

general assignment guidelines

You are expected to use at least two references to support each of your assignments. Be sure to cite your references appropriately using any citation method of your choosing (MLA Style, Chicago Style, etc.). If you are unsure about how to properly cite your sources, see the below website:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Here are some more tips to consider for successful writing in this course:

- ~ Use specific, detailed examples from the films/clips to support your analysis.
- ~ Avoid using too much summary. Assume the reader has seen the films and understands them intimately (because I have, and do). Dispatch of any review-type language (ex: The film is a blockbuster extravaganza!).
- ~ Do not ask rhetorical questions, and do not raise questions you do not attempt to answer. Also, do not talk about what the film doesn't do, but rather, what the film *does* do. Be critical and express your ideas.
- ~ Use *italics* for all film titles, i.e. *Citizen Kane* not **Citizen Kane** or Citizen Kane.
- ~ Do not qualify your analysis (ex: I think, perhaps, probably, sort of, etc.). Do not be afraid to make statements and support them with examples/analysis.
- ~ If you refer to a character in the film, research their name (as well as directors, writers, etc.).
www.IMDB.com is a great site for information about the films.
- ~ Don't use quotes as stand-alone analysis, but rather, as support for your own thoughts about the films. I'm interested in *your* perspective, not someone else's.
- ~ Use present tense for film criticism (ex: *Ladybird* is a good example... not, *Ladybird* was a good example...).

I do not accept physical assignments, so please email all of your work to wadenia@crc.losrios.edu. Please send each of your assignments in an editable format such as Microsoft word or Pages. No .PDF or .WPS files! When saving your work, format the file name thusly, or I will not accept it:

Your Name_Class Title_Assignment

Ex:

AdamWadenius_FMS300_Short-answer Assignment

When sending your paper to me, format your email subject thusly, or I will not accept your paper:

Email Subject: Your Name_Class Title_Assignment

Ex:

Email Subject: AdamWadenius_FMS300_Short-answer Assignment

You are responsible for emailing your assignments by the start of class time on their assigned due dates. Upon receipt of your work, I will email a quick response to confirm it has been received. If I don't email you back, check your SPAM folders, and if it's not there, then you can email me again to double-check. You are not bothering me to double-check if your paper has been submitted; it's better to be safe than sorry!

short-answer assignment

Address **two** of the following four questions in a *300-400 word response paper*. Each question corresponds to a short clip that can be accessed by clicking the links. Read and answer the question carefully, using specific examples from the clip to support your analysis. You are required to use the readings/ lecture materials as sources to support your ideas, and you may also use any outside sources that you research.

~ **Question #1** ~

Discuss the four elements of mise-en-scène in the clip from *Lord of the Rings: the Two Towers* (2002). How are each of the elements staged within the frame to enhance a sense of realism?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NB2CNR692RE>

~ *Question #2* ~

Consider the cinematography in the clip from *The Revenant* (2015). How does the framing function to encourage the spectator to identify with Glass' perspective?

<https://vimeo.com/150120476>

Pay close attention to the distance of specific shots (e.g., close-ups, medium shots, long shots, etc.), as well as the use of different types of mobile framing.

~ *Question #3* ~

Analyze the style of continuity editing in the scene from *The Social Network* (2010). How is the scene edited together to orient the spectator into the film space, and ensure a smooth flow of narrative action?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=224&v=xdiFzcpmmJc

Discuss specific examples of shot/reverse shot patterns, eyeline matches, parallel editing, the 180-degree rule, (i.e., the conventions of continuity editing) to support your analysis.

~ *Question #4* ~

What are the three main types of sound used in the scene from *Halloween* (1978), and how do they function to create an atmosphere of tension and anxiety?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_ZinNz0s34

sequence analysis

Read the below question carefully, and write a 500-600 word response paper using specific examples from the clip to support your analysis. You are required to use the readings/lecture materials as sources to support your ideas, and you may also use any outside sources that you research.

~ *Question* ~

Analyze the opening sequence from *Apocalypse Now* (1979) as an example of the art cinema aesthetic. How does Francis Ford Coppola's experimental cinematography and mise-en-scène function to establish some of the film's main themes such as isolation, the horrors of war, losing one's sanity, or the boundaries that distinguish good and evil?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntPHFVWDIqM>

film analysis essay

Answer **one** of the following questions in a 1200-1500 word essay. Each question corresponds to one of the films screened in class. Read and answer each question carefully, using specific examples from the film to support your analysis. You are required to use the readings/ lecture materials as sources to support your ideas, and you may also use any outside sources that you research.

