Writing About Film

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.

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

Types of Evidence

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

Writing Conventions

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

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
• Macrocosm
• Microcosm
• *Mise en scène*

• 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

Citation Style

MLA (Modern Language Association)

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Sources: