

Argumentative Writing Activity



COURSE

Music 121

INSTRUCTOR

Madison Spahn

TERM

Fall 2025

ASSIGNMENT OVERVIEW

This assignment asks you to engage critically with what it means to be a social activist as a musician, and with Antonio Gramsci's concept of the "organic intellectual." You will choose any female composer or musical artist and give an argument as to why they should be considered an organic intellectual based on their music and/or public activities.

POINTS AVAILABLE

50 Points

REQUIREMENTS

Your essay should be between two and three pages (minimum 500 words), formatted in 12-point Times New Roman font, double spaced, with one-inch margins.

The essay should include the following components:

- **Introduction.** Your introduction should give some basic background information about the artist you are discussing, a definition in your own words of "organic intellectual," and a clear thesis statement (i.e. "In this essay, I argue that [BLANK] is an organic intellectual because [BLANK]").
- **At least two supporting arguments with evidence.** You should offer two arguments that support your main thesis statement. These could be related to the artists' music, lyrics, performance style on stage, interviews, or involvement with other organizations. You should support these arguments with specific evidence of instances in which this artist demonstrates their activism.
- **Conclusion.** In your conclusion, try not to just restate what the rest of the essay has said. Instead, consider the larger implications of your argument. Why does it matter that we consider this artist an organic intellectual? What kinds of impact might their activism have on the world? Is there any aspect of their activism that you would critique? Do you believe that artists should be social activists?

DUE DATE

Your draft should be brought to class (two printed copies) **on Tuesday, November 25**. Your final draft should be uploaded to Brightspace by **11:59PM on Tuesday, December 2**.

GRADING

Introduction with a definition in your own words of "organic intellectual" and a clear thesis statement	10 points
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Two arguments that support your thesis statement, with specific examples	30 points
Conclusion that wraps up your argument	5 points
Clear organization of ideas and correct use of English grammar, syntax, and spelling	5 points