~ *Question #1* ~

Discuss the ideological implications of *The Little Mermaid* (1989). What is the preferred reading of the text, and how does it exhibit the narrative characteristics of classical Hollywood? Provide an oppositional reading of the text, and discuss how it might function to reinforce hegemonic values in American culture.

~ *Question #2* ~

Analyze the representation of young men and women in *Fast Times At Ridgemont High* (1982). How do the characters subvert the stereotypical representation of excessively masculine men, and dichotomous women in film? How does the film function to challenge the typical patriarchal perspective offered in classical Hollywood films?

~ Question #3 ~

Discuss the representation of race in *Do The Right Thing* (1989). How does the film challenge the typical patriarchal perspective of mainstream and Hollywood films? How do the characters function to subvert the stereotypes that have often been perpetuated against marginalized groups throughout film history?

~ Question #4 ~

How does *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (2001) go about constructing a more diverse image of transgender characters? Discuss the ways that the film subverts the traditionally negative representation of trans identity in popular mainstream cinema.

example essay

The below essay is an example of an *A* paper turned in by a student. It provides thoughtful, detailed analysis of the film's visual and narrative elements, while using specific examples to support the writer's ideas.

Analyze the style of continuity editing in *Psycho*. How is the film cut together to ensure narrative continuity? How does the film make use of the four dimensions of film editing to ensure that the spectator remains oriented in the film space?

Continuity Editing in *Psycho*

Continuity editing guides the spectator through the narrative of a film as seamlessly as possible. It serves to bring realism to the story so we can "suspend disbelief easily and comfortably" (Reed, 1). The use of this technique in *Psycho* keeps us on the edge of our seat waiting for the next event. We start to anticipate what will happen, which allows the filmmaker, Alfred Hitchcock, to cleverly lead us down one path, and then place a curve in the road that obliterates our assumptions. The use of continuity editing starts before we ever see any actual footage of the movie, as the credits move quickly across the screen, in and out from both sides. This rhythmically matches the up-tempo, non-diegetic introductory music, which is syncopated with a driving beat to build excitement. The opening establishing shot, or extreme long shot (Etkin, 1), orients the spectator in the space of the story with non-diegetic graphics that tell us where we are, and when (Phoenix, AZ - Friday, November 11th). As the camera pans right and zooms in, as series of cuts places us closer to a seemingly random hotel window, where we are introduced to the main protagonist Marion, and her boyfriend Sam. This careful juxtaposition of shots establishes the exposition of the film, and is an indication that the editing will play a key part in advancing the film's narrative action.

For modern audiences, one of the first surprises in the film is the time and location of the “shower scene”. Based on the notoriety of the scene, it being one of the most talked about in film history, one would think it to be the climactic scene in the movie. While it is certainly the climactic moment in the Marion’s life, because it happens relatively early in the film, it is not the climactic action of the film. It is, however, a surprise twist in the plot, set up specifically by the films’ editing. Prior to this scene, we see that Marion is planning to take back the money. She says this to Norman rather cryptically, but we also see it when she does the calculations of how much of the \$40,000.00 she has remaining. The shower scene itself has no dialogue but conveys a whole lot simply through its images, and their juxtaposition in the mise-en-scène. When Marion gets in the shower we see short duration shots of different parts of her body, the showerhead, the water, and the bathtub. We see her smiling, perhaps thinking about going back home and getting out of the “trap” that she has stepped in, when all of a sudden, the bathroom door opens, and an obscure figure enters quietly into the room. When the curtain is pulled back, Mother raises her knife and slashes down at Marion, violently stabbing her over and over. The sharp sounds of a screeching violin is heard, and the cutting moves quickly from shot to shot, faster and faster, to rhythmically match the action of the knife and the music, heightening the suspense of the scene. We see close ups and extreme close ups of the knife, Marion’s mouth, and parts of her body. We never really get a look at the attacker or the stabbing because of the speed of the cuts, and the shot/reverse shot pattern between Marion and the attacker, however, the sounds of the knife hitting her flesh provide enough detail for the spectator to fill in the gaps with his/her own mind. Overall, the scene has “70 shots in 45 seconds,” and this editing style functions to create a sense of tension and anxiety, that the spectator shares with Marion, the unfortunate victim (Coyle, 1). Today’s technology allows filmmakers to show much more graphic images, but at its time, the editing in *Psycho* “created a sense of panic and energy throughout the audience” without graphic violence (Wainwright, 1). As the scene ends, a graphic match of the drain carefully dissolving into a shot of Marion’s eye signals to us that “the woman’s life has been washed away”(Wainwright, 1).

