

Film Studies Essay #4:

Woody Allen Project:

Filmmakers usually have certain ideas or themes that they cling to from movie to movie. If you watch enough of them, this idea becomes clearer and clearer. For this next project, you will become very familiar with one filmmaker and try to determine the thesis that is underlying his work.

Watch the following Woody Allen movies:

- Annie Hall (1977)
- Vicky Christina Barcelona (2008)
- Whatever Works (2009; in theatres now!)

Also listen to Terry Gross's recent *Fresh Air* interview with Woody Allen online by downloading the episode on iTunes or by using the following link:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=105400872&ps=cprs>

I would recommend taking notes and quotations. From this interview, it should be REALLY easy to determine what Allen's prevailing message through his films.

The Assignment:

Write a 4 page research paper that answers the following question: **What is Woody Allen's prevailing message in his films?**

Since the answer to this essay question is practically provided by the Terry Gross interview, you will focus mainly on providing a solid structure in your essay. Focus on the following items:

- solid topic sentences that introduce new ideas that add layers to your analysis (IT DOESN'T JUST REPEAT THE SAME THING OVER AND OVER)
- analysis that follows a logical structure
- a smooth progression from one idea to the next that lets the reader understand different layers of Allen's films
- briefly summarizing each film in no more than 3 sentences

Woody Allen's *Prevaling Theme* Essay (Film Studies)

	INSUFFICIENT MASTERY	APPROACHING MASTERY	MASTERY	BEYOND MASTERY
THESIS	Your essay contains a thesis, but it may not be clear or relevant.	Your thesis states a simplistic argument that somewhat answers the essay question.	Your thesis states a clear argument that answers the complete essay question.	Your thesis states a clear and sophisticated argument that answers the complete essay question.
EVIDENCE	You address only small pieces of the film.	You address some of the film but without sufficient detail or explanation.	You address most of the film with enough detail and explanation.	You address the significant parts of the film with detailed explanation.
ANALYSIS	You do not explain or interpret the evidence. The essay mostly contains summary.	You explain only some of your evidence. OR Your explanation does not connect to your thesis.	You analyze the evidence supports your thesis in a 4:1 ratio.	You clearly, persuasively and sophisticatedly analyze your evidence supports your thesis in a 4:1 ratio.
COHESIVENESS & ORGANIZATION	You do not provide clearly identifiable topic sentences.	Your topic sentences do not clearly support your thesis statement.	Your topic sentences clearly support your thesis statement.	Your topic sentences clearly support your thesis and provide a smooth transition from one idea to the next.
GRAMMAR	Grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling have many noticeable errors.	Grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling have some noticeable errors.	Grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling have no major errors.	Grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling have no noticeable errors.

IF ANY PART OF YOUR ESSAY FALLS BELOW MASTERY, REVISE & RESUBMIT.

Thesis: /50	Comments:
Evidence: /100	
Analysis: /200	
Cohesiveness/Org. /100	
Grammar /50	
Total: /500	

Film Studies Essay #5:

Director/Genre Project:

Pick three movies that are either all director by the same individual or all belong to the same genre. (Remember, a genre is a type of story. Horror, Western, Action, Romance, and Drama are all examples of archetypal film genres.)

For this project, you will compare and contrast these three films. What similarities do they share? What differences do they present?

The Assignment:

Write a three page compare/contrast essay that analyzes the similarities and differences of these films.

Your essay must include the following:

- a thesis that directly answers one of the following questions:
 - Same Director: **How do these different films present the director's vision?**
- OR
- Same Genre: **How do these different films present a static or dynamic vision of this genre? Is the genre connected through these different films? Is the genre changing through these different films?**
- a section of analytic paragraphs that compare (i.e. find similarities) between these films
 - a section of analytic paragraphs that contrast (i.e. find differences) between these films
 - a BRIEF conclusion
 - a Works Cited section that lists the films and any other sources you used (visit the Owl Purdue Writing Center online to learn how to cite your sources)

Director/Genre Essay (Film Studies)

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Analysis: /200	
Cohesiveness/Org. /100	
Grammar /50	
Total: /500	

Film Studies Essay #6:

Critique of New Film: A New Twist

Much like Essay #3, the “Critical Review”, you will critique a film. However, this time, instead of critiquing a film that you know and love, you will be critiquing a brand spanking new film.

The Assignment:

Find a brand new film that has recently come out. DO NOT READ OTHER FILM REVIEWS OF THIS MOVIE!!! Go see the film and make a determination for yourself about its quality.

Your review should contain all of the following:

- a thesis statement about the good or poor qualities of the film and why
 - Remember, you can describe a film as having mixed qualities, both good and bad.
- an analytic paragraph evaluating the quality of the story and characters
 - How much does the story draw you in?
 - How much do you end up caring about the characters?
- an analytic paragraph evaluating the quality of the acting
 - How well do the actors portray their characters? Why?
 - If the actors are well known, is this performance better or worse than other films? Why?
- an analytic paragraph about what this film says about some aspect of society
 - Are we too greedy?
 - Do we have too short attention spans?
 - Are we more concerned with physical pleasure than lasting relationships?

You could approach this two ways: (1) look at the director’s message in the film, or (2) think about why the film was made in the first place (just to get laughs and pull in money or is there another reason?)

Film Critique Essay (Film Studies)

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Film Studies Essay #7:

“Readerly” Texts & Delightful Ambiguity

There once was an incredibly smart philosopher of literature named Roland Barthes. He said that there are two types of texts. One type of text is strictly controlled by the author and therefore has a very clear, singular interpretation of its meaning. He called these texts “writerly texts” because the writer does all the work interpreting. The other type of text has a certain amount of ambiguity and forces the reader (or audience) to determine which interpretation works best. He called these types of texts “readerly texts” because the reader is the primary interpreter.

The Assignment:

Watch the film *Pan's Labyrinth* by Guillermo Del Toro and read the novel Life of Pi by Yann Martel. I consider both of these works to be delightful examples of readerly texts because they force the audience to determine how to understand the story.

Write a 4 page paper that answers the following question: **How and why are Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* and Yann's Life of Pi two good modern examples of “readerly texts”?**

Your essay must should focus on the following:

- a clear thesis that guides your entire essay
- analysis that discusses the idea of “readerly texts” and explains how these texts qualify as “readerly texts”
- further analysis that explains which interpretation you settled on and why (you can choose to not pick a side, but you will still need a persuasive reason why)
- a BRIEF conclusion

Readerly Texts Essay (Film Studies)

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Grammar	/50	
Total:	/500	