

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_FMS305_ 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_FMS305_ 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 three 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* ~

Compare and contrast two or more of the films (or sets of films) screened in class from the lecture on the **birth of cinema**. Analyze the formal aspects (staging, framing, color, intertitles) and content (scenarios, characters, action) of the films, and consider the major similarities and differences that arise between them.

~ **Question #2** ~

Analyze the peasant dance scene from *Sunrise* (1927) as an example of continuity editing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69eQyqW-H4>

How does the film make use of the conventions of continuity (axis of action, staging in depth, set design/lighting, etc.) to provide narrative clarity for the spectator?

~ **Question #3** ~

Consider the representation of Native Americans in the clip from *Stagecoach* (1939).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4jF3xTxKWM>

How have marginalized groups such as this typically been treated in classical Hollywood films, and how would you characterize the depiction of Native identity in the clip?

sequence analysis assignment

Answer **one** of the three below questions in a 500-600 word response paper. Read and answer each 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. You are responsible for uploading your assignments by the start of class time on their assigned due dates. Do not email me any assignments.

~ **Question #1** ~

Consider the final scene from *Germania anno zero* (1948) as an example of the neorealist aesthetic.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZ3FUkjvwMs>

Analyze the use of long-take cinematography, and discuss the staging of the mise-en-scène. How do these two elements function to emphasize a distinct sense of realism in the scenario?

~ **Question #2** ~

Discuss the clip from *Vivre sa vie* (1962) as an example of the “disruptive cinematic style” that the Nouvelle Vague filmmakers sought to achieve.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-C9x131Iof0&t=287s>

Stylistically, how does the clip function to challenge the more conventional, studio produced French films (e.g., the *Tradition de qualité*) of the previous era?

~ **Question #3** ~

Consider the performance of “Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend” in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) as an example of the First Cinema. How does the clip reinforce Solanas and Getino’s contention that Hollywood films promulgate a “bourgeois philosophy,” that depicts “reality as it is conceived by the ruling classes”?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knLd8bfeWtI>

film analysis essay

Answer **one** of the below four questions in a 1100-1200 word essay. Each question corresponds to one of the films screened in class. Read and answer each 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. You are responsible for uploading your assignments by the start of class time on their assigned due dates. Do not email me any assignments.

~ *Question #1* ~

Discuss *Bringing Up Baby* (1938) as an example of a film produced by a major studio during the Hollywood production code era. Does the film seem restricted by the three general principles of the production code? Consider some of the ways that the filmmakers might have encoded “objectionable” material into the film’s narrative.

~ *Question #2* ~

Analyze Melvin Van Peebles’ *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song* (1971) as an example of the Blaxploitation subgenre, giving specific examples of how it borrows from, and “exploits” the characteristics of other popular film genres of the time period. Does the film function as an example of Stam and Spence’s notion of naïve integrationism, or does it leverage Hollywood structures to create its own diverse representation of black identity?

~ *Question #3* ~

How does *High School* (1968) function as an example of the Direct Cinema movement of the 1960s? Analyze its formal style, and consider how it evokes a sense that the spectator is observing the events of the historical world as they happen.

~ *Question #4* ~

Discuss *Be Kind Rewind* (2008) as an example of postmodern cinema. How does the film exhibit certain characteristics of postmodernism such as intertextuality, pastiche, reflexivity, excesses of violence, or the breakdown between high and low culture?

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.

Discuss the use of the long take style in Orson Welles’ *Touch of Evil*. How does Welles’ cinematography evoke Sergei Eisenstein’s theory of “sensuous thinking”?

Sensuous Thinking and Touch of Evil

When addressing the importance of aesthetics in relation to film production, Sergei Eisenstein writes that, “films are faced with the task of presenting not only a narrative that is logically connected, but one that contains a maximum of emotion and stimulating power” (Eisenstein, 3). Throughout his career, Orson Welles has consistently produced films that achieve this careful balance of the intellectual and the sensual, most notably the 1958 classic *Touch of Evil*. The film is widely renowned for its use of the long take, with two scenes in particular (the opening shot, and Sanchez’s interrogation sequence) that stand out as strong filmic examples of Eisenstein’s theory of “sensuous thinking”. This is due to the aesthetic qualities of the long take, which demand that the viewer associate intellectually with the continuous, unbroken action, while at the same time deriving pleasure from its artistic use. However in attaining this delicate equilibrium of the mind and body, Welles demonstrates himself to be equal parts artist and intellectual, thus ostracizing himself from the Hollywood system; an establishment that promotes the one-dimensional, simplistic filmmaker. By applying this diverse quality of sensuous thinking to film, Welles is able to produce an aesthetically pleasing work of cinema that ultimately serves to hamper the

development of his career.

