**THE BASICS OF WRITING ABOUT FILM**

**There are three distinct styles in writing about films**

1. **Movie Review**-introduces unknown films, assumes the reader knows little to nothing about the film. A review is written for the broadest audience with the intention of providing a recommendation about the quality of the film.

2. **Theoretical Essay**-supposes that the reader has an extensive knowledge of film and its history; mainly for serious students and film teachers. This type of writing provides in-depth explanations of complex structures about film and how viewers understand and are connected to them.

3. **Critical Essay**-this style is in-between the above two. The critical essay presumes the reader has a familiarity with the film; it hopes to reveal subtleties and complexities about the film not readily apparent from a first casual viewing of the film.

**Topics for Film Analysis and Writing**

**Theme** (ideas about and connection to society)

**Aspects of story** (narrative, characters, point of view)

**Mis-en-scene** (realism, sets and settings, costumes, lighting, acting)

**Cinematography** (use of the camera, shots, angles, movement)

**Editing** (transitions, continuity, pacing/timing)

**Sound** (as transition, as matches, music, dialogue, silence)

These topics are usually dependent upon one another for the greatest effect on the viewer. Thus it is wise to write about two or more of these topics at a time for a full understanding of the film.

**SIX APPROACHES TO WRITING ABOUT FILM**

While considering a topic for an essay, consider the reasoning and interests that you have in regards to the film. Are you interested in the technique used by a particular director? Do you consider the themes of the film to be of importance in a sociological/cultural sense? Is the historical development of a technique or style intriguing? There are six specific approaches to writing about film in incorporating the above topics.

**1. Film history**-organizes and investigates films according to their place within historical context and in light of historical developments. Relating films to time or place, school of thought, social significance, etc.

**2. National Cinemas**-how films are a reflection and incorporate the cultural and national character. The study of films from certain cultures or areas of the world demonstrate styles and sociology unique to that place.

**3. Genres**-discussion of adherence and abandonment of expectations specific to genre (sci-fi, westerns, romance, etc.). Be specific to era as genre styles change according to era; also be cognizant of genre twisting and mixing and its effectiveness.

**4. Auteurs (directors)-**identifies and examines a movie by associating it with a director or occasionally with another dominant figure. Make sure to examine the characteristics or specific aspect the “auteur” controls or makes his/her impression (storyline, editing, certain camera technique, theme).

**5. Formalism**-concerned with matters of structure or style in a movie, or how those features are organized in a particular way in a movie (the aspects/topics explained above). Focused on what is in the movie and not outside forces.

**6. Ideology**-use of politics in a film, clear or sometimes subtle political message of a film; what does the film want to say?

**Film Writing Guidelines and Style**

Dan Craig Craig 1

Literary Analysis of Film

Mr. Craig

5 October 2015

Classic Film Criteria in Citizen Kane

1. Every film paper must have a succinct synopsis of the film without giving away major plot points (2-3 sentences should suffice).

2. Always mention director and two-four major stars. Mention the character first and the full name of the actor in parenthesis; **Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill).** After you may only refer to the character, or possibly by the actor’s last name when referring to the acting style. Be consistent.

3. Movie should be in bold italics or underlined if hand-writing. Please put the year of release in parenthesis when first mentioning the film. ***Memento*** (2000)

4. Use ***www.imdb.com*** to obtain all information about movies.

4. Please type all assignments when possible (neat font, size 12, double-spaced)

5. You may hand-write if needed, but please BE NEAT!

**Film Review Rubric**

To conserve on paper, the points for the film reviews will be written on the review itself. Use the following rubric as a guide to the numbers for your grade.

Introduction (all guideline standards utilized) **25 points**

Body Paragraph (guidelines utilized, specific examples used) **30 points**

Conclusion (guidelines utilized) **20 points**

Punctuation/Grammar (as per guidelines and rules of P/G) **15 points**

Sentence style (complete sentences, fluency, variety) **10 points**

FILM REVIEW

Guidelines

**DIRECTIONS:** Students will write a film review every two weeks (always due on a Friday). The film review should be about a film that was recently viewed. All of the information about the film must be accurate (check information on IMDB). Each film review will choose some type of angle or main idea that will be developed throughout three paragraphs.

**Examples of Theses:** acting, storyline, a theme (a big idea in the film), special effects, compare to another film, novel adaptation, etc.

* **Introductory paragraph** that provides the film and year released; ***Pan’s Labyrinth*** (2006); director, writer, and up to four main stars. Write a *brief* synopsis of the film without giving away major plot points or the ending. Finally, write a sentence or two that provides your general impression of the film and one specific aspect that you enjoyed the most about the film. You can write a negative review; maybe you didn’t like the film!
* **Second paragraph** that specifically talks about why you liked or didn’t like the film (based on your thesis or angle). Discuss your idea with specific examples from the movie. Eventually you will discuss the structure (camera/structure/editing/sound) that helps create a great movie. This paragraph is the longest and should be specific.
* **Third paragraph** that provides a conclusion with genre, what type of audience would enjoy the film, and your recommendation. Try to wrap up the conclusion with a sentence or two why this film will be memorable or forgotten by future viewers.

**Important:** All reviews must be typed, double-spaced, size 12, and a readable font. You can find important information about the film at www.imdb.com. Reviews will not be accepted after 3 days (-10 points off each day late up to three days, students will then receive a 0%)

Film Review Due Dates, MP 1:

Friday, October 16

Friday, October 30

Wednesday, November 4