

Instructions for the Critical Review Essay

- A) To prepare for the essay you should review the following: (1) the assigned chapters from the textbook, (2) the Basic Film Production PowerPoint presentation on the website, and (3) each of the weekly email summaries that refer to our classroom screenings, lectures and discussions.
- B) Once you've reviewed the class material, you should screen the film you intend to analyze. At minimum, you should screen the film twice: once without making any notes, then afterward to create a detailed plot segmentation of the film based on its event structure (distributional functions). At the end of your first screening, you should formulate your thesis. Your thesis is a declarative sentence that conveys your critique of the film based on your application of the "production" perspective to one of the remaining four critical perspectives: "industry," "history," "sociology," "psychology." For example: "Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* reinforces gender norms in the United States as they existed prior to the second world war."
- C) After an initial screening, determination of the thesis statement, and the creation of a plot segmentation, it's time to select scenes you will be using in your analysis. It's strongly recommended that you choose between three and five scenes to analyze for your essay. The scenes you choose should be representative of the larger theme upon which your thesis statement is based. Each scene should be analyzed in a length of between one and three paragraphs. What you're doing in your analysis is using evidence from the particular scene to demonstrate the validity of your thesis statement. For example, building off the thesis statement above, one might analyze the wishing well scene in Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, where Snow White first meets the prince at the beginning of the film. Remember that this scene was added to the story (extrapolated) and you should explain what function it serves and why (see Film Notes 6). You might also consider Snow White's appearance, behavior, and the lyrics she sings: "I'm wishing... for the one I love... to find me... today... I'm hoping... and I'm dreaming of... the nice things... he'll say...." Notice how she runs away at the sight of the prince, yet they lyrics declare that she's waiting for a prince to come and take her away. This might be interpreted as representing her chastity on the one hand, but desire for love on the other. Remember that all aspects of production count as potential evidence for your analysis.
- D) Once you've completed the body of your essay, it's time to write the introduction and conclusion. The primary purpose of your introduction is to clearly present the thesis statement, but other elements also need to be included. For example, you could include information on the director, cinematographer, sound designer, production company, actors, year of release, and nation of origin. At minimum, the director, leading actor(s), nation of origin, and year of release should be included, but if you're critiquing the film from an "industry" perspective, more detail will be needed. Another subject to include in your introduction is your

method of analysis: how did you go about analyzing the film? Your method is described right here in this document. What you're doing is selecting scenes from the film and analyzing them based on the rhetorical meaning of their production techniques. Finally, you will provide a preview of the scenes you intend to analyze in the body of your essay. You will not perform the analysis here; rather you will just identify the scene based on its cardinal function (what happens).

- E) Lastly, you will formulate a conclusion that describes the overall rhetorical meaning of the film in accordance with the specific detailed observations you've made throughout. In short, summarize and provide a conclusive statement.
- F) Make sure your paper is type-written and double-spaced with one inch margins all around. You must use *Times New Roman* font with a size of 12. A separable cover-sheet with your name, the title of the paper, the title of the class, and the class section number should also be included. Writing skills proficiency and English Composition are prerequisites to entering this course, so proper English grammar, spelling, mechanics, syntax, and punctuation are expected. If you know that writing is difficult for you, please seek help from a tutor at the writing center before submitting this paper as it will enhance the level of feedback you will receive from me on this initial draft. Failure to follow these rules will result in the paper being rejected without corrections and feedback.