

Overall Project Roadmap for Both Assignments #4 and #5

Journey Leg 1: (Oct 22 – Nov 5)

- #4 Read *On the Road* and write a first paper draft based on it (3-5 pages).
- #5 Explore film possibilities, decide on your film, and make a plan to obtain & view it (multiple times).

Rest stop 1: (Nov 5) Writing workshop day.

- #4 Bring your draft (#4 D.1) as a printed paper for peer review & discussion with me. **(5 points)**
- #5 Turn in your film choice.

Journey Leg 2: (Nov 5 – 24)

- #4 Read *Hell's Angels* (you'll have 1 or 2 chapters out of the whole book) and *Travels With Charley*. Revise your draft, and/or switch books to one of the others and write a new draft.
- #5 If you haven't seen your film yet, this is time to do it. Write a background / overview of the film based on your initial screening(s).

Rest stop 2: (Nov 24) Writing workshop day.

- #4 Bring your second draft (#4 D.2 – now full-length) as a printed paper for peer review & discussion with me.
- #5 Bring your film background / overview draft #5 D.1, length 2-3 pages. **(5 points)**

Journey Leg 3: (Nov 24 – Dec 3)

Continue working on both assignments, at your own pace

Rest stop 3: (Dec 3) Writing workshop & revision day.

- #4 D.3 Bring your current draft as a printed paper for peer review and polishing.
- #5 D.2 should be the full-length paper draft, with scene analysis completed.

Journey Leg 4: Home stretch (Dec 3 – 10)

Finish revising both papers

Finish line: (Dec 10)

Submit both papers as **separate completed packets**. Each packet should contain:

- Cover letter explaining your revisions (5 points)
- All your drafts and any peer review feedback forms or other papers.
- Finished, clean draft of the final paper (15 points)

Grading: (25 points for each)

D.1 draft on time & appropriate length = 5 points

Cover letter eloquently & thoughtfully explaining your revisions, due with final packet = 5 points

Final version of paper, with all prior drafts included = 15 points

History Lab #4: How to Read a Memoir (Revised)**D.1 due 11/5 (3-5 pages)****D.2 due 11/24 (5-6 pages)****D.3 due 12/3****Final version & revision packet w/ cover letter due 12/10**

Ok – radical re-write of this assignment. It was originally oriented only around *On the Road*, but I'm expanding the possibilities because all three books that we're reading in October and November share some key characteristics due to being primary sources of their era (the 1940s/1950s in the case of *On the Road*, the 1950s/1960s for *Hell's Angels*, and the early 1960s for *Travels with Charley*). In other words, each is a consciously crafted literary memoir of the author's experience traveling across the country on wheels, which memorializes roadside America at a particular point in time. In the case of all three books/authors, the usual distinction between fiction and nonfiction blurs so much that it becomes nearly meaningless, anyway.

History Lab #4: Craft a 5-6 page paper that considers a literary, historical, aesthetic, or cultural aspect of one of these three books (or that compares a chosen aspect across more than one book). This paper will go through several revisions. Everyone starts with the Kerouac, but you don't all have to end with it.

You can still use the resources I provided for the original Kerouac paper, if you want, or you can leave those in the dust and take it in a new direction.

Note: we are no longer doing the podcast / Poster Day assignment!

Please see revised syllabus, it replaces the original one.

History Lab #5: How to Read a Film

Select and analyze ONE scene from a road-trip-related film. As with History Lab #4, this paper will go through several writing stages.

D.1 due 11/24 (background/overview/intro)

D.2 due 12/3 (w/ full scene analysis = 5-6p)

Final version & revision packet w/ cover letter due 12/10

Study a feature film about American roads, roadside culture, or travel. It can be one of the several we've seen clips from in class, or it could be from the list below, or it could be one of your own choosing (w/ approval from Dr. Hangen). You will want to have access to the film yourself, through interlibrary loan or video rental or digital streaming service, since Worcester State College's video/DVD collection will not be adequate. I do NOT recommend viewing a film that has been cut into chunks and posted free in pieces on YouTube – the quality of the digital image is too poor (though if you find one posted in HD & full-length that's OK). You will need to PLAN AHEAD and allow time to view your film MORE THAN ONCE. If you want to coordinate your viewing, you can share the same film with others in the class, but you'll each need to write your own independent paper **using different scenes**.

In your paper,

SUMMARIZE the film: historical context, creators, plot, theme, background, overview.

