

## English 1302

### Film Exam Vocabulary and Essay Assignment

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#### Vocabulary: Elements of Film

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You will need to be familiar with the following terms for the vocabulary exam and your essay, and we will read about these more in-depth in the [Yale Film Guide](#) as we go through the unit on film.

**AUTEUR** (Do not use this as an element to focus on in your essay. You need to know this for context in our readings.)  
French for "author." Used by critics writing for *Cahiers du cinema* and other journals to indicate the figure, usually the director, who stamped a film with his/her own personality.

**DIEGESIS** (Do not use this as an element to focus on in your essay. You need to know this for context in our readings.)  
This includes objects, events, spaces and the characters that inhabit them, including things, actions, and attitudes not explicitly presented in the film but inferred by the audience. That audience constructs a world from the material presented in a narrative film.

#### FOCUS

The degree to which light rays coming from any particular part of an object pass through the lens and re-converge at the same point on a frame of the film negative, creating sharp outlines and distinct textures that match the original object

**GENRES** (Do not use this as an element to focus on in your essay. You need to know this for context in our readings.)  
Types of film recognized by audiences and/or producers, sometimes retrospectively. These types are distinguished by narrative or stylistic conventions, or merely by their discursive organization in influential criticism.

#### MISE-EN-SCENE

All the things that are "put in the scene": the setting, the decor, the lighting, the costumes, the performance etc. Narrative films often manipulate the elements of this, such as decor, costume, and acting to intensify or undermine the ostensible significance of a particular scene.

#### SHOT

A single stream of images, uninterrupted by editing.

#### HIGH-KEY LIGHTING

A lighting scheme in which the fill light is raised to almost the same level as the key light. This produces images that are usually very bright and that feature few shadows on the principal subjects. This bright image is characteristic of entertainment genres such as musicals and comedies

#### LOW-KEY LIGHTING

A lighting scheme that employs very little fill light, creating strong contrasts between the brightest and darkest parts of an image and often creating strong shadows that obscure parts of the principal subjects. This lighting scheme is often associated with "hard-boiled" or suspense genres such as *film noir*.

## DEEP SPACE

A film utilizes this when significant elements of an image are positioned both near to and distant from the camera. These objects do not have to be in focus. This creates a sense of depth and space in the scene.

## FRONTALITY

This refers to the staging of elements, often human figures, so that they face the camera square-on.

## CONTRAST

The ratio of dark to light in an image.

## FOLLOWING SHOT

A shot with framing that shifts to keep a moving figure onscreen. This combines a camera movement, like panning, tracking, tilting or craning, with the specific function of directing our attention to a character or object as he/she/it moves inside the frame.

## POINT-OF-VIEW SHOT

A shot taken with the camera placed approximately where the character's eyes would be, showing what the character would see; usually cut in before or after a shot of the character looking.

## EXTREME LONG SHOT

A framing in which the scale of the object shown is very small; a building, landscape, or crowd of people will fill the screen. Usually the first or last shots of a sequence, that can also function as establishing shots.

## LONG SHOT

A framing in which the scale of the object shown is small; a standing human figure would appear nearly the height of the screen. It makes for a relatively stable shot that can accommodate movement without reframing. It is therefore commonly used in genres where a full body action is to be seen in its entirety, for instance Hollywood Musicals or 1970s Martial Arts films.

## MEDIUM LONG SHOT

Framing such that an object four or five feet high would fill most of the screen vertically. Also called *plain américain*, given its recurrence in the Western genre, where it was important to keep a cowboy's weapon in the image.

## MEDIUM CLOSE-UP

A framing in which the scale of the object shown is fairly large; a human figure seen from the chest up would fill most of the screen.

## CLOSE-UP

A framing in which the scale of the object shown is relatively large. In a close-up a person's head, or some other similarly sized object, would fill the frame.

## EXTREME CLOSE-UP

A framing in which the scale of the object shown is very large; most commonly, a small object or a part of the body usually shot with a zoom lens.

## PAN

A camera movement with the camera body turning to the right or left. On the screen, it produces a mobile framing which scans the space horizontally. This directly and immediately connects two places or characters, thus making us aware of their proximity.

## TILT

A camera movement with the camera body swiveling upward or downward on a stationary support. It produces a mobile framing that scans the space vertically.

## TRACKING SHOT

A mobile framing that travels through space forward, backward, or laterally. This shot physically accompanies the entire range of movement. It therefore creates a closer affinity with the character or object moving, since the spectator is not just watching him/her moving, but moving *with* him/her.

**RHYTHM** (Do not use this as an element to focus on in your essay. You need to know this for context in our readings.)

The perceived rate and regularity of sounds, series of shots, and movements within the shots. It includes beat (or pulse), accent (or stress), and tempo (or pace). It is one of the essential features of a film, for it decisively contributes to its mood and overall impression on the spectator. It is also one of the most complex to analyze, since it is achieved through the combination of mise-en-scene, cinematography, sound and editing. Indeed, it can be understood as the final balance all of the elements of a film.

