ABSTRACT

**THESIS:** “I Know That We the New Slaves”: An Illusion of Life Analysis of Kanye West’s *Yeezus.*

**STUDENT:** Margaret Parson

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**COLLEGE:** College of Communication Information and Media

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This work utilizes an Illusion of Life method, developed by Sellnow and Sellnow (2001) to analyze the 2013 album *Yeezus* by Kanye West. Through analyzing the lyrics of the album, several major arguments are made. First, Kanye West’s album *Yeezus* creates a new ethos to describe what it means to be a Black man in the United States. Additionally, West discusses race when looking at Black history as the foundation for this new ethos, through examples such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Nina Simone’s rhetoric, references to racist cartoons and movies, and discussion of historical events such as apartheid. West also depicts race through lyrics about the imagined Black male experience in terms of education and capitalism. Second, the score of the album is ultimately categorized and charted according to the structures proposed by Sellnow and Sellnow (2001). Ultimately, I argue that *Yeezus* presents several unique sounds and emotions, as well as perceptions on Black life in America.