will apply to both participants.

### The following steps may help you in the composition process:

**a. Begin writing lyrics for the song.** You may use any subject matter suitable for class performance; humor and even parody are acceptable. If you're writing something original, it is sometimes helpful to choose a lyrical hook, such as a pun or specific turn of phrase (“a hard day’s night,” “un-break my heart,” *etc.*) that you can build the rest of the lyrics around. Consider writing lyrics for the chorus first, then creating lyrics for the first verse (and optionally pre-chorus) that lead up to the chorus.

**b. Set your lyrics to chords and melody.** There are multiple approaches to this; you may find that choosing chords will help you determine an effective melody, or vice versa. Note that specific genres sometimes have their own conventions regarding melodic range, harmonic rhythm, *etc.*, so listening to and transcribing other songs in your selected genre can provide help and inspiration.

**c. Play through your chords.** This will help you notate the best possible (most parsimonious) voice-leading for either guitar or piano. You will need to notate these separately as a tablature/piano transcription.

**d. Fill out remaining lyrics depending on the form you have chosen.** Continue writing your verses. Write a bridge which contrasts the verse and chorus; the bridge may be instrumental or it may include lyrics, or can even have a section of each.

**e. Create a lead sheet.** Notate your melody with lyrics, and place chord symbols above the staff. Notate chord extensions (*e.g.*, “Cmaj9”) if appropriate.

**f. Write a short analysis.** In a 500+ word essay, write a brief analysis of your song's form, melody, and chord progressions. If you composed with other models in mind, include a description of those songs and how your composition compares. Also provide a descriptive analysis of your own text setting. If you used previously-written lyrics from another song, describe the difference in your text-setting from the original. The analysis will be graded based on content but also spelling/grammar and quality of argument/analysis. *See italicized note above regarding working in pairs.*

### Submission:

- **Save your lead sheet as a PDF file.** Make sure your song is titled, your name(s) is provided in the top right as the composer, and if needed, attribution is given to the original lyric writer. Name your lead sheet in the format “LastName(s) Popular Song - Lead Sheet.” Ensure the format of the file is .pdf.
- **Save your analysis as a PDF file.** Insert any analytical diagrams as images into your file (make sure they are readable!). Name your essay in the format “LastName(s) - Popular Song - Analysis.” Ensure the format of the file is .pdf.
- **Your tablature may either be done on the computer or by hand. Scan the final product and submit as digital file.** Make sure your song title is on it, as are lyrical and composer attributions (as in lead sheet). Name your file in the format “Last Name(s) - Pop Song - Tablature.” Ensure the format of the file is .pdf or a common image file (.jpg, .png).
- **Submit your song.** Upload all necessary files into the Final Project Assignment. If you work in pairs, only one person need submit, but *both names should be included on all materials and file names.*