

English 345: Cine/Technology

Article Critique Assignment

Length and Due Dates

Length: 4 to 5 pages, formatted as described in the "Article Critique" section of the syllabus

Proposal Due: Tuesday, February 20, **by 2:30 p.m.**; submit via electronic posting board

Final Draft Due: Friday, March 2, **by 5:00 p.m.**; submit via E-Submit

Assignment

For this assignment, you will compose a 4- to 5-page critique of one of the following packet or electronic reserve articles:

- Kerman, Judith. "Technology and Politics in the *Blade Runner* Dystopia."
- Maland, Charles. "*Dr. Strangelove* (1964): Nightmare Comedy."
- Postman, Neil. "The Ideology of Machines: Computer Technology."
- Stiller, Andrew. "The Music in *Blade Runner*."
- Telotte, J.P. "*The Terminator*, *Terminator 2*, and The Exposed Body."

The critique should communicate your understanding of the article's main points and offer an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, the critique should comment on the article's usefulness to students analyzing *Blade Runner*, *Brazil*, *Dr. Strangelove*, or *The Terminator*.

Guidelines

1. Article critiques typically adhere to the following structure:
 - Introduction: provides an overview of the article's purpose and main argument and offers the writer's thesis regarding the article's strengths and weaknesses.
 - Summary paragraph: briefly reviews the article's key points.
 - Assessment paragraphs: analyze the article's strengths and weaknesses. In discussing strengths, the writer can point to the article's inclusion of pertinent historical context, persuasive interpretations, thorough explication of evidence, or conclusions that apply to scenes not covered in the article. In critiquing weaknesses, the writer can examine the article's ineffective use of evidence, inaccuracy, unconvincing readings of the film, failure to explore ideas within the scope of the main argument or disregard of scenes that contradict or would better support the article's thesis.
 - Conclusion: presents commentary on the article's overall usefulness. The writer should address the extent to which the article helps students to understand the film.
2. Effective critiques will cover the article's significant points. A critique that ignores the article's main argument or concentrates on ideas mentioned parenthetically suggests a lack of comprehension on the writer's part.
3. Avoid composing a critique that solely addresses the article's strengths. Such critiques tend to read as summaries rather than assessments.
4. Although you need not present a balanced opinion of the article, you must be fair. A single article cannot address every aspect of a film or touch on every scene that might support its thesis. Consequently, a valid assessment of weaknesses will not raise points that fall outside the article's scope or purpose. This caution is particularly important if you write about Postman's chapter on computer technology; it does not specifically discuss *Brazil*, even if it provides a framework for understanding the film's story world.
5. Remember to justify your analysis of strengths and weaknesses with evidence from the article and film. In assessing strengths, you may paraphrase compelling points or explain how the author's ideas illuminate a particular aspect of the film. In evaluating weaknesses, you may offer contrary interpretations of the film, point to illogical passages or inaccuracies in the article, explain how the author's evidence does not sufficiently support his or her point, or describe scenes, shots, or sounds the author should have considered.

6. Although you must recite the article's key ideas in your critique, quote sparingly—for example, only when the author's language reveals distinctive phrasing or a lack of clarity. Summarizing or paraphrasing points allows you to demonstrate your understanding of the author's arguments. If you quote, please use MLA format. Since the class has read the article, you need not provide a works cited list.
7. When writing about the article or film to which it applies, use the present tense (for example, "Maland contends that *Dr. Strangelove* critiques the Ideology of Liberal Consensus" or "When analyzing *Blade Runner's* various technologies, Kerman does not extensively consider the Voight-Kampff testing equipment. However the Voight-Kampff test allows Deckard the privileged vision and power Kerman associates with the Esper machine.")
8. If you're having difficulty devising an approach to the article critique, or if you want to discuss ideas-in-progress, email me or come to my office hours in Padelford A-305.

Proposal

The proposal assignment allows you to draft a summary of the article's main points, develop a tentative thesis regarding its strengths and weaknesses, identify potential evidence for your assessment and consider the article's overall usefulness to student film scholars. In completing the proposal, you will produce a roadmap to guide your writing process. Because other writers will respond to your ideas-in-progress, you can revise your analysis before submitting the final draft of the article critique for a grade.

The proposal should be one to two pages and include the following components:

- A tentative title for the article critique.
- The author and title of the article you will critique (please note that the back front cover of the course packet contains complete bibliographic information for all articles).
- A short summary of the article's thesis and main points.
- A tentative thesis: What argument do you plan to make about the article's strengths and/or weaknesses?
- An overview of your assessment and support. This discussion should include:
 - Statement of strengths and/or weaknesses: What aspects of the article will you analyze in your critique? List each point you plan to make about the article.
 - Evidence: What evidence will you use to support each of your assessment of the article's strengths and/or weaknesses? Describe the passages you will cite. If you plan to challenge the author's reading of particular film scenes or point to evidence he or she should have considered, describe the images, cinematic techniques, narrative events, or sounds you will discuss.
- A brief indication of your opinion of the article's usefulness. Which aspects of the film does the article help writers to better understand? Which aspects does it fail to elucidate?
- A list of any questions you have regarding your ideas-in-progress or the critique assignment.

Grading

Grades for the article critique will be calculated on an 80-point scale. Because receiving and responding to feedback constitutes an essential component of the article critique, failure to submit a proposal will result in a 20-point deduction from the final grade. Late final drafts will receive a 10-point deduction per day late, including weekends and holidays. I will make exceptions to the lateness policy only in cases of documented illness or family emergency.