

**“Turning Fiction into Film”
Portfolio I
Due Monday, February 27, 2012**



“Tell me everything you saw, and what you think it means.”

The following two-part assignment has been designed with both your future film viewing and writing assignments in mind. It should help you to begin the task of interweaving the theme of embodiment and the fiction film as delineated through our course template, with the information and research methods found throughout your handbook, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*. In completing this assignment, you will have a head start in developing the skills required to move beyond a basic awareness of these themes and methods, giving you a far greater appreciation of the sophisticated activities and ideas required in developing an authoritative approach to film adaptation.

Portfolio Objectives

As you move through the experience of taking proper notes, interpret this material relative to your understanding of the course texts, and observe yourself moving through this entire process, you will begin to develop an understanding of the following:

- The importance of *constantly developing* your powers of observation and description.
- The importance of *applying these powers* of observation and description to your own engagement of film through various writing methods and techniques.
- The importance of *using proper narrative approaches, methods, and investigative techniques* in unifying the distinct, yet related types of observation and description as developed throughout this work.

Evaluation Criteria

Every aspect of this assignment should display hard work and creativity, and the presence and quality of these will be assessed according to the following grading rubric:

- Quality of writing - 70%
- Following of directions - 15%
- Personal initiative - 15%

IMPORTANT: I ask that you include all of the work that you do for this assignment in your portfolio.

PART I: "Observation & Embodiment"

Step 1: Ten to twenty minutes

Please watch the first shot of Chantal Akerman's film, *News From Home*, carefully observing *all that is presented to the viewer*. Open your senses, and use every one of them. When you have finished viewing this material, please divide a piece of paper into two columns, and on the left side of the page, list five to ten things which stood out to you while watching this opening shot of the film. Next, to the right of this list, please spend about five minutes commenting upon your initial observations, and include some remarks regarding your experience of what you have viewed of the film thus far (Akerman's film can be found on the wiki just below this assignment).

Do not censor yourself.

Step 2. Ten to twenty minutes

Once again, please watch the opening shot of this film, *this time making a mental note of anything that you may have missed during your initial viewing*. When you have finished, list your new observations in the left hand column of a fresh piece of paper. In the right hand column, please devote five more minutes commenting upon what you saw the second time through, and include some remarks regarding your reaction to what you may have missed the first time. Does this experience surprise or intrigue you? Do you find it disturbing or perhaps a bit unsettling? If so, why? *Once again, do not censor yourself.*

Intermission

At this point of the assignment, I would like you to "tell the story" of your experience with this film thus far. In a well written narrative, please discuss each aspect of what you have observed and written about yourself and about the film. *This typed narrative should be one to two pages in length.*

Step 3. Twenty to thirty minutes

With all that you have accomplished in this assignment thus far mind, please watch the first ten minutes of Chantal Akerman's *News from Home*, once again observing *all that is presented*. As you do so, I ask that you do two things. First, please relax, and surrender to the unusual nature of this work. Second, pay attention to any and all associations that come to mind as you personally "take in" the film. When you have finished, once again divide a fresh piece of paper into two columns, and on the left hand side, list the associations that came to mind, and whether or not these associations were sparked by images, words, or both. Next, to the right of this list, please spend about five minutes commenting upon how the weaving of images and words in the text of the film might have brought the "text" of personal associations that you have listed to mind, and whether or not these personal associations could form any kind of narrative structure of their own at this point. In other words, could you imagine yourself putting together a highly personal representation of these associations as Akerman has done in her film?

Step 4: Ten minutes

Take some time to look over all that you have written thus far, and make sure that your writing is clear enough for you to understand at a later time. This is essential, as you should be able to make sense of all that you have written later in the semester, and there should be enough substance to this work to summarize every aspect of your experience in a narrative of some kind.

