

Term Paper Pitch (PHIL 194W)

due February 18

Good term papers don't happen overnight; they require extensive research, writing, and editing. And so, midway through this course you are to write a "pitch": a proposal for the topic you intend to explore in your term paper. The purpose of this pitch is: (a) to give you a head-start on your term paper, so you're not rushing to put it all together last minute; and (b) to give you some early feedback on your ideas, so that you have some guidance on how to develop them in the weeks to come.

Guidelines

Your pitch should be **approximately 750 words in length** (i.e., 3 double-spaced pages). It should clearly communicate three things: the scholarly intervention you intend to make, how you will accomplish this, and why anyone else should be interested. As such, it should not be merely an outline of your term paper. It should concern some specific aspect of the relation between literature and the moral imagination, and be grounded in an analysis of a specific literary work. Here's some more detail on the three things your pitch must communicate:

1. **Your scholarly intervention** Your "intervention" is another way of referring to the thesis of your eventual term paper. I'm calling it an intervention because I want you to be thinking of your thesis as *intervening* on some position or debate in the scholarship on literature and the moral imagination. That is, your thesis should explicitly engage with at least one other scholar's ideas, and present a point in contrast with their view. This does not mean that you have to *refute* someone else's view, or argue for the completely *opposite* viewpoint; alternatively, you may clarify a subtlety in their position, or extend their view to a nonobvious case, or strengthen some particular point that they make, and so on.

2. **How you will accomplish your intervention** This is where you explain how your thesis will be supported by an analysis of a specific literary work. Obviously, you do not have enough space within this pitch to communicate all of the subtleties of your analysis. Your goal should be rather to communicate just enough about the work that your reader can understand what it is about, and see why it is relevant and will help support your thesis.
3. **Why anyone else should be interested in your intervention** While the bulk of your pitch should be focused on the preceding two points, you should also devote some space, either at the start or at the very end, to explaining what makes your paper *interesting* and *exciting*. The easiest way to do this is to explain what makes *you* interested and excited in your topic. You don't have to pretend to be "radically revolutionizing our very understanding of literature" or anything else so grandiose, but you should be able to present your paper in a way that any reader will be intrigued by your topic and want to read what you have to say.

And remember: this is a pitch! You don't need to have every little detail worked out yet. But be honest about any problems that you're already running into, and don't promise more than you can deliver. You'll have plenty of space in your term paper to work out all the kinks!

Formatting

Prepare your pitch 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 pitch may be formatted however you wish, but please remember that it is going to be read by other humans (namely, me and your peer reviewer). A legible font, ample margins, and appropriate line spacing will all be appreciated.

Citations of any sources should be referenced according to some standard bibliographical style of your choosing. A bibliography of all works cited should be included at the end.

Turning it in

Please submit your pitch, in PDF format, via Canvas by end of day on February 18 (or, for all your night owls, by 8 A.M. the following morning).

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 pitch will be graded on the cogency and originality of your intervention, the quality and clarity of your analysis, and the effectiveness and interest of your overall pitch. The grading rubric I will be using will be made available on the course website.

Also be aware that after your pitch is submitted to me, it will also be forwarded to one of your classmates, who will use your pitch as the subject of their peer review. (At the same time, you will receive another classmate's pitch and do the same.) All pitches will be kept anonymous for the purposes of peer review, and peer reviewers will be randomly assigned.