Genre Essay: Film Analysis

Background: The purpose of this assignment is to continue your development of analytical writing; this essay will formally analyze a selected film based on a chosen film genre.

Explanation: “A French word meaning “kind,” genre is a category for classifying films in terms of common patterns of form and content. Many of us casually practice the categorizing behind genre studies when we view movies: often we identify a set of similar themes, characters, narrative structures, and camera techniques, that link movies together as westerns, musicals, film noir, road movies, melodramas, or sci-fi films [to name a few genres]. […] In analytical writing, a discussion of genre is frequently an effective way to begin examining how a film organizes its story and its audience’s expectations.” —Timothy Corrigan, A Short Guide to Writing about Film

Assignment: Write a 4-5 page essay that analyzes a film [a list of possible films to choose from is at the end of the assignment] based on a named genre.

The paper will discuss choices made by the director to portray the film’s subject in terms of a certain genre. These choices present the film’s subject in an extremely specific and calculated manner that they seek to affirm, break or re-invent the genre’s tradition.

The genre selected will require definition, which may be the writer’s own or be informed by research. You MUST include a peer-reviewed source to define your film genre. Please use ONE of the sources included on Academic Research for Film Genres page

The paper should focus on explaining why a film supports or strays from these established characteristics. In such a short paper, it is impossible to fully explain the entire film or look at each scene in the film.

Research
The annotated bibliography will require 3 pieces or research

• Research to define the film genre (from the Academic Research for Film Genres page in Canvas),
• Director’s commentary or an interview with the director,
• A journal article or chapter from a book found in the SCF Library

The essay will ask that you include 2 pieces of research (minimum)

The essay must follow APA guidelines for formatting and documentation. A reference page (the film + two pieces of research) must be included as well as the use of parenthetical citations.

Only credible sources can be used. Credible sources can include:

• original source (interview or commentary from the director) or
• academic in nature (peer-reviewed)

Note: I recommend setting up a quick appointment with me (5-10 minutes) to discuss this essay at any stage of the writing process.
How to tackle the assignment:

- Consider a film genre with which you are familiar.
- Define the film genre using library research along clear and distinct criteria.
- Select a film from the list provided. Review the film in its entirety.
- Conduct research, taking copious notes as to what material will go into the essay (this will help in preventing plagiarism).
- Complete the annotated bibliography.
- Review the film again and select scenes that will support your analysis of the film—select the best scene for each characteristic of the film genre—be selective
- Outline the essay (research proposal) using classical rhetoric. Invest time in this step of the process.
- Draft the essay. Be sure to include specific explanation of the scene using cinematic terminology and interpret each scene for meaning.
- Review your essay to sure that research does not exceed 20% of the essay & documentation is in place.

Arrangement of the Genre Essay

Introduction: Names the film + names the genre and defines it explicitly

- Proem: Defines the genre through specific characteristics that will be used to analyze the film (note each characteristic listed in the proem must be used in the analysis). Note: Only include information that will help the reader understand the analysis of the film through the genre chosen (do not list several films that work in the genre selected, name only 1-2 if any). You MUST include a peer-reviewed source to define your film genre. Please use ONE of the sources included on Academic Research for Film Genres page

- Exordium: Introduce the film and the director and how the film fits into the genre in general

Thesis statement (clear + objective + plausible)

- Establishes the director’s interpretation of the film’s subject through a genre
- Outlines the essay’s points of analysis in an objective statement that gives the reader a sense of what characteristics of the genre will be discussed with the film (limit to 4-5)

Confirmation (Body Paragraphs):

- Each supporting paragraph will isolate a scene from the film and analyze that scene against one of the genre’s characteristics/ criteria. At no point will this essay resemble a plot summary of the film.
- The supporting paragraphs will balance description of the scene selected with an explanation of how that scene fits one characteristic of the genre.
- Analyze one scene per paragraph to support the film’s genre and the director’s message
- Describe relevant information of the scene and balance each sentence of description with explanation of how these details work with criteria of the film genre
- Use research sparingly
- Remember to employ transitions between paragraphs (linking words)

Conclusion:

- Conclusions should discuss the significance of the components in a larger context (they should answer the question: so what?) How does the film fit within the genre in a larger perspective?

Reference page

- Should list the film
- Research included in the essay should be listed