

# Think Piece Peer Review (PHIL 105W/205W)

*due November 26*

The ability to charitably and constructively respond to others' ideas is a key philosophical skill. It is a skill we need whenever we are reading a text or reconstructing an argument, but we need it especially when we are participating in any sort of philosophical community (like a class, or a conference, or even a one-on-one conversation). This peer review assignment is intended to help you work on this skill; in addition, it will give you a sense of the ways in which you may think to develop your own think piece, looking ahead to your final paper.

## *Guidelines*

Your peer review should be **approximately 750 words in length** (i.e., 3 double-spaced pages). It should provide constructive, formative feedback on the think piece you have received,<sup>1</sup> presenting two (and exactly two) developed responses to the think piece's thesis. **You are *not* to grade or present your overall impression of the think piece.** Specifically, your peer review should consist of the following three sections:

- Introduction (100 to 200 words)
- First developed response to the think piece's thesis (250 to 300 words)
- Second developed response to the think piece's thesis (250 to 300 words)

Your introduction should summarize what you take to be the think piece's thesis, and indicate what your two responses will be. Your developed responses should each build on the think piece's thesis in a different, concrete way. This may be done in various ways; for example, you may...

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<sup>1</sup>That is, the think piece you have received via Canvas, on or around November 13.

- **strengthen:** present an additional piece of evidence (not discussed in the think piece) which supports the think piece’s thesis, and explain why
- **weaken:** present an additional piece of evidence (not discussed in the think piece) which contradicts (or at least seems to contradict) the think piece’s thesis, and explain why [N.B.: make sure this evidence is relevant!]
- **expand:** discuss what you think is the natural “next step” for the think piece to take, and explain how this would go
- **focus:** identify a point of detail which you feel the think piece passes over too quickly, and explain why more time should be spent discussing this point
- **clarify:** highlight a particular claim from the think piece which you believe is ambiguous (i.e., admits of two or more readings), and explain why those readings need to be distinguished
- **objection:** present an objection (or potential objection) to the think piece’s reasoning, and explain why this objection needs to be addressed

Your responses need not fit neatly into any of these categories; the above list is intended merely to give you an idea of what I am expecting. Your responses may both be of the same form, but **they must present independent points.**

**Tone is crucial!** Remember, your purpose is to provide *constructive, formative* feedback. You will be docked points if your tone comes off as mean, uncharitable, or arrogant. This does not mean that you cannot criticize the think piece; but it does mean that you cannot be a jerk about it. Your peer review should sound like you are helping someone out (because that’s what you should be doing!).

Finally, do not refer to the author of the think piece as “you” (this is too personal and direct); just use “the author” and third-person singular “they”. You may refer to the think piece simply as “the think piece”.

### *Formatting*

**Prepare your peer review for blind grading:** the only piece of identifying information on your submission should be **your student number**. Please do not include your name, email, or any other identifying information.

Your peer review may be formatted however you wish, but please remember that it is going to be read by other humans (namely, me and the author of the

think piece). A legible font, ample margins, and appropriate line spacing will all be appreciated.

### *Turning it in*

Please submit your peer review, in PDF format, via Canvas by end of day on November 26 (or, for all your night owls, by 8 A.M. the following morning). **You must submit your peer review in two places:** first, on the peer review assignment listed in your Dashboard To Do sidebar, as an attached file under “Add a comment”; and second, on the Think Piece Peer Review listed on the Assignments page. **Failure to upload your peer review in both places will result in a zero on the assignment.**

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 peer review will be graded on the quality of its responses, the overall tone of its comments, and the clarity of its writing. The grading rubric I will be using will be made available on the course website.