PART II: "Story & Discernment"



Step I:

In this part of the assignment, you will begin to record and shape your first impressions of *The Spirit of the Beehive*, in light of our reading and class discussions thus far. To assist yourself in doing so, please apply some of the terminology and ideas gleaned from the text *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* to your work. You will need to put a lot of thought into every element of this assignment, but you should do so with both your personal response to the film, and the ideas that we have been addressing in class in mind. Try to draw from your own experiences, passions, and interests as you move through each stage of your work. The film has been placed on the wiki, which should help you a great deal.

Instructions:

- 1). Please familiarize yourself with the concepts and terminology of chapter three in *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, by Tim Corrigan.
- 2). With some of the terms from this chapter in mind, find two or three aspects or elements of *The Spirit of the Beehive* that you would like to prepare for further inquiry. Be sure to focus on those areas of interest that will allow you to both explore and apply the concepts and terminology drawn from the text most successfully.
- 3). When you have completed steps 1 and 2, write a screening report, two to three pages in length, carefully addressing your chosen concerns and synthesizing the ideas from the book and the film accordingly. Screening reports are explained on page 8 of the Corrigan text. For this report, you should consider me your primary audience, and make your rhetorical choices accordingly.

Important: In order to clarify your thinking, please use the discussion threads that I will start for this purpose.

Reminder: *This typed screening report should be two to three pages in length.*



Step 2.

In this part of the assignment, you will begin to record and shape your first impressions of *The Night of the Hunter*, in light of our reading and class discussions thus far. As you set out to complete this task, you have the advantage of having read Grubb's novel, and the benefit of covering each of these works in class discussions. As before, you will need to put a lot of thought into every element of this assignment, and again, you should do so with both your personal response to the film and the ideas that we have addressed in class in mind. You will also need to once more include some of the terminology and ideas gleaned from the text [A Short Guide to Writing about Film](#) in your work. I suggest that you only begin this assignment after you have finished your screening report of *The Spirit of the Beehive*.

Instructions:

- 1). Find a scene or two from Grubb's novel that you find particularly cinematic, and make a note of why you believe each to be so.
- 2). With this complete, find the corresponding scene(s) in the film, and compare the way that these have been "translated" through Laughtons' adaptation of Grubb's writing. As you will once again be drawing upon the concepts and terminology of chapter three in the Corrigan book, I recommend that you focus on those areas of interest that will allow you to successfully build upon what you discovered in and through your work on *The Spirit of the Beehive*. Again, the film has been placed on the wiki, so please make good use of this resource.
- 3). When you have completed steps 1 and 2, write a movie review, two to three pages in length, carefully including your chosen scenes, and where appropriate, synthesizing the ideas from the Corrigan book, the novel, and the film accordingly. Movie reviews are explained on page 9 of the Corrigan text. For this report, you should think of your classmates as your primary audience, and make your rhetorical choices accordingly. Please imagine that none of them have viewed the film yet, but assume that they are familiar with the novel. If it helps, you may also assume that they have seen *The Spirit of the Beehive*.

Important: In order to clarify your thinking, please use the discussion threads that I will start for this purpose.

Reminder: *This typed movie review should be two to three pages in length.*

Portfolio Directions:

All of your work for this portfolio should be included within a thin, two-pocket folder of some kind.

Portfolio Checklist:

Your complete portfolio should include the following:

- Your double-entry notes from Part I
- A one to two page narrative of your experience with the Akerman film, as described in Part I - Intermission
- Your notes from Part II
- A two to three page screening report, as described in Part II - Step 1
- A two to three page movie review of *Night of the Hunter*, as described in Part II - Step 2

At this point of the semester, you have already read the first three chapters in *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*. However, while working on this assignment, you might want to review the following sections of the text.

- “Your Audience and the Aims of Criticism” - pages 7-17
- “Silent Dialogue: Talking Back to the Movies” - pages 23-25
- “Taking Notes” - Pages 26-35
- Chapter 3 - “Film Terms and Topics for Film Analysis and Writing”



Use your imaginations, and have fun,

Tom