**FLME 1010 Module 1: Film Aesthetics & Analysis**

This is the gateway class for Film Majors at Georgia State University, and is the prerequisite class you need to take any of the 3000 and 4000 level classes downtown. It is designed to build on what you learned in FLME 2700, History of Motion Pictures. We will be going into greater depth about writing Film Analysis papers. This is a skill you need to practice and develop in order to succeed in the upper level film classes at the downtown campus.



You will be watching LOTS of film clips, and should find that to be interesting and a lot of fun. You’ll also be participating in weekly online discussion forums.

Writing an analysis involves more depth than just writing a Film Review. A Film Review’s purpose is to help a reader quickly decide whether to spend the money or the time to watch a particular film. The content and opinions expressed are almost always only those of the person writing the review. Most of these reviews do not involve doing any research, or going into any depth about the various components of the film, like the writing, directing, acting, cinematography, sound design, editing, music, and the special video and audio effects. Part of what we will do in this class is examine each of those areas in some depth, so that you will have a better idea of what to be looking for when you write about these components in your papers.

Some film reviews DO go into this kind of depth, so the above statement was not meant to be any kind of absolute definition. We could debate this definition, but let’s just assume that you understand the general point being made – which is that a Film Analysis paper involves more than just your own personal first impression of a film, and whether or not you give it two thumbs up or down.

**SOME BASICS ABOUT WRITING FILM ANALYSIS PAPERS**

You should already know this information. But it bears repeating.

We expect your grammar skills to be close to perfect in the final draft of your papers. That means **no** spelling errors, no punctuation errors, no run-on sentences, no incomplete sentences, and using correct verb tenses. If you have not mastered these skills, please take advantage of the free GSU tutors! Let someone you know who is good at this proofread and review your paper. Use Grammarly.com to help you correct grammar mistakes. Use imdb.com to make sure you are using the correct spelling for the names of the Directors, Actors/Actresses, their characters in the film, and everyone else associate with the film. There is no excuse for any of this information being incorrect.

We expect you to know how to write a paper using proper MLA style. If you don’t know what this is, read the MLA Style Guide in the library or do some online research.

We expect you to do some research for every paper, and to cite your sources appropriately.

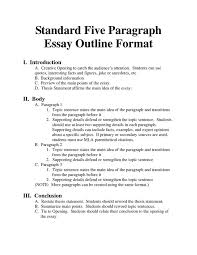
We expect that all of your content will be relevant to your paper, and not just “filler” or “padding”. We don’t need to know every single award the film won at film festivals and other events. We would like to know if it was nominated or won the Best Picture at the Academy Awards, or something similar.



We are interested in a **condensed** summary of the plot, but this should never be 90% of your paper. We also want you to use your research to guide your conclusions about the overall meaning of the film, as well as how other components contribute to that meaning, including the writing, directing, acting, editing, music, soundtrack, and special video and audio effects.

We want to see well organized papers. Every term, we see papers that have only one or two paragraphs, where all of the thoughts are run together in a virtual stream of consciousness style. This never works! **Please do not do this.** Do your research before you start writing, and put together at least a brief outline before you start writing too. Think of this outline as a road map. Following the map will help you get to your destination quicker than will “just winging it.”

You’ve been exposed to the 5 Paragraph Essay concept. Follow it, or at least some version of it. Your opening paragraph should give us an idea of the overall purpose of your paper (a thesis statement), as well as the main points you will cover that will support that thesis statement. Then cover each of those points, in depth, with research sources and references to specific scenes in the film that all helped you arrive at your conclusion.



And finally – FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS. Do the research required, and cite at least 2 sources. Turn the paper in on time.



**WRITING IS A PROCESS!** This is such a key concept, and a lot of students just don’t get it. They wait until the night before to start writing a paper, and have probably even been secretly pleased to have mostly gotten A’s anyway. We will always give you several weeks of notice before a paper is due. We want you to take the time to select a good film to write about, watch it several times, do some quality research, organize your ideas into an outline, write a first draft, and get some good feedback on that draft. THEN do a final rewrite and triple check the paper to eliminate the grammar errors, misspellings, and typos.

**UNDERSTANDING YOUR PERSONAL FILTERS**

Have you ever thought about exactly why it is that people sometimes come to completely opposite opinions about a film?

A big part of this reason has to do with our own personal filters. Think of a filter as literally a set of uniquely personal eyeglasses that you are wearing when you see a film. Those are made up of the combination of factors related to your age, education, relationship experiences, gender, race, economic status and more. Quite often, these play a major role in whether we decide to even view a film at all, after we read something about it.



Give this some thought and see if you can identify some of your own filters. My filters include anything about child abuse, excessive violence, excessive drug use and similar things. I don’t really want to see films that involve these themes. I know other people who are recovering alcoholics or who don’t drink because they saw what it did to someone in their family; quite often these people are very reluctant to see films that involve any kind of excessive drinking and the kinds of abusive behavior that many drinkers get involved in. I and many others were put off by *Wolf of Wall Street* because that film showed some very unscrupulous people ripping off the retirement savings of normal people, and living the high life, with the parties, drugs, expensive food and drink, yachts etc. Many of us lost a lot of money to people like this in the great Wall Street Crash of 2008-9 when they almost took down the entire country. We don’t think this subject is anything to laugh at.

Many students over the years have thought that there is some right or wrong answer to this question about your personal filters, and have responded by telling me how open minded and non-judgmental they are. So here is a potentially provocative question for you, designed only to get you to think a bit deeper about this.

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How many of you saw *La La Land,* and how many of you saw *Moonlight*? If you saw both films, which one did you like better? If you saw only one film, why did you choose to see that film, and to not see the other film? If you haven’t seen either film, then why not? The point is not to make anyone “wrong” for their answer, but just to stimulate an honest discussion.

This is this week’s discussion forum question. Please discuss this in a civil manner, and remember that everyone is entitled to their own opinion.