**MONTAGE** (Do not use this as an element to focus on in your essay. You need to know this for context in our readings.)

An approach to editing developed by the Soviet filmmakers of the 1920s such as Pudovkin, Vertov and Eisenstein; it emphasizes dynamic, often discontinuous, relationships between shots and the juxtaposition of images to create ideas not present in either shot by itself. Shot transitions that omit parts of an event, causing ellipses in plot and story duration.

## SOUND BRIDGE

This can lead in or out of a scene. They can occur at the beginning of one scene when the sound from the previous scene carries over briefly before the sound from the new scene begins.

Alternatively, they can occur at the end of a scene, when the sound from the next scene is heard before the image appears on the screen.

## DIEGETIC SOUND

Any voice, musical passage, or sound effect presented as originating from a source within the film's world.

## NON-DIEGETIC SOUND

Any voice, musical passage, or sound effect presented as originating outside the film (as most background music).

## VOICE OVER

When a voice, often that of a character in the film, is heard while we see an image of a space and time in which that character is not actually speaking. This is often used to give a sense of a character's subjectivity or to narrate an event told in flashback.

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## Essay Topic

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Write about the film I identify for this essay on the schedule and/or in class. I expect you to use the terminology you've studied as you write. Refer to the essay grading criteria on the next page for guidelines on structure and form.

**Face-to-Face Classes will write the essay in class.** Bring the planning/homework sheet I gave you to class completed. You must turn in all papers you use with your essay. I will provide paper for you to write on.

**Online classes will not write the essay in class.** Refer to your schedule for the time line on this.

### Guidelines and Limitations:

- You must write about the film identified for this essay either in class or on your schedule.
- NO personal pronouns (I/me/my/you) except in the case of direct quotes.
- Your essay should be organized as an argument essay. Make sure you use the Argument Essay structure discussed in [Writing down the Basics](#).
- While you should NOT include the question in your essay, your thesis should make it clear which question you are answering.
- Do not retell the film.
- Length: You should have a clear introduction ending with your thesis, supporting body paragraphs (at least 2), and a conclusion that goes beyond just summarizing what you said in your essay. Each of your paragraphs should be well developed.
- Include a Work Cited page. Refer to the second example about citing Films or Movies on [this page](#).
- Review the Essay Grading Criteria on the next page for full expectations.

### Essay Questions

Choose **one** of the questions below to base your essay on. Make sure you insert the name of the element of film from the list on pages 1-3 of this assignment in the question. Only choose 1 or 2 elements. Do not choose more than 2. I really suggest 1. Remember, your thesis for your essay is your *answer to the question* once you've filled in the blanks.

- How does \_\_[element of film]\_\_ play a role in creating the message of the film?
- How does \_\_[element of film]\_\_ create a specific effect or feeling for viewers?
- How is \_\_[element of film]\_\_ used to challenge viewers' assumptions?
- How does \_\_[element of film]\_\_ show who a specific character is? What does it show about him or her?
- What sorts of transitions and other editing techniques does the director incorporate at different times? How do they emphasize a particular theme or message?

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Fill out the homework assignment to help outline your ideas. Review the [samples](#) we've looked at as well as others to see how fellow students have done this.

## Essay Grading Criteria

This is the grade sheet I use to evaluate your essay. Make sure you are doing each of these things in your writing. Don't forget how helpful the [Writing Center](#) is.

<b>Format and Professionalism</b>	
The paper is correctly formatted (MLA style)	
The paper is developed to the required minimum length (At least 4 well-developed paragraphs)	
The paper has a work cited page (MLA style)	
<b>The Introduction</b>	
Sets the context by sharing the general topic. Ie: something specific about the human condition, character, certain situations, or an element of film.	
Provides the director's name and title of the movie, properly formatted.	
Provides a clear thesis clearly connected to one of the questions assigned. (It is clearly the answer to one of the questions above.)	
<b>The Body</b>	
Gives specific examples or quotes from the film to support your thesis	
Explains why those things support or illustrate your thesis.	
Are there specific reasons why you believe your thesis? (Topic Sentences)	
Are those reasons supported with <i>very</i> specific examples from the film?	
Is the evidence integrated into sentences, reflecting a smooth writing style?	
Is the evidence interpreted and connected to the thesis? (Do you explain how the examples support or prove your thesis?)	
The essay is adequately developed to support the thesis	
<b>The Conclusion</b>	
Discusses how the specific examples add up to illustrate something more about the general topic set up in the introduction. <b>OR</b> Discusses how the work gives us a deeper understanding of the human condition, character, or situations through the director's use of the particular element.	
<b>Style and Clarity</b>	
Conventions for literature for director's names, titles, and verb tense are followed	
Style and level of formality meet the expectations of this type of writing at this level	
Grammar and Mechanics meet expectations for writing at this level	
Works Cited page is formatted correctly, and citations for all works used are listed and correct.	