



Open
College
of the Arts

Formative feedback

Student name	Pete Walker	Student number	
Course/Unit	Introduction to Film Culture	Assignment number	3
Type of tutorial	Written / Audio-Visual		

Overall Comments

Much more focused, coherent, readable, and convincing stuff, Pete. You've clearly committed yourself to researching and developing this assignment, and the result is your strongest piece of work so far. You make lots of very well-considered (and largely well-expressed) points, and the structure of the essay is clear, unobtrusive and much-improved. Your blog, however, is greatly in need of attention- simply listing films that you've watched and including a very short plot synopsis is not the best way to make use of it. Your blog needs to be much more focused on *reflective* content, not lists.

Feedback on assignment

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

The way that you introduce the essay is confident, thoughtful and well-considered, Pete, and there's an immediate sense of someone who means business and has brought together a number of elements- reference to wider academic literature, an assessment of various representations of piracy, and a workable definition of what it actually means in the 21st century- that set the essay up really nicely. Contrasting piracy as it has been represented in news media with the fantasy, swashbuckling version as typified in the likes of *Pirates of the Caribbean* and the films of Errol Flynn was a smart move. The second paragraph would be a little stronger if it had included a suitably meaty definition/ assessment of propaganda, so I'd suggest that you find something appropriate and work it in ahead of assessment.

I like your observation that,

The opening scene maximises the impact of the authenticity it provides by framing the character Hartmann against the open sea while he is on the phone to his family. There are several medium close-up shots of him in a similar vein that serve to present him as the main protagonist, whilst

drawing attention to the juxtaposition of his life at sea and that with his family, therefore promoting his humanity.

It's an observant and agreeable reading, but you could have made a touch more of the concluding point. Yes, I think it's a fair shout that the character's 'humanity' is being promoted and that there's a juxtaposition taking place, but the point would have perhaps been a little more persuasive if you'd related it to ideology and the film's point of view. Presenting him as a 'family man' seems to be key to positioning him as a signifier of the 'civilised', 'normal' world that will contrast with the lawless, 'barbaric' world of piracy- so what else can be said about this? Your point about displacement is really nice, so with a touch more detail, this section could be that bit stronger.

Your assessment of *Fishing Without Nets* is also agreeable. This point is also well observed:

Although the initial shots are cinematic, it appears that the pirates are being interviewed for a documentary as a result of the medium close-up and the way in which they speak to camera. This is juxtaposed with an unsteady camera that follows them to the ship in the next scene.

This said, I don't think it's quite as detailed or well developed as it might have been. Being a little more specific with what exactly you mean when you say 'cinematic' would help- I know what you are getting at, but it is a rather vague way to make the point. Equally, you say that there is a juxtaposition taking place, but you don't say anything about its purpose or how you read it. An 'unsteady camera' is a coded device that has a particular set of meanings/ associations. Why does the film do this and how do the filmmakers want audiences to read the scene? You also touch on 'realism' again in this section but, again, don't offer any particularly detailed attempt to grapple with how it might be understood. Likewise, I think that this section could have been slightly more effectively concluded. The last sentence is interesting, but I think there was room for you to reflect on it in just a little more detail.

The section on *Captain Phillips* is largely interesting, but it needed to be rounded up in just a little more detail: I wasn't entirely convinced by your rather claim that Paul Greengrass is 'a propagandist'. If you really think this is the case, you should argue it just a little more persuasively, as opposed to boldly stating it as a simple and self-evident 'fact'.

Overall, there is a clear sense of progress from your second assignment, and this is a very thoughtful, agreeable and promising piece of writing. There are far more points to be encouraged by than 'concerned' with, but I'd like to see you be more detailed with some of the (key) terms that you use, particularly around notions of realism, the idea of the 'cinematic', and how particular types of camera movement tend to signify some sort of almost 'documentary authenticity'. Bordwell and Thomson's *Film Art* will be useful in this respect and should give you a more detailed set of tools with which to appropriately describe and discuss film form and style and make the necessary revisions to the essay. With this in mind, have you made any changes to your previous assignments?

Learning Log

Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

The level of self-reflection on your blog needs fairly urgent attention, Pete: posting page after page of short, descriptive IMDB-type entries is doing you no favours, and your blog should

be showing a more careful, considered engagement with the learning process. A lot of the entries on your blog don't add a great deal of academic worth and do not provide enough evidence of a student who is consistently reflecting on the learning process. Indeed, too much of your blog reads like a list of very throwaway entries that are invariably not at all appropriate for HE study: there is really not much point in posting very short, sometimes sentence-long entries that do little more than offer a synopsis of or preference for a film or book. It's vital that you spend some time thinking about how you use your blog; as it currently stands, it does not provide enough evidence of a student showing consistently good judgment. Everything you post should be focused, critically engaged and mindful of demonstrating how you are engaging with the ideas that underpin the unit.

Equally, I think you should ask yourself how (and who) the sheer volume of entries is helping. There are, quite simply, too many to wade thorough. It's tough to have to point this out after reading such a promising, intelligent, thoughtful and likeable essay, but this is all part of the process. Even if the five essays you submit for assessment are consistently strong, do bear in mind that a weak and unfocused blog could well work against you.

Suggested reading/viewing

Context

Do some research around the notion of film, realism and 'verisimilitude', Pete. Early in the essay you mention notions of 'realism' in relation to Lindholm's *Kapringen*, and while the point is good, it would be just a little more persuasive if you'd shown just a little more awareness of what theorists have had to say about the idea of 'realism' and the idea of the 'realistic' and the ostensibly 'authentic'. These seem like simple and straightforward terms that generally don't need any further exploration, but the more you can demonstrate a detailed and savvy awareness of the finer points of the things you consider, the stronger your work will be. 'Realism' has been a huge issue within film (and film studies) for a long time, so you should have no problem finding any relevant academic material. Bill Nichols' *Representing Reality* is specifically focused on documentary film, but should still have a number of useful parts.

Pointers for the next assignment / assessment

This assignment most definitely represents a key moment for you on this unit, Pete. Everything in it suggests a student for whom the pieces are starting to drop into place. As far as essays are concerned, keep going- I'm eager to see what you do next. As far as your blog goes, much work is needed to get it on track. So while there is a clear need to carefully research and develop your next assignment, you should also spend a considerable amount of time whipping your blog into shape. This is, however, all perfectly do-able, and something that we can chat about. For your next assignment, I think it would be worth us having a Skype conversation as opposed to me sending you written feedback, so we can also chat about your blog then. As well as giving you a space to ask any specific questions about the assignment, we'll be able to discuss your progress so far and outline the best courses of action as we approach the final two assignments. Keep going!!!!

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