As far as spatial relations are concerned, *Psycho* leads us through the story and keeps us oriented into the action with use of the 180° rule, or the axis of action (Bordwell/Thompson, 223). Spatial relationships in the film are maintained by eyeline matches, with characters looking in the proper direction while speaking with one another, and shot/reverse shot patterns that are used to show reactions to between characters. These conventions help maintain the spectator's orientation in the space of the film, and foster their identification with the characters.

There are many instances where the shot/reverse shot is used where there is no dialogue at all, forcing us to imagine what the characters may be thinking. When Marion is driving from Phoenix, and is looking at the policeman in her rearview mirror, we see a medium close-up of her through the windshield juxtaposed with close-up shots of the mirror from her point-of-view. When Norman pushes the car into the lake after cleaning up Mother's mess from the shower scene, he chews his fingers nervously as we see shot/reverse shot of a close-up of Norman, and a long shot of the car as he watches it sink. When the car stops sinking, the duration of the images shortens, and the shot/reverse pattern speeds up to heighten the tension. As is the case with Marion, the point-of-view shots of Norman also function to place the spectator into his perspective, heightening our sense of identification with the characters. When Marion is in her apartment alone preparing for her trip, she looks over at the money sitting on the bed. As she walks around the room, the shot/reverse shot pattern between Marion and the money functions as a conversation of sorts. It's as if the money is saying "don't do it, you'll get caught", and she's replying, "Yes, I have the money now to escape with Sam!"

Temporal relationships are exhibited when Marion is driving and we hear the non-simultaneous sound of Sam's voice, reacting to her unexpected arrival. Non-simultaneous sound is "sound we hear that is occurring earlier or later in the story than the events we see," and it functions in this scene to let the spectator know that Marion is on her way to see Sam (Bordwell/Thompson, 277). We also hear the voice of her boss, her co-worker and the customer whose money she has stolen talking about her, and how to find her. Each of these conversations would have occurred in the future, and all are good examples of non-simultaneous sound that adds an air of tension to the scene.

Most of the shots in the film transition with a cut, such as Marion's driving montage, and the sequence when Arbogast is poking around the motel looking for clues. The major shifts in time and location use dissolves. Dissolves help bridge between locations. When Marion leaves her office after taking the money, the scene dissolves to her at her apartment, signaling that time has elapsed, and she's driven home. This ellipses cuts out the frivolous action of her getting into her car and driving home, as this is not relevant information for the advancement of the story. Fade-ins and outs are also used to signal that time has elapsed. A good example is when Marion gets sleepy while driving, she pulls her car over, and the shot fades to black, signaling that she's gone to sleep. The next shot is a fade-in from black, signaling her waking up when the police officer is knocking on her car window. Another key fade in the film occurs after Arbogast is killed. We see him stabbed twice after being pushed down the stairs, and as the scene fades to black we hear him scream, signaling that he is dead.

Continuity editing plays a huge role in the narrative of *Psycho*. The cuts, fades, and dissolves all function to create certain graphic/rhythmic/spatial/temporal relations, that ultimately create a continuous flow of events for the spectator to engage with. The eyeline matches, point-of-view shots, and shot/reverse shot patterns create smooth transitions between characters, and help us to identify with them. With continuity editing we don't have to speculate about where we are, or who we are looking at on the screen, or their relationship to other characters; it's all laid out for us. Overall, these conventions serve to heighten the suspense, and keep the spectator glued to the screen. For all of these reasons, *Psycho* is still being studied and dissected 53 years after its release.

Works Cited

David Bordwell/Kristen Thompson, *Film Art, An Introduction: Tenth Edition*. McGraw-Hill, 2013

Grant Reed/Ben Etkin, Collegefilmandmediastudies.com/editing

Harry Wainwright, *Psycho* editing methods: wainwrightthriller.blogspot.com, October 2012.

Jake Coyle, *After Psycho* a shower of violence in movies, salon.com, November 2012