

ENG 238
Literary Vision of Film
Spring 2017

Final Essay

Format: 2000-3000 words (9-10 pages), typed, double-spaced, MLA format, 12pt. font.

Sources: You will need to use at least five (5) credible and varied outside sources for this paper. The film itself, or films, can only count as one source and should be listed on the works cited page.

Due: Turn in to BlackBoard before the end of the day indicated in the course schedule.

For this essay, you will be offering an analysis of a film, much as you did in the first essay. The main difference in this essay will be that you will be using research to support your argument and provide a cultural or intellectual context for understanding the film and the issues and themes put forward in it.

Therefore, as in your first paper, you will want to develop a coherent thesis that argues for an idea or theme of the film presented through specific moments. You will use your research to help you to bring the theme or meaning into focus and to give it a context for your understanding of the film. The body of the paper will consist of analysis of specific moments from the film to explain where and how the idea or theme of the film emerges.

I would suggest that you consider using much of the research and your sources early in the paper to establish a context within which you are reading and discussing the film. Remember that using a source does not require extensive discussion of it, unless you are deeply involved in the ideas. Some sources can be used to establish ideas, frame issues, or provide simple context, and thus can be referred to quite simply.

You will be graded on

- your coherent analysis of a film for meaning (40%),
- use of research to contextualize and develop the analysis (15%),
- specific reference to the film and scenes used to develop the meaning (30%),
- and clear presentation of ideas in the paper (15%).

You should use a minimum of five outside sources in your paper. Of these, **at least three should be an academic, scholarly article** dealing with either the film or, more likely, the meanings and ideas you are discussing.

You may work on any film from the semester that you like. If you wish to work on a film that was not on the syllabus, clear it with me and make sure that you are discussing the film in relation to the topics of the course.

I will be happy to take a look at your paper as you are working on it. Please email to me at tconnell@mc3.edu.

WRITING TIPS

In many ways, writing a paper about film is no different from writing other kinds of papers in the Humanities. You need to focus your topic, write a good thesis sentence, settle on a structure, write clear

and coherent paragraphs, and tend to matters of grammar and style.

In some other ways, however, writing a paper about film has some challenges of its own. Here are some tips:

- Don't simply summarize the film.

Your professors have seen the film; you don't need to recount the plot to them. They are looking for analysis, not summary.

- Don't simply summarize the use of camera angles or editing techniques etc..

Posit something about what the director is trying to achieve, or the effect that this shot sequence has upon the audience.

- Don't limit yourself to a discussion of plot and characters.

You should include some consideration of the filmic elements in your discussion.

- Avoid the "I."

It's too easy to slip into a subjective "reviewer's" stance when you use the "I" in your criticism. Try to find a more objective way of beginning your sentences than "I found" or "I feel."

- Use details and examples to support your ideas.

Use specific details about editing, camera movement, lighting, music, and gestures and words of actors to support the ideas you are expressing about the theme or the meaning you draw from the film.

- Use the present tense.

Write about the film in the present tense: "Rick Blain is owner of the American cafe." Of course, use the past tense if you are describing something that happened at an earlier point in the film prior to a scene that you are discussing.

- Refer to the character, not the actor.

When talking about the actions of a character in a film, refer to the character, not the actor. The first time you refer to the character, use the full name followed by the actor's name in parentheses. In subsequent references, use the character's last name unless he or she is always referred to in the film by the first name. Example: "When we first see Alisdair Stewart (Sam Neill), Stewart is moving through the jungle." You may of course use the actor's name if you are talking about the actor's techniques, etc. Example: "Clint Eastwood, director of *Unforgiven*, casts himself as the ex-gunfighter William Munny.

Eastwood spares nothing to make himself appear unglamorous."

- Use italics for film titles.

When you refer to the name of a film in writing, you should write it in italics:

Unforgiven, for example, rather than Unforgiven.

- Give your paper a title.

Your title should say something about your paper. Not *The Piano*, but "Feminist Traits of *The Piano*."