WRIT 100: Pretty Hurts
Paper IV Assignment

Your final paper will combine the close reading and critical analysis skills we've practiced this semester with the research skills you developed in Paper III and your group-led discussion project. For this paper, you will write a well-researched and thoroughly cited work of cultural criticism aimed at the specific online audience of your choice. The goal of your paper is to show your audience something interesting about Beyoncé's visual album, and to strengthen your reading of the songs and videos with supporting documents and analysis of the critical conversation.

Writing your paper in 9 easy steps

1. Pick a topic
The first thing you need to do is decide on a topic. Your goal is to show your readers something interesting about some specific element of *The Visual Album*, and to connect your close reading of the album itself to other people's arguments. In other words, you want to show your readers how analyzing some part of *The Visual Album* helps them understand some larger cultural issue. You should look back at the videos, as well as the readings from each group-led discussion. Are there any arguments that you want to respond to, perhaps by disagreeing or expanding on a major point? You won't have room to talk about the entire album, or to respond to all the critics who write about Beyoncé, so you need to begin by narrowing your scope.

2. Pick an audience
One you've decided on a topic, you'll need to pick an audience. Here, too, you can turn to the readings for guidance. Where were they published? Do any of them seem to be making the kinds of arguments or engaging the kinds of readers that you'd like to engage? Look over the different websites you identify and see if any of them appear to be a good fit for your topic. If you're having trouble identifying a specific website and audience, feel free to consult with me.

3. Research your audience
After you've decided on a website, you'll want to research your audience. Read through the material on the site and take some notes. Who do you think the site's primary readers are, and why? What kind of stories do they run? What kind of ads do they publish? What do you think the readers are generally interested in, and what can you identify as their primary values?

4. Evaluate your research
Before you begin writing, you'll want to make sure you have all the secondary sources you need to support your argument. Look over the texts from the group-led discussions. Which ones relate to your topic? What do you still not know about your topic, and how can you find what you're missing? (Hint: Librarians are always happy to help you with your research, as am I.) Keep reading and searching until you have as many sources as you need, which should be at least 3.

5. Identify your argument
Now that you've looked at what everyone else has to say, you need to carve out your own space in the conversation. What do you want to show your readers that hasn't been done in the sources you've found? You might want to connect the arguments other people make to a new or unexamined aspect of *The Visual Album*. You might want to disagree with people about something. You might want to point out something everyone has overlooked. Whatever you do, you should be sure that you're focusing on a specific issue within a video or a few videos, because you want to support your argument with details from those videos.

6. Decide on a structure
At this point, you'll want to think carefully about how best to structure your paper. What are the main claims that you want to make about your argument? Is there an order that will make more sense to your reader? What information does your reader need first, and what claims need to be saved for last? Aim to let the needs of your particular argument guide the organization of your paper.
7. Write your paper
As you write, make sure you are making it clear to your readers which arguments are yours and which are drawn from other critics. Use attribution tags like “Jones argues,” “According to Smith,” and “Lee claims.” Be sure to cite each source using MLA style. As with your earlier papers, make sure you’re following a claim-evidence-analysis model. When your evidence is drawn from your secondary sources, be extra careful to follow up with analysis of how that evidence proves your claim and relates to your thesis.

8. Look back at the beginning and end
You probably had a thesis in mind when you started writing, but once you’ve drafted your paper, take some time and re-visit that thesis. Is your initial thesis actually what you ended up writing about? Often, your argument changes—sometimes substantially—as you work through your analysis. If that’s the case, re-write your thesis to reflect your new argument. Use your conclusion to remind your reader why your argument is important: that is, how does your thesis help your reader better understand the album?

9. Reflect on your analysis
The final part of your paper should be a meta-analysis of the ways you engaged your specific audience. In about 500 words, tell your reader who your audience was, and you identified as the most important things your audience values or is interested in. How do you know they value those things? Then explain the specific choices you made in your paper that respond to those interests or values.

What your paper should do

- **Make an argument** about a specific and appropriately narrow aspect of *The Visual Album* that situates your analysis of the songs and videos themselves in a broader cultural conversation
- Address your argument to a **specific online audience** that you identify and research
- Use **specific details** drawn from the videos and your sources to support each claim in the paper, and follow each piece of evidence with **analysis** explaining how those details prove your claim

After your paper is written

**Peer review and submission instructions**
We will conduct peer reviews of your papers in class on **Tuesday, April 5**. You should bring a copy of your paper with you to class; you should also upload your paper to the “Paper IV peer review” folder on Sakai.

After our in-class peer review session, you should revise your paper according to your classmates’ feedback and upload it to the “Paper IV” folder on Sakai by **class time on Friday, April 8**.

**Grading**
Paper IV is worth 16 points. Two of those points are allocated to peer review, one for submitting a completed draft by the appointed time, and another for participating in the in-class session and submitting feedback. The final paper will be graded on the 14-point scale; for more details on that scale, see the “Grading Scale” handout.

**Revisions**
Paper IV is the final paper of the semester, so you will have only one opportunity to revise following peer review and submission. Your revised Paper IV should be submitted no later than **5 PM on Friday, April 15**.

- Refer to at least **3 secondary sources**, and show how those sources support and expand your own argument about the album
- Have a brief **introduction** that introduces your reader to your topic, what you’ll be arguing, and why that argument is important
- Have a brief **conclusion** that reminds your reader what your argument and most important points were, and how and why that argument is important
- Include a **500-word analysis** that describes your audiences and reflects how and why you made specific choices in your paper to appeal to your audience
- Be **2000-2500 words** long, including your reflection
- Be formatted according to **MLA style**