Gary Rostock - Winter 2024 – Critical Writing for Film
Requirements:
Attendance 70%
Show Involvement In Groupwork
2 Essays (in class) – 1 film, 1 soundtrack

Critical Writing for Film

Overview

Critical writing for film refers to the process of analysing, evaluating, and interpreting films in a thoughtful and informed manner. It goes beyond just summarizing a film's plot or describing its technical aspects; instead, it seeks to provide insight into a film's deeper meaning, cultural significance, and artistic merit. Critical writing can be found in various forms, such as reviews, essays, or scholarly articles, and it often draws on film theory, history, and broader societal contexts to support its arguments.

Here are key elements of critical writing for film:

1. Analysis of Themes and Messages: This involves exploring the central ideas or messages the film conveys, such as its commentary on social, political, or cultural issues. A critical writer may ask questions like: *What does the film say about gender, race, or class? How does it reflect or challenge societal norms?

2. Examination of Cinematic Techniques: A critical film essay might discuss the director's use of cinematography, editing, sound, lighting, or mise-en-scène. The writer would analyse how these elements contribute to the film's overall impact and meaning.

3. Interpretation of Characters and Storytelling: This involves discussing how characters are developed, how the narrative unfolds, and whether the storytelling techniques are effective. Critical writers often explore character motivations, arcs, and how they relate to the film's themes.

4. Contextualization: Critical film writing often places a film within a broader cultural, historical, or artistic context. This could involve discussing the time period in which the film was made, the director's body of work, or its place within a specific genre or movement.

5. Evaluation of Success or Failure: In addition to analysis and interpretation, critical writing often includes an evaluative component, where the writer assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the film. They might critique whether the film effectively communicates its message, how well it holds up technically, or how it compares to other films in its genre or by the same director.

Overall, critical writing for film is not just about liking or disliking a movie but engaging with it on a deeper intellectual level, explaining why it succeeds or fails as a work of art, entertainment, or cultural commentary.