Artifact 1: Analysis of a Failure

Due dates
Rough draft: upload to T-Square / email to peers by 8am, Monday, September 14
Peer review: in class, Monday, September 14
Final draft: upload to T-Square by 8am, Friday, September 18

Details
For this assignment, you will write a 1200-1800 word critical analysis of a film of your choice. The essay will adhere to MLA style guidelines (which can be found here: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/), and will reference and properly cite at least three reviews of the film found in print or digital media. Additionally, you will integrate at least four images from the film to support (a) your argument and (b) the visual design of your essay. Ideally, these images will be screenshots of the film—if this is impossible, only high resolution (i.e., larger than 1024 x 768 pixels) images will be accepted. Like the written sources, these images should be properly cited in captions as well as the essay’s bibliography. Ultimately, the essay should be saved as a Microsoft Word document and uploaded to T-Square by the date and time listed above.

A nonexhaustive list of the corresponding modes of the process are as follows:

W: analysis of the film’s script, critical reception; prose writing of the essay
O: analysis of the film’s dialogue and acting
V: analysis of the film’s mise-en-scène, cinematography, visual design, etc.; visual design of the essay; selection of visual evidence
E: viewing of film (likely); research; composition and design of the essay; submission of the artifact
N: analysis of the acting

Prompt
In our reading thus far, we have encountered a wide range of criteria for what constitutes failure.
For Malcolm Gladwell and Zadie Smith, failure is inevitable—what matters is the amount of grace with which it is handled. For Scott Sandage, failure can be a shortcoming of religious or moral integrity, economic success, or individual character. Janet Malcolm and Kurt Vonnegut show that failure is a productive, if frustrating, part of the creative process; Tom Bissell argues that failure to attain a specific vision can result in unexpected success in other arenas.

Drawing on these ideas of failure, as well as our discussions of film conventions in the context of The Room, Jodorowsky's Dune, and Adaptation, your task is to identify another film that you consider to be a failure. Of course, it is your responsibility to develop the specific characteristics of failure by which you judge this film: is it a financial failure, an artistic failure, a technical failure, a dramatic failure, a moral failure, or some combination of these? Your establishment of this criteria will be the starting point from which you perform a critical analysis of the film, using the conventions and elements of the film medium—narrative, direction, acting, cinematography, editing, etc.—as evidence to support your claims. Ultimately, your essay should clearly elaborate how, why, and upon what grounds your chosen film is a failure.

The presentation of your essay, as stated above, will be both written and visual. It should contain the constitutive elements of a research argument, including a thesis statement, topic sentences, direct engagement with quoted sources and visual evidence, a fully developed and well supported argument, and a strong conclusion. See Chapter 15 of WOVENText for further insight regarding the rhetorical situation and conventions of persuasive genres—the sections on editorials & opinion pieces, researched arguments, and film reviews in particular.

Process
You will first turn in a rough draft of the essay, which a group of your peers (group assignments forthcoming) will evaluate in class using the same evaluation rubric that I use, identifying the areas for improvement on which you should focus during the revision process. As such, in order to get the most out of the peer review process, you should treat your rough draft of the essay as if it is the final draft. That is, don’t wait until the night before it’s due to start working on it—rather, by the time the rough draft is due, it should have already undergone intensive labor and revision.

While I will not provide individual feedback on rough drafts, I will be happy to address questions and concerns regarding specific parts of the draft: thesis statements, choice of evidence, conclusions, visual design, adherence to MLA conventions, etc. To receive such feedback, it will be your responsibility to come to my office hours with a copy of your essay.

The rough draft will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Students who fail to submit a rough draft will receive a zero for the entire assignment.

Upon revising your essays and submitting your final drafts, I will grade them according to the grade scale in the WCP common policies and provide feedback utilizing the evaluation rubric, as well as written comments.

We will undoubtedly spend much time over the next couple of weeks discussing this assignment in further detail, but as always, don’t hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or concerns about any step of the process. Don’t forget that the Communication Center is an invaluable and very available resource at any and all stages in the process: brainstorming, research, analysis, drafting, visual design, and revision.

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