SELECT one scene, and **ANALYZE** its shot sequences

Annotating a scene involves labeling each shot in a sequence. For example, a scene may begin with an establishing shot, which segues into a dolly shot. The dolly shot comes to rest in a medium shot of the main character, who is looking off frame. Next comes a reverse angle subjective close-up shot, which dissolves into a montage. Labeling each of these shots - preferably using a system of abbreviations for efficiency's sake - enables you to keep track of the complex sequence of shots. When you review your annotations, you might see a pattern of camera movement and editing decisions (or, on the other hand, some unusual variation in the pattern) that better helps you to understand 1) how the director crafted his film, and 2) why the scene has a certain effect on the audience.

Once you've taken notes in this way, **DISCUSS** the scene and its impact or its importance within the film, in your paper.

CONNECT this scene to a theme, idea, issue or event we've discussed in this course

Total length = 5-6 pages

Some Suggestions:

The Wild One
Rebel Without a Cause
Two-Lane Blacktop
Easy Rider
Fandango
Thelma and Louise

It Happened One Night
Paper Moon
Nebraska
Little Miss Sunshine
Diner
Smokey and the Bandit

Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert
Lost in America
On the Road
Take Me Home

Instructions, Guidelines, and Resources:

Most mainstream movies are designed to create an atmosphere of passivity in audiences--allowing them to smoothly absorb the story and become immersed in the action. There is nothing wrong with this, but the purpose of scholarly film analysis is to look more closely at a movie than most audiences do. Teaching film analysis starts simply by encouraging observation: What is being shown on the screen? Why are we being shown it? How is it conveying that information? The building blocks of cinematic structure are essential to understanding how movies convey information and meaning. Elements such as camera placement, shot/reverse shot structure, scene composition and editing, all started from somewhere and developed semantic rules as they went along.¹ You might have dismissed such rules as "obvious," or taken them for granted, but the purpose of analyzing film is to highlight and make explicit a film's grammar, language, construction of meaning and historical context.

Questions to Consider:

What is this film's genre?

What is the significance of its title?

Whose artistic vision does this film represent? (Writer? Director? Producer? Actor(s)? Music composer?)

Content: What is the plot? Who are the characters? What is the setting?

Context: When was it made? By whom? With what technology?

What is the lapse in time between the period in which the film was made, and the period that it depicts?

What political or cultural perspective does it present?

What other films in its time period does it relate or refer to?

Deconstructing the Film's Semiotics (Semiotics = Symbolic Systems of Meaning)

Framing:

What is in a shot? What is excluded? What is centered?

Depth of Focus:

What is in focus and what is blurry? Focus creates foreground and background; it can create relationships between objects and/or characters within the shot.

Size of Shot:

Is the shot wide or long, communicating vast space or depth? Is a figure miniaturized or featured in a close-up?

¹ "Teaching Film Analysis," http://www.ehow.com/how-does_4869097_teaching-film-analysis.html

Camera Angle:

Linked with the shot's size, camera angle creates focal points. Is the camera looking upward, downward, or level? The figure in the shot is manipulated by the camera angle (aggrandized or diminished). Camera angle indicates point of view, much like the narrator. Is the camera acting as the eyes of the character (first person narration) or as the eyes of the audience (omniscient narrator)?

Lighting:

What is lit and what is not? Is the lighting harsh or soft? Are there shadows? What colors are highlighted? Light/shadow and color interact to produce psychological and symbolic effects.

Camera Movement:

How does the camera shift to change frame, depth of focus, the size of the shot, or the camera angle? Movement affects point of view and viewer equilibrium. It can be lyrical or turbulent, slow or fast-paced, disorienting or "grounded," creating psychological moods in the viewer.

Music:

Music adds important, yet often devalued, emotional components to film. Frequently certain characters will have musical themes and aural associations that can be made quite apart from the visual.

What other sound effects are used?

Is there a voiceover?

Scene Design:

Where is the scene?

How is the scene constructed?

Editing:

What is the rhythm of the editing in a particular scene—long and lyrical, or short and clipped?

Does the rhythm speed up or slow down?

How are the scenes connected—by cutting, by dissolving, by fading, by blackout? Often one thing will dissolve into another, creating a symbolic link.

Resources:

Holly Blackford, "How to Read a Film," http://wire.rutgers.edu/p_reading_film.html

"Cinema Semiotics," <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/rbj0001.html>

James Monaco, "How To Read a Film" (digital book) <http://www.readfilm.com/HTRbook.html>

Dartmouth Writing Program, "Writing About Film"

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/student/humanities/film.shtml>

Yale University, "Mise-en-scene" <http://classes.yale.edu/film-analysis/htmlfiles/Mise-en-scene.htm>