Name: _____

Inventing a Notation System
Essay Assignment

Assignment Format:

- Typed, double-spaced, 2 full pages in length. Up to one additional page of examples can be included.
    o At least one example is required and should include a 5–10 second section of a piece of music transcribed into your system of notation.
    o Include a link to an online recording of the work in the body of your paper (doing this in a footnote is fine).
    o Use time markings to show where in the recording your transcription can be found (e.g. 1:40–1:47 seconds in www.youtube.com/awesomesong).
- Must use 10–12-point font with 1" margins. (1" margins are NOT always the default—check this carefully!)
- Include a heading with your name and the course number. (Nothing else!)
- Include a title for the paper. A creative or fun title can set a nice atmosphere.
- Careful editing, proofreading, and spelling are expected.

Assignment Content:

- The paper should adopt the tone and style of a short pedagogical essay for an advanced student, such as one that a college student might read as part of a chapter of a textbook. The goal is to educate a reader about your notation system in as clear and concise a manner as possible.
    o You are welcome to review the first chapter of a textbook for inspiration.
    o Carefully consider your assumptions when explaining your system of notation. Are you presuming your reader will read left to right, and top to bottom? Are you assuming that a pitch written above another pitch will sound higher? Do you expect that rhythms of different sizes/colors/shapes or notes closer together will be read faster? Remember that these assumptions may not be shared by all readers, nor all cultures.
- You should include a description of the type of music your notation was designed for, and a list a few representative examples.
    o Describe musical characteristics (e.g. loud, fast, upbeat, sad, instruments, content of typical lyrics, anything else you can think of, etc.).
    o For example, if your type of music is "Ska from the 1990s," you could describe this music as typically "loud, fast, and upbeat, containing happy lyrics, and instrumentation such as electric guitar and bass, drum set, and saxophones, trumpets, and/or trombones." You could also state that representative bands include "Reel Big Fish, Less than Jake, and the Mighty Mighty BossTones."
- Most of the essay will consist of an explanation of your notation system.

- - In your essay, describe what musical features your notation system accounts for, and a few that it doesn't.
  - Provide an example (or examples) demonstrating your notation system.
  - Explain the example and the notation system using clear, concise prose.
- You must decide what stylistic features to prioritize in your notation system. Do you want to notate pitch in some way? What about rhythm? If you do notate rhythm, will you do it generally: e.g. as long, short, and medium values, or in a more complex manner? Some other musical features you might want to consider (or purposefully not consider):
  - Dynamics (loudness/softness; does this change?)
  - Timbre (different color or instruments; does this change?)
  - Words
  - Tempo (how fast the music goes; does this change?)
  - Mood (is the music generally happy or sad; does this change?)
  - The musical features you choose will be dependent on the type of music you pick—not everyone's are the same!
  - You won't be able to incorporate every feature of the music (and this is okay!), so prioritize 2–4 of the most important features.