

Writing #4: Music criticism – due in class M Dec 12

For this writing experience, you're going to create a piece of original music criticism about any piece of music you choose. Music criticism is the act of declaring what is good (or not good) about a piece of music and how others should listen to it: it seeks to answer the implicit question in all musical experiences, "What value does this music have?" We will study several examples of music criticism in class on M Nov 25.

Prompt and requirements

(1) Choose a piece of music (any style, any time period). This should be a specific piece of music and not just a style or genre, although you may discuss broader issues of style or genre as part of (2a), below.

(2) Write a piece of original music criticism about your chosen piece of music from any perspective (real or imaginary) that you choose. You may find that this writing synthesizes many of the other skills or ideas you've been working on in your previous writings (e.g., skills of observation and details in your Soundscape Journal, noticing how music reflects broader ideas in *The Ethos of 2019*, thinking about audience and bias in *An Account after Rameau*).

(2a) In your piece of music criticism, you should address all of the following questions in any order you choose (do not include the questions themselves directly in your writing):

- Does it have any good or valuable qualities? What are they and why are they good?
- Does it have any bad or detracting qualities? What are they and why are they a problem?
- Why should other people listen (or not listen) to this piece of music? What should they listen for, or how should they listen? Why?
- What's at stake here? Why does it matter if this piece of music exists? What are the broader values or issues in the mind of the person creating this criticism?

(2b) Your writing must also discuss at least three (3) specific musical details of the piece you've chosen. Depending on who the narrator of your criticism is, they may or may not use the specific musical vocabulary we've been learning in class, but instead they may use their own words to describe the sounds and musical sensations they experience.

(3) The style of this writing can take several forms, for example:

- A diary entry (of an audience member, of a rival musician, of a friend of a musician)
- Newspaper or magazine journalist or essayist
- An interview of a musician (or a non-musician!)
- An alien who has suddenly arrived on Earth and is telling their alien-friends back home about Earthlings' music
- A text message conversation between friends discussing a piece, a concert, or an album
- Letter or email
- Memes
- Any other kind of writing you like

Finally, revise. Don't turn in a first draft. Writing takes time. Do a little bit each day. Ten minutes a day over the course of a week is more effective than an hour crammed in the night before a due date. Give yourself time to mess up and recover. Schedule time in your calendar to just write without distractions—no friends, no music, no TV, no Internet, no phone, no multitasking.

Formatting and submission

In general, written college assignments are typically typed using 12-point font, double spacing, and using 1-inch margins. I won't penalize you for not following these norms, but your doing so does make my grading process significantly easier.

The only requirement I do have is that if you need to email me a file because you will miss class, you must name it like this: LastName, FirstInitial – Writing 4 (Example: Jones, A – Writing 4). If you send me any other file name, I will not accept it. The only file formats I will accept are .doc, .docx, or .pdf. Attach your file directly to your email; I will not accept a link to a cloud service (e.g, OneDrive, Google Drive, iCloud).

Grading

This assignment will be graded on a scale of Credit/No Credit. If you do not submit an assignment, it will be marked "No Credit." If you know that you will be absent, make arrangements to submit your work *before* it is due—send it via email, send it to class with a friend, or drop it off in my mailbox.

If you submit your assignment and it is marked "No Credit," you can resubmit it as many times as you like until it receives "Credit." Each new version must include the previous version and a "Process Letter" in which you explain what you've done differently in this revised version and what you've learned in the process.

Late assignments. Every student may have one extension, no explanation necessary—life happens. Request an extension in person or via email at least 24 hours before the scheduled due date and set your own new due date. Whatever the due date (or if you do not request an extension), late assignments lose one point per day, up to two weeks, and will not be accepted after 14 days. An assignment that is submitted late and receives a grade of No credit may still be revised; the final grade will reflect the number of days the first submission was late.

There is no length requirement for this assignment. I am only looking for good writing... Refer to Writing #1 for all of Dr. J's writing and editing suggestions, as well as resources on the class website: www.drjonesmusic.me/writing-tips