

PHIL 13N: Fourth Paper

due by 11:59 P.M. on Friday, December 11

One of the goals of this course is to develop your ability to synthesize the various ideas about taste we've looked at so as to form a positive position. In this paper you will do just that. Your assignment is to write a **position paper** where you will construct and defend a personal conception of "good music". This means *articulating a thesis, explaining its attractions and motivations, and responding to some challenges or objections* that may be brought against it.

Before you begin

Think back on everything we've looked at and talked about this quarter. We've dissected our and others' tastes from every angle. With any luck, you now have a deeper understanding of what you would've considered "bad" music at the start of this class. Now imagine a friend asks you, "Okay, so what would you say *good* music is?" Your task for this paper is to present an answer to this question which is informed by and sensitive to the various ideas and considerations you've been exposed to in this class.

Paper guidelines

Your paper should be **approximately 1000 words in length** (i.e., 4 double-spaced pages). It should clearly do the following three things:

- **present** a thesis (that is, a personal conception of "good music")
- **explain** why this thesis is compelling (that is, its attractions and motivations)
- **defend** the thesis against some potential problems or objections

How you argue is more important than what you argue here. Your thesis itself does not need to be particularly original. What's more important – and where the originality of your paper truly lies – is the way in which you present, develop, and defend your thesis. Focus your energy on clearly articulating what you want to say, disambiguating and qualifying where necessary, so as to avoid misinterpretation. Be frank about the thesis's strengths, spelling out in detail the considerations that speak in favor of it. And be honest about its weaknesses and shortcomings, while at the same time indicating some potential solutions to these weaknesses.

Don't bother writing a hokey introduction or a grand conclusion to your paper; just jump right into the task at hand, and keep your focus there. You may, and will probably need to, use the first person ("I/my/mine") throughout.

Oral option

Instead of submitting a traditional paper, you may choose to come in for a live 10–15 minute conversation with me. Our conversation will cover all the same topics that would be covered in your paper (i.e., you will begin by saying what you think good music is, then I will ask you a series of questions about your thesis, getting you to explain why you think your thesis is compelling, and to defend your thesis against some obvious problems or objections). You need not be able to answer every one of my questions perfectly (just as, in a paper, you need not address every possible objection). What I am looking for is that you come in prepared with a well-thought-out idea, and are able to communicate and talk through that idea effectively.

You may, and should, organize your thoughts ahead of time, and may even want to write out a rough draft or outline, but **you may not reference any notes during our conversation.**

Conversations will be held during finals week, between December 7 and 11, and can be scheduled at whatever time is most convenient for you. **If you select this option, you must contact me by Friday, December 4** to let me know and set up a time for our conversation; otherwise, you must submit a paper as usual.

Your conversation 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 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.

There's no reason to reference any secondary literature for this assignment, but if you do, please include a full bibliographical citation at the end of your paper. No specific citation style is required; just follow some standard style of your choosing.

Please save your paper in PDF format, with the file name "PHIL13N Fourth Paper [YOUR SUID NUMBER].pdf" (e.g., "PHIL13N Fourth 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 Friday, December 11.

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.