



Formative feedback

Student name	Pete Walker	Student number	
Course/Unit	An Introduction to Film Culture	Assignment number	5
Type of tutorial	Audio-Visual		

Overall Comments

Congratulations, Pete, on reaching the end of *An Introduction to Film Culture*. The first essays that you produced for the unit showed promise but were rather flawed and a little ragged, but **your last few assignments have shown considerable improvements**. Whereas your writing was patchy, inconsistent, descriptive and often lacking in critical engagement and adequate evidence of independent research, it is now much more confident, thoughtful, critically engaged and well organised. **I've often founded myself nodding in agreement with the points you've made and seeing new things in the films you've discussed.**

As has been the case with your most recent assignments, the feedback here mainly contains my initial impressions, which I used as prompts for our video tutorial.

Feedback on assignment

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

Nicely structured and thoughtful stuff, Pete. The essay has been effectively introduced and its points well identified and organised.

Boyle is a good choice because, on one hand, I think it's a fair shout to identify him as a modern auteur. On the other, however, I've often thought that he resisted Andrew Sarris's definition of an auteur, as he seems much more stylistically restless than many other potential-auteurs. While he, for me much more than you as it turns out, clearly has a number of thematic preoccupations, I'd agree that he's quite an eclectic filmmaker, and films such as *Slumdog Millionaire*, *28 Days Later* and *The Beach* are as different as they are similar. Auteur theory was always a little shaky as a concept, essentially being little more than an intellectual value judgment of the worth of the directors that it is applied to, and figures such as Danny Boyle perhaps suggest that its usefulness as a means of serious analysis has (long) been outlived, or at least in need of a revamp.

One of the counter arguments to the broad principles of the *politiques des auteurs* has been the hard-to-argue-with claim that filmmaking is a collaborative enterprise. The quote from Boyle that you bring in supports this, but it's something that I think reveals considerably more than just modesty and an eagerness to give his team credit where it's due. Take a(nother) look at his 2012 Olympic opening ceremony and think about his ideological and political perspectives- this seems to be a man who is always apparently eager to think in social rather than individual terms. Indeed, isn't this something that recurs in his films, from the young trio dazzled by money who then turn against one another in *Shallow Grave*, to Renton's abandoning of his 'friends' in *Trainspotting*? Even *The Beach*, problematic a film as it is, is about Utopia being compromised by individual greed and hubris.

Regardless, you've argued your position well, and this is another confident, assured and well-researched essay, and the progress you've made on *An Introduction to Film Culture* has been really encouraging.

More succinctly....

- I take your point about *Shallow Grave* and *Trainspotting* being influential films, and ones that sparked a post-Thatcher reawakening of British cinema, but to attribute this entirely to Danny Boyle is a little excessive. I take your point, but try to keep things a bit more measured. Boyle played his part, no doubt, but culture is far too complex to ever be reduced to simple 'X begat Y' arguments. Boyle's first few films were perhaps more a reflection of a changing Britain, one that also resulted in parallel 'movements' such as Britpop, than things that directly caused an awakening in British cinema. He's significant, for sure, but it's important to keep things balanced, even with such a casual, scene-setting point.
- It's great to see such an exhaustive list of references, Pete, but I think your writing would be that little bit more effective if you directly referenced the sources that you consulted. There are, for example, three citations in the first paragraph, but they all allude to an idea rather than offer a verbatim quotation. Why not include a specific sentence?
- The background reading you've done around auteurism gives this strand of the essay a particularly solid set of foundations: good stuff. But, again, rather than just gesturing towards Bordwell & Thomson and Caughie, why not include a specific passage from their writings?
- Does a director need to display 'authorial intent' to be considered an auteur?
- 'Abnormal psychology'? You should explain this a little more carefully. It's an awkward phrase that needs contextualising.
- I like the basic idea of the section that considers Boyle's use of music, but it seems to fall just a little flat. *The Beach* and *A Life Less Ordinary* are summarily dismissed, but I wonder whether these 'ambivalent' films in the Boyle canon are worth a closer look. Their lack of apparent 'quality' shouldn't preclude you turning your curious eye towards them!!

Overall, this is more encouraging and very readable stuff. Your conclusion fell a little flat, and I think it's worth taking a closer look at how you might be able to conclude as effectively as you began.

Research

Context, reflective thinking, critical thinking, analysis

Much-improved and assured stuff. You really seem to have found your feet with this area of your studies. Do make sure that you carry this momentum over into your next unit.

Pointers for assessment

Your blog has improved since you removed the rather superfluous material, but I think it could still be a touch easier on the eye, particularly with regard to general layout and navigation. Otherwise, you've diligently returned to each assignment and made improvements, and I'd recommend pushing on with this, and also thinking about how to best present your assignments.

But well done. You're my first student to complete the unit, and to see you grab hold of everything with such conviction and work so hard is enormously gratifying. However, it would be rather unfair to say that graft is the primary merit here: from A3 onwards you've produced work that is thoughtful, savvy, well-researched, intelligent, and full of promise. Best of luck with the rest of your studies!

Tutor name	Andrew Conroy
Date	17/7/17
Next assignment due	n/a