

# >>Final Analytical Dialogue Paper<< (English 263—Intro to Film)

For your final paper, you will write about one of the films we screen in class or one of the films on the supplemental film list. (If you wish to write about another film, you should get permission from me in advance).

You will choose a portion of the film (no more than ten minutes) to analyze. Rather than writing a traditional paper, you will construct your paper as a conversation in which three different kinds of critics (with different perspectives) have a conversation about your film selection.

## >>Choosing the Three Perspectives

In constructing the “characters” for your analytical dialogue, you will choose **three** of the following perspectives:

### **1) Cinematographer / Director**

How do lighting, camera angle, camera distance, camera movement, camera point of view, and/or shot composition contribute to the scene’s meaning and emotional impact? (See Barsam Ch. 3 and 4)

### **2) Feminist Theorist**

How does this scene represent women (of different classes, races, and abilities)? Is the camera’s gaze gendered? Does this scene reinforce and/or subvert sexist social hierarchies? (See PowerPoints)

### **3) Editor**

How does the arrangement of shots (transitions, rhythm, ellipsis, continuity, discontinuity) contribute to the scene’s meaning and emotional impact? (See Barsam Chapter 6)

### **4) Critical Race Theorist**

How are issues of race absent or present in this scene? Is the camera’s gaze a racialized gaze? How does this scene reinforce and/or subvert racist social hierarchies? (See PowerPoints)

### **5) Actor**

How does the acting of the characters (vocal delivery, facial expressions, body movement) contribute to the scene’s meaning and emotional impact? (See Barsam Chapter 5)

### **6) Production Designer**

How does the design (setting, décor, costume, makeup, hairstyle) contribute the scene’s meaning and emotional impact? (See Barsam Chapter 3)

### **7) Film Historian**

Does this scene implicitly or explicitly reference images, sounds, and cinematic techniques from earlier films? Have later filmmakers borrowed from or parodied elements of this scene? How does this scene reveal stylistic techniques and themes that this director often uses in his or her films?

### **8) Queer Theorist**

How does this scene represent sexual identities and practices? Does this scene have a queer subtext (homosocial relationships, characters who are implicitly marked as gay, lesbian, or bisexual)? Does this scene reinforce and/or subvert heteronormative social structures which construct heterosexuality as “normal” and other sexualities as “deviant”? (See PowerPoints)

### **9) Sound Expert**

How does the sound (dialogue, narration, music, ambient) contribute to the scene’s meaning and emotional impact? (See Barsam Chapter 7)

### **10) Disability Studies Theorist**

How does this scene represent disability? Does this scene reinforce and/or subvert ableist social structures which construct able-bodied people as “normal” and people with disabilities as “deviant”? Does this scene draw upon problematic tropes of “overcoming disability” or “pitying disability”? (See PowerPoints)

### **11) Personal Spectator**

How do you personally respond to this scene? How does your own context (social identity, film-watching experience, political point-of-view, life experience) influence how you interpret the scene? How do other people you know respond to this scene and why do you think they respond this way?

### **12) Psychoanalysis**

How could you read this scene in terms of the Oedipus complex, fetishism, repetition compulsion, and/or the mirror stage? (See PowerPoints)

*(Note: If you have an idea for another perspective not included here, I will likely permit you to pursue as long as you talk to me in advance)*

## **>>Composing the Dialogue**

You will begin the paper with a brief summary (no more than 250 words) of the portion of the film you are analyzing. You also will then introduce the three critics (representing three of the above perspectives). You can give the critics made-up names or just call them by the perspectives they represent (e.g. “the editor”, “the feminist theorist”).

The body of the paper (approximately 750 to 1,250 words) will consist of a “transcript” of an imagined conversation among the three critics in which they discuss the portion of the film you

have selected. You can have the critics argue with one another and interrupt one another. You can have them speak informally / conversationally / humorously. Nevertheless, each of the critics should make clear, well-supported points and they should use specialized film terminology correctly.

There is no need to wrap up the paper with a tidy conclusion. After all, the point of the dialogue is to show that films can be analyzed in *multiple* (sometimes contradictory) ways. You will not be required to reference any secondary sources in your paper; however, if you choose to do so, you should cite them using MLA or APA format.

## >>Evaluation

A successful paper will:

- Support its claims by citing *specific* evidence from the film
- Demonstrate a good basic understanding of the perspectives chosen.
- Employ specialized film vocabulary (from textbook / lecture)
- Follow a dialogue format in which the three critics (three perspectives) engage with one another.
- Reveal creativity (pushing beyond obvious interpretations and conventional writing)