

Final Paper
Due: Monday, May 14th



As you recall from your first portfolio assignment, screening reports are often done as a preliminary activity in preparation for further viewing, writing, discussion, or examinations. Having already completed reports of this kind this semester, you are certainly aware of why this sort of preparation can be so helpful in this regard. ***Drawing insights through this type of preliminary activity should be quite helpful to you as you work on this final essay.***

There are several avenues open for further writing about films beyond the screening report, and one is of course already quite familiar to you: the movie review. As you know, movie reviews are generally aimed at the broadest audience possible, and usually do not assume that this audience will be highly knowledgeable about film. Those who write movie reviews are primarily interested in letting audiences know if the film under review is worth seeing or not, and why this is so. ***This is not what you will be doing for your final paper.***

Two additional methods of writing about film that are less common are the critical essay, and the theoretical essay. Usually these approaches overlap to a certain extent. In the critical essay proper, writers tend to assume that their reader has seen the work being discussed, and that their audience possess a more sophisticated understanding of film than the typical film goer. What these writers primarily focus on are elements and subtleties of a particular film that have been overlooked or perhaps forgotten. Themes, elements of plot, and other aspects of the work might be addressed to remind the reader of their importance, but the main goal of the critical essay is usually far more specific.

As you have seen this semester, theoretical approaches to film make use of much of what can be found within the critical essay, yet they do so with the additional aim of saying something about the nature of the medium of film itself, both more broadly and more specifically than what is typical of other approaches. The prefix “meta” is often associated with this approach, as meta-cinematic and meta-filmic approaches tend to approach film in a self-reflective way, and as such, films which are explicitly thematic in this manner are often seen as ideal examples for analysis in this regard. However, if we return to the original sense of “meta” as not only referring to elements beyond or outside of a chosen medium, but as also referring to these same elements as found moving in and through a particular work at hand, it becomes clear that almost every film can be approached in this manner.

Final Paper
Due: Monday, May 14th



This semester, we have primarily focused on the nature of fiction and its adaptation on a meta-cinematic level, and we have done so by addressing the following question: “**What is the relationship between the cinema, perception, and the human body.**” Through seven stages, or “scenes,” we have addressed this question through seven different, albeit related “lenses,” and we have also addressed each theory with the help of appropriate films. These films have allowed us to theorize both **about** (meta) fiction in cinema, and **through** (meta) works of cinematic fiction.

With these things in mind, I would like you to write a four to six page paper, adhering to the goals of the critical essay, and guided by the theoretical perspective(s) we have worked with over the semester as a whole. In this essay, I ask that you both devise and develop an interesting take on the relationship between the first and final films that we have encountered this semester: *Rear Window*, and *Three Colors: Red*. In doing so, please keep in mind the following six things:

1. The importance of the seven thematic “lenses” we have addressed this semester.
2. *Rear Window* as a paradigm of the classical film viewing experience, especially as this paradigm is associated with classical cinema as a whole. Also, how Hitchcock makes use of this paradigm while also calling its major tenets into question.
3. The unusual approaches to time and space associated with much of modern cinema, and particularly the “retroactive reasoning” displayed by Kieslowski’s film *Three Colors: Red* as an evidence of this paradigm shift in the history of the fiction film.
4. You should take another look at the discussion of the theoretical essay on pages 11-12 in *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* to refresh your memory on the function of this sort of writing, and think about how it has informed my approach to our work this semester. When finished, you should reread the section on the critical essay on pages 12-14 for guidance as you decide upon a topic and approach for your final essay.
5. You should review some of the topics that we have addressed from the book (shot, scene, sequence, etcetera) as a means of both finding something intriguing to focus upon in your essay, and to help you to communicate your central ideas. Your notes should help as well.
6. Please be specific, both in your choice of topic, and in your language throughout your essay.