

Music criticism: Group project and individual essays

This project will be completed in several steps:

October 23	In-class group work (Day 1)
October 30	In-class group work (Day 2)
November 6	In-class group project presentations. Group work process letter due. SBP prompt and rubric distributed
November 13	Student Blog Post first draft due in class
November 20	SBP first drafts returned to you with feedback
November 24	SBP final drafts due to your section website
November 26-December 9	SBP discussions (online)
November 27	SBP final draft process letter due in class

As you can see from the timeline, this project has three main components: (1) Group work and group presentation; (2) Individual writing; and (3) Online class discussion based on that writing.

You will be divided into groups in class on October 23. Each group will have the choice of 2 music criticism topics to learn about and present to the class in any format you choose (November 6). Based on your group work experience, you will individually write a Student Blog Post (SBP) about any piece of music you like. The final draft of your SBP will be posted online for your classmates to discuss, just like our instructor-led blog posts at the beginning of the term (November 26-December 9).

Grading

This project encompasses three graded tasks:

- 1) Group project and presentation – Credit/No credit
- 2) Student Blog Post – Letter grade
- 3) Participation in student-led online discussions – Credit/No credit

Group project

You will be assigned to a group with 3 or 4 classmates from your section of Mu 101. As a group you will choose one of the two topics provided to you, and you will study the assigned piece(s) of music as well as other people's reactions to that music. You will present your topic to the class on November 6, and you may be as creative or multidisciplinary as you like in your presentation.

Your grade for this task will be based equally on the quality of your group's presentation and the content of your process letter.

Student Blog Post

Based on your familiarity with various kinds of music criticism in your group work and the group project presentations you saw in class on November 6, choose a piece of music and describe how you imagine at least 5 different people would react to it. Your 5 people must

include at least three different music professionals we've discovered in class (performer, composer, musicologist, ethnomusicologist, arts administrator). The people whose reactions or criticism you imagine to your chosen piece of music can be real or imaginary people from any time, from any place, and of any identity. Your writing may be creative (e.g., script/dialogue, journal entries, etc.) or an essay. As you write, draw upon your groupwork project and your familiarity with online blogs in this course.

You will be graded according to the rubric distributed with the assignment prompt (November 6).

Student-led discussions

You will be graded for meaningful participation in at least half of the posts submitted by your classmates, November 26-December 9. These discussions will be similar to the instructor-led online discussions from the first half of the term.

Group work, Day 1 (October 23)

Read your two music criticism topic choices. Listen to the assigned pieces. Decide which of your two options you want to study more closely and present on.

By the end of class today, you should be able to answer (or have a plan for how you want to answer) the following questions about your topic:

- What does the author say they don't like about this music? What specific musical features do you hear in this piece that support the argument the author is making?
- What can you infer that they *do* like, musically speaking?
- Where does their tastes or preferences come from, or what are they (implicitly) comparing this music to?
- What's at stake, in their eyes? Why does this topic matter to them? What can you *infer* that is at stake, even if they don't say so explicitly?
- How reliable, authoritative, or trustworthy do you think the author is?
- What do you find most surprising or interesting about the criticism you're reading?
- What are your limitations as listeners, readers, or students of this topic: What don't you know that you would need to know in order to understand this criticism more deeply? (Do not do research for this project. The goal is to be able to clearly state what you *don't* know.)

Group homework, Day 1:

Decide who needs to do what over the week to be ready to do in-class work on Day 2.

Group work, Day 2 (October 30)

Continue answering Day 1 questions, as needed.

Decide how you will present your topic and practice your presentation: show why this topic was interesting to your group. Do you need access to the computer or need to play musical excerpts? Do you need images to be displayed? Will you act out how different people reacted to this music?

Each group will have a total of 10 minutes to present.

Group homework, Day 2:

Continue working on your presentation, as needed.

Each member of the group must write a process letter about their groupwork experience: What did you contribute to the group's presentation or process? What did other members of the group contribute to the group's presentation or process? What about your groupwork experience worked well? What about your groupwork experience did not work well?

Group work, Day 3 (November 6)

Each group will have a total of 10 minutes to present, and your presentation can take any format you choose. If you want me to have files or links ready on the computer for your presentation, email them to me by 10pm on November 5.