

Formative feedback

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| Student name | **Pete Walker** | Student number |  |
| Course/Unit | **Introduction to Film Culture** | Assignment number | **1** |
| Type of tutorial | Written / Audio-Visual | Written |  |

**Overall Comments**

A decent start to the unit, Pete. There are a number of likeable and observant ideas in this essay, and while you needed to expand on some of its points in more detail and do *considerably* more to reference wider literature, this is promising stuff. You’ve tried to include quite a bit here, and I think that in future essays you can afford to work through fewer examples, but cover each in more carefully considered detail. But this first assignment is largely diagnostic, and there’s certainly plenty to be encouraged by.

**Assessment potential**

**Assignment 1**

*You may want to get credit for your hard work and achievements with the OCA by formally submitting your work for assessment at the end of the module. More and more people are taking the idea of lifelong learning seriously by submitting their work for assessment but it is entirely up to you. We are just as keen to support you whether you study for pleasure or to gain qualifications. Please consider whether you want to put your work forward for assessment and let me know your decision when you submit Assignment 2. I can then give you feedback on how well your work meets the assessment requirements.*

**Feedback on assignment**

**Demonstration of technical and Visual Skills, Quality of Outcome, Demonstration of Creativity**

As a first stab, this is fairly promising stuff and you’ve made a number of quite perceptive and interesting points. Your style is just a little informal at times, and some of the ideas you express can be rather more reminiscent of pop analysis than something that’s appropriate to HE study. For example, while I take your point, I’m not sure that ‘all wrapped in a package that any blockbuster Hollywood movie now or then would be grateful to have’ adds a great deal to your discussion. It’s not a *major* issue by any means, and with further reading of literature and material appropriate to HE study, this is something that should sort itself out fairly easily.

While you make a number of good points, you do have a slightly frustrating tendency to make them in all-too brief ways. With future work, I’d like to see you include few examples but go into them with more detail. As an example, you make the point that ‘Kurosawa allows… the characters to marinate so that they become rounded individuals.’ This is a fair point and a decent observation- although not worded particularly well- but you don’t really make as much of it as you might have. Obviously you’ve been constrained by space, but I think you could have afforded to pick one or two of the film’s characters and demonstrated some of the specific ways in which you think they become ‘rounded individuals’. You needn’t have used just text to do this, and could have also included a few screenshots to illustrate your points. Likewise, you suggest that there are parallels between Kurosawa’s work and the western, which is another good point, but you could have argued this case with a bit more conviction- you say that there is a western ‘feel’ to the film, which is certainly something I wouldn’t disagree with, but the point would have been rather more convincing if you’d opened it out a little more. What does the western ‘feel’ like exactly, and how does the film appropriate this? As well as doing this with your own words, you could have also referred to wider, relevant literature-, particularly that which explores the idea of ‘genre’. Similarly, with the number of references you’ve made to Kurosawa himself, it would have added a potentially really interesting level of detail if you’d brought in some wider literature focused on auteurs and authorship. What *was* his style exactly? How did it connect with- and influence- the western genre? Equally, you go on to discuss *A Fistful of Dollars* in relation to *Yojimbo*, making the (good) point that it doesn’t have the same tone and is a ‘more serious’ film than its predecessor. Again, this is worthwhile stuff, but further discussion of *how* and *why* this is the case- e.g., score? Mise en scene? Performances? Cinematography? Editing? Locations? Script? Lighting? etc etc- would have made a good point even better.

A few bits of general housekeeping:

- Film titles should be in italics, with, on the first use, the year of release and director following in parentheses

- There are a few typos here and there, and some words that appear to be missing altogether, e.g., when talking about *The Seven Samurai* you note that ‘at over ???? hours Kurosawa allows the plot points to develop slowly.’ These things happen, but if missed they do have an unfortunate tendency to connote a certain lack of attention to detail!

- Also, with you next assignment, try to more clearly map your work out with your introduction- what you’ve written here was ok, but could have more effectively signposted the work for the reader.

Overall, this is a piece of writing that shows you to be, to some degree at least, observant and engaged. But having said this, you do have a tendency to express your points in a limited, almost bulletpointy style at times. With A2, I’d like to see you slow down a little and expand on things in a bit more detail, so as to give the work a more obvious sense of focus and purpose. As always, if there’s anything you want to discuss, please always feel free to give me a shout.

**Research**

**Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis**

As suggested above, material evidence of wider research is a little on the thin side, I’m afraid, Pete. The upshot of this is that, while the work makes a number of intelligent and fairly perceptive points, it is also rather too subjective and lacking in awareness of wider discussions about the points you make. For the second assignment, do make sure to broaden your research and explicitly bring in anything that will help the development of your argument(s).

**Suggested reading/viewing**

**Context**

Do keep in mind that you should focus your research efforts on good quality material that’s appropriate to HE level. There is no shortage of writing on film out there, of course, but do try to draw a distinction between that which acts a little more than a consumer guide as to which films are worth you spending your money on, and those that offer more considered assessment and analysis. Whereas a magazine such as *Empire* can certainly have its moments, by and large it tends to be focused on the former, whereas *Sight and Sound* generally trades more in the latter.

Two resources that I think you’d find really useful for the unit are Jill Nelmes’ *An Introduction to Film Studies* book and Bordwell and Thomson’s *Film Art*. Both are in the umpteenth edition and will give you all manner of useful tools for approaching the analysis of film. Certainly the Nelmes book will work as a complement to the Amy Villarejo book outlined in the unit guide (for my money it’s also vastly more interesting and useful!!).

You also mention John McTiernan’s 80s film *Die Hard*. Joseph Sartelle’s essay ‘Dreams and Nightmares in the Hollywood Bluckbuster’ pegs it as film that recast ‘the white man as victim’, noting that it contains all kinds of anxieties about global competition, multi-culturalism, and how ‘[t]he threat posed to McClane’s masculinity by his wife’s career targets feminism as one of the forces victimizing the American white male.’ Interesting stuff. You can find it in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, ed Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Oxford.

If there are any films you’re considering discussing, drop me an email and I’ll see if I know of any useful literature for you to look at.

**Pointers for the next assignment / assessment**

This first assignment is largely diagnostic and, as such, has done a fair enough job of demonstrating you to be observant and thoughtful. In order to kick on from this, I’d like to see you do the following with the next assignment:

- Base your arguments more on solid wider reading appropriate to HE study, and to include specific ideas and quotations (referenced correctly, of course) in a bibliography/ list of references at the end of your assignment.

- Spend more time organising your ideas in draft form before committing them to the page, so that each point is carefully developed and qualified over the course of at least a paragraph.

- Use screenshots where appropriate. n.b., as well as allowing you to make your points visually, this will limit the need to include lots of purely descriptive text.

- Keep going!!! Studying film can be time consuming, but getting into the habit of watching and rewatching films/ scenes from films and making copious amounts of notes will pay off in the way that you analyse and assess them. It was only on about the 15th viewing of Vincent Gallo’s *Buffalo 66* that I got to grips with its finer points (and realised that I might be a bit obsessive about it).

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| Tutor name | Andrew Conroy |
| Date | 31/8/16 |
| Next assignment due | 29/9/16 |