Comparative Film Analysis

In your first two essays you identified, analyzed, interpreted and discussed specific cinematic elements that combine together to create a film viewing experience. In so doing, you focused your attention on an extremely narrow aspect of a single film. This time, however, you will focus your attention on the similarities and/or differences between two or more texts, at least one of which is a film, and develop an argument about how these similarities and/or differences give insight to a specific director, social environment, or the texts themselves.

To begin this work, you must first select an approach from those that we read in *The Art of Watching Films* and discussed in class and then select the film(s) you wish to consider with this approach.

Specifically, “Chapter 11: Director’s Style” explains Auteur Theory and how an analysis of similarities among a specific director’s works can illuminate that director’s personality or philosophy as expressed through the language of film. If you choose to work with this approach, choose at least three films from a single director’s oeuvre (complete works) so that the similarities you identify are apparent and consistent. You might, for instance, choose to study how Alfred Hitchcock uses the same character types (the beautiful, yet emotionally cold blonde female, the man with the mistaken identity, or the overbearing mother) in many of his films, or how Steven Spielberg uses innocent children or fascist enemies consistently, or how Stanley Kubrick uses similar cinematography (the slow zoom in and zoom out) in his films, or how Robert Zemeckis uses the theme of manipulating the past to suit the demands of the present in his films.

“Chapter 13: Adaptations” discusses another approach you can take with this essay. With this approach, you will discuss a film based on another work, usually literary, and analyze how the film version differs from the original. You might, for instance, discuss how the physical appearance or personality of Dracula differs from the novel to one of the film versions, or you might examine why the film version of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* adds a few scenes that the play does not possess and what these additions do to the narrative, or you might look at how the graphic novel *V for Vendetta*’s timeframe of the 1980s changes to a post 9/11 world in the film version and what this change implies.

“Chapter 14: Genre Films, Remakes and Sequels” discusses yet three more approaches that you can take with this essay. With these approaches you will look at the similarities and/or differences in how films use similar themes, plots or characters. You might, for instance, analyze how representations of Native Americans in westerns have developed through different decades, or you might observe how giant monster movies tend to reflect a particular social concern of the time and place they were made, or you might identify a previously unidentified genre and discuss the similarities that the films within this genre exhibit and to what purpose, or you might analyze how the 1974 version of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* differs from the 2003 remake in the methods it uses to evoke horror and what these differences might say about viewers.

As you can see, the possible topics for this essay are limitless, but remember, the essay must have a clearly defined argument that needs to exhibit more thought and analysis than simply listing differences or similarities between works.

Basic requirements for this essay are as follows. Its minimum length is 7-9 pages, not including the Works Cited page. It must be typed in 12 point Times New Roman (or similar standard font) and follow MLA documentation style. For the due date, consult your syllabus.