The opening shot in *Touch of Evil* is perhaps the most famous single take in film history, due entirely to its aesthetic duality. The scene fades in from black to the image of a man setting a timer that is wired to multiple sticks of dynamite. The camera follows as he makes his way to the trunk of a car, placing the explosives inside. As he runs away, a couple gets into the vehicle, and drives off toward the Mexican border. Welles immediately encourages an intellectual participation from the viewer, as the images provoke questions that linger unanswered until the completion of the scene. One ponders when the bomb might go off, or if the couple will be alerted to its presence in time to save themselves. Suspense builds, and the viewer is now emotionally connected to the events, either rooting for the couple to be saved dramatically in the final seconds, or hoping for their demise by way of a grandiose, visually stimulating explosion. One is teased with the notion that the couple may be spared, when the young woman in the passenger seat cries out that she hears a ticking noise. She is brushed off by the driver and border guards, the tension mounting as the car is passed through into Mexico. The car is not to be seen again until moments later, when the viewer's questions are answered and his emotions relieved, as the car bomb detonates into a twisted ball of flames. This explosion is the culmination of a logically assembled string of events, captured in a long take style that both commands the viewer's intellect, and captures his emotions.

Equal in its dual aesthetic achievement is the Sanchez interrogation scene, which Welles himself considered to be the greatest use of the camera in motion picture history. The scene is broken into two parts, separated by a short sequence in which Mike Vargas places a telephone call to his wife Susan. Towards the middle of the first portion, Vargas is in the restroom washing up. As he reaches for a towel to dry his face, he inadvertently knocks over a shoebox into the bathtub. The camera continues its long take, moving around Vargas to focus on the empty box as he picks it up and puts it back on the shelf. Welles' camera does not cut away, but instead alters its position to obtain a clear view the box, deliberately calling attention to the object. This works to establish a visual clue, which piques the interest of the viewer, connecting him intellectually with the action. The shot continues, and Vargas soon leaves to try and telephone his wife. Here, Welles takes a different approach from the previous long take sequence, as he momentarily interrupts the shot with a brief scene in which Vargas places a phone call to Susan. This is important because it enhances the sense anticipation, so that when we finally arrive at the second portion of the interrogation, the viewer is now emotionally invested in the outcome of the scene. During this second portion, as Vargas reenters the house, Captain Quinlan emerges from the bathroom and orders Sergeant Menzies to conduct a more thorough search of the area. Menzies walks off camera into the next room, and within moments

comes out screaming that he's found the hidden evidence. The camera does not follow Quinlan as he moves to investigate, but rather it holds on Vargas, looking quizzically off camera into the other room. Vargas' suspicion of the scenario is apparent by the look on his face, and the viewer is drawn to identify with his position because of the long take. With the camera focusing intently on his gaze, the doubts that pass through his head are the same that occur to the viewer, who is completely immersed in the intellectual and emotional aspects of the scene. When Menzies produces the shoebox containing two sticks of dynamite as evidence, the viewer recalls it as previously being empty, and Quinlan's deception becomes evident. Welles' use of the long take to single out the shoebox during the first portion of the scene works to stimulate the mental attention of the viewer, who begins to question its overall significance to the film. Welles continues with the long take during the second portion of the scene, to attach the viewer to the emotional state of Vargas, upon realizing that Quinlan is tampering with evidence to frame suspects.

While both the opening shot and the Sanchez interrogation sequence are strong examples of Welles' ability to evoke both the intellectual and the emotional in his films, it is this same quality that ultimately served to prohibit his career from reaching its full potential. Though Eisenstein would likely approve of his duality as a filmmaker, the Hollywood community most certainly did not:

Peter Bogdanovich: Well, it's true that America likes its artists and its entertainers to be either artists *or* entertainers and they can't accept the combination of the two.

Orson Welles: Or any combination. They want one clear character. And they don't want you to be two things. That irritates and bewilders them (Bogdanovich, 244).

Welles was most intimidating to Hollywood because he lived as both an artist and an entertainer, in a society that does not support those who defy the status quo. This posed a significant problem for him many times throughout his career, particularly with *Touch of Evil*. Though Universal Studios was initially willing to take a chance on Welles to direct his first feature in over ten years, he was barred from the lot and stripped of his editing privileges upon viewing his preliminary cut. Welles had fashioned a sprawling, unconventional film that was soon re-edited and demystified for a fatuous audience. In an attempt at saving his film, Welles penned a letter to studio chief Edward Muhl, pleading for to him make changes in the new version. A small portion of his requests were granted, and the film was released in 1958 (trimmed from Welles' original version, and playing the bottom half of obscure double-bills around the country). It was not until 1998 that the film was re-edited according to Welles' letter, and his true vision fully realized on screen in its current form. The very elements of aesthetic brilliance that set *Touch of Evil* apart from the rest of the film world were ironically the very elements that worked to end his career.

As a sensuous thinker, Orson Welles produced art works that are aesthetically pleasing in both the intellectual, and emotional realm of filmmaking. In an essay entitled “Twilight in the Smog”, published in Esquire magazine in March of 1959, Welles writes that “A genuine individual is an outright nuisance in a factory” (Bogdanovich, 295). This sentence most definitely describes Welles, who stands alone as true maverick, amongst a cardboard cutout community of filmmakers turning the Hollywood machine.

Works Cited

Eisenstein, Sergei. “Word and Image”, pg. 3, 1938.

Bogdanovich, Peter. This Is Orson Welles, pgs. 244, 295, Da Capo Press, New York, 1998.