

PHIL 13N: Second Paper

due by 11:59 P.M. on Sunday, November 1

One of the goals of this course is to help you learn how to identify the implicit assumptions others make in their discussions of art, and to use this knowledge to guide the discussion forward. In this paper you will do just that. Your assignment is to write a **critical evaluation** of two actual album reviews of your choosing, one positive and one negative. This means *identifying the assumptions* standing behind the reviewer's differing assessments of the album, and then using these assumptions to *elucidate the disagreement* between them.

Before you begin

The reviews you choose to write on are up to you. You may choose to use one of the reviews you wrote about in the fourth or fifth micro-assignment, but you need not do so. Using the resources detailed in those micro-assignments, find two reviews of some album of your choosing, one which is (on the whole) positive, and one which is negative (or mixed, or in some way critical). This will be easiest if you pick an album which is relatively recent and reasonably well known. To get the most out of this paper, I would recommend finding two strongly worded reviews, to sharpen the contrast between them.

Paper guidelines

Your paper should be **approximately 1000 words in length** (i.e., 4 double-spaced pages). Structurally, your paper need not be too rigid, but it should clearly do the following three things:

- **summarize** the main points of each review

- **identify** the implicit assumptions (i.e., about what good music is) which each review is making through their criticism/praise
- **clarify** the disagreement between the reviews

Importantly, you are *not* to evaluate whether one review is “more correct” than the other. Assume for the sake of argument that both reviews are highlighting actual features of the album. Your task is to elucidate the reasons or assumptions standing behind their disparate assessments of the album.

To do so, you should be asking yourself the following sort of questions: At a deeper level, what are the reviews disagreeing about? Are both reviews assessing the album according to the same standard? Are both reviews addressing their assessment to the same audience? Do both reviews share the same conception of what good music is?

You may, and probably should, include a short introductory paragraph, but keep it brief and to the point: simply announce the album and the reviews you will be discussing, and preview what you’re going to say about them. Again, feel encouraged to use the first person (“I/my/mine”) throughout.

Video option

Instead of submitting a traditional paper, you may choose to submit a 5–7 minute “video essay”, a YouTube-style talk-through of your chosen album reviews. Your video should cover all the same topics that would be covered in your paper (i.e., you should begin by summarizing the main points of each review, then identify the implicit assumptions within each view, and finally clarify the disagreement between them). The video itself can be simple and low-tech (i.e., just you talking to your camera); you may even shoot it on your phone. The idea here is just to give you the option to express your thoughts in a less formal and more conversational manner, if you want that.

You may, and should, organize your thoughts ahead of time, and may even want to write out a rough draft or outline, but **your video should not just be you reading a paper out aloud**. Talk through your thoughts naturally, as you would to a friend. You may edit your video together however you see fit.

Videos are due at the same time as papers. You may either upload your video directly to CourseWork, or upload your video to YouTube (or some other video-sharing site) and then submit the link.

Your video will be graded on the same criteria as your paper would be, except that instead of the quality and clarity of your writing, I will be looking for the quality and clarity of your oral communication skills.

Formatting

Please prepare your paper for blind grading: the only piece of identifying information on your paper should be your SUID number; please do not include your name. Other than that, you may format your paper however you wish, but please keep in mind that it is going to be read by another human. A legible font, ample margins, and appropriate line spacing will all be appreciated.

Please include a full bibliographical citation of the reviews you evaluated at the end of your paper. No specific citation style is required; just follow some standard style of your choosing. Quotations from the review you're evaluating should be put in quotation marks, but need not be followed by any further citation information (e.g., year or page numbers). There's no reason to reference any other literature for this assignment, but if you do, please include a full bibliographical citation for this as well.

Please save your paper in PDF format, with the file name "PHIL13N Second Paper [YOUR SUID NUMBER].pdf" (e.g., "PHIL13N Second Paper 05584623.pdf").

Turning it in

Please submit your paper via CourseWork (from the "Assignments" link on the sidebar) by 11:59 P.M. on Sunday, November 1.

Late papers will be docked 5% for each 24 hour period between the due date and when they are handed in (unless accompanied by valid medical documentation). Late papers may be submitted up to 7 days after the due date; any papers not received by this time will automatically receive a 0.

Grading

Your paper will be graded on the quality and clarity of its writing and analysis. The grading rubric I will be using will be made available on the course website.