Writing About Film

I. General Purpose

People write about film to understand their own responses to a film; to share their enthusiasm for a film or a filmmaker; to convince others of a position; to explain or introduce new concepts, artists, directors, or films; to compare films, directors, actors, or eras; or to connect to a culture or field. Audiences include filmmakers, technicians, critics, professors, classmates, fellow film aficionados, and the general public.

II. Types of Writing

• Review (analysis and recommendation)
• Theoretical Essays (argumentative or persuasive)
• Critical Essays (critical, scholarly analysis)
• Analyses (examination of plot, character, style, dialogue, message, etc.)
  • Film History and National Character (production history, distribution/release history, or situation within film history)
  • Genres (types)
  • Auteurs (Vision, themes, “signature” of director or actors)
  • Formalism (Structure and style)
  • Ideology (political content)
  • Technical proficiency
  • Importance of acting and casting

III. Types of Evidence

• Concrete, specific details, illustrations, examples
• Primary Sources
  o Films, videos, DVDs
  o Published scripts/screenplays
  o Shooting scripts
• Secondary Sources
  o Books, journals, magazines, electronic sources, indexes, interviews and profiles of filmmakers

IV. Writing Conventions

• Blend personal perspective with objective analysis.
• Writing should be both descriptive and analytical.

Revised 10/12
• Use concrete, specific details as support.
• Voice and tone are balanced between formal and casual.
• Introductions should grab reader.
• Correctness and accuracy are highly valued.
• Over-use of “I” may weaken an argument.

V. Terms/Concepts
• Adaptation
• Caricature
• Cinematographer
• Chiaroscuro lighting
• Context
• Contrapuntal sound
• Crosscutting
• Depth of field
• Director
• Dissolve
• Fade in
• Filmography
• Formalism
• Freeze frame
• Full shot
• Genre
• Iris shot
• Irony
• Jump cut
• Macrocoshm
• Microcosm
• Mise en scene

• Montage
• Narration
• Narrative Structure
• Pan
• Period Piece
• Point of View
• Producer
• Scene
• Sequence
• Screenplay
• Shot/ reverse shot
• Sound effects
• Special effects
• Story Structure
• Subtext
• Swish pan
• Take
• Tracking shot
• Zoom shot

VI. Citation Style
MLA (Modern Language Association)

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Sources: