

## Contemporary American Cinema: Mid-term Paper

Each student is required to submit a 2,000 response to ONE of the following questions:

1. As the work of King, Schatz, and Wyatt shows us, the early part of the contemporary period tends to be underwritten by a rhetorical distinction. Where the Hollywood Renaissance of circa 1967-76 is associated with thematic sophistication and formal innovation, supposed juvenilization and commerciality are said to characterize the Blockbuster Era that followed it. With this point in mind, how did the makers of the short film that was used to promote *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1976) to American audiences aim to complicate or blur these distinctions?

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XA6B1\\_0CEDc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XA6B1_0CEDc)

2. As both Lowry's and Wasser's essays indicate, Hollywood and the independent "exploitation sector" of the pre-video era are often set apart from one another in terms of the types of the film they produced, the content of those films, and the motives underwriting their assembly. How, and for what reasons, then do the makers of *Visions*, a short film broadcast on American television to promote Columbia Pictures' "women-in-danger" movie *Eyes of Laura Mars* (1978), aim to uphold these distinctions?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AID3rsgNvzE>

3. The industrial and aesthetic model that both Wyatt and Schatz dubbed "High Concept" came to emblemize the Blockbuster era of the late 1970s and 1980s to the extent that it was often evoked by smaller independent companies wishing to pass off their films as Hollywood product. Accordingly, how does the independent company New Line Cinema invoke High Concept in the "Behind the Shells" featurette, which was screened on US television, to suggest that *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Secret of the Ooze* (1991) is a quintessential High Concept film?

Part One: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bHUL9tPxzM>

Part Two: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=bp\\_SjF8J\\_oY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=bp_SjF8J_oY)

Part Three: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsYkompHMUc&feature=related>

NB: it is by no means imperative that you view the feature length motion pictures being advertised in the featurette you chose to analyze.

### **Presentation**

The paper is to be typed in size 12 Times New Roman (or a similar, easily readable font). It is to be double-spaced or 1.5 spaced, with 2.5 cm margins at either side of the page. Each page is to be numbered. US or UK spellings are accepted. Titles of films, TV series, books etc. are to be italicized with the year of original US release included in parentheses after the first citation only (e.g. *Jaws* (1975); thereafter *Jaws*). All quotations are to be placed in double inverted commas (e.g. Smith describes the period as a “golden age for Stephen Spielberg”). Imbedded quotations are to appear in single inverted commas (e.g. Smith goes on to suggest “Spielberg knew the ‘good times’ were over by 1991”). For quotations of 40 words or longer, omit commas, single space, and indent at either side by 2cm (additional to the 2.5 cm margins) on a separate line.

### **Footnotes**

References should be in Oxford Style. Please use an automated numbering system.

#### **Book:**

John Caughie, *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism and British Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

#### **Edited book:**

Jonathan Bignell, Stephen Lacy and Madeleine Macmurray-Kavanagh (eds), *British Television Drama: Past, Present and Future* (New York, NY, and Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000).

**Article in own book:**

Dai Vaughan, 'Rooting for Magoo: a tentative politics of the zoom lens', in *On Documentary: Twelve Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), p. 144.

**Article in someone else's book:**

Bruno Latour, 'The Prince for machines as well as for machinations', in Brian Elliot (ed.), *Technology and Social Process* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), p. 33.

**Article in journal:**

Madeleine Macmurrough-Kavanagh, 'The BBC and the birth of "The Wednesday Play", 1964-70: institutional containment versus "agitational contemporaneity"', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 17, no. 3 (1997), pp. 67-84.

**Translation:**

Michel Ciment, *John Boorman*, trans. Gilbert Adair (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p. 45.

**Follow-on references:**

Ciment, *John Boorman*, p. 47.

Macmurrough-Kavanagh, 'The BBC and the birth of "The Wednesday Play"', p. 59.

Latour, 'The Prince for machines'.

Bignell et al. (eds), *British Television Drama*.

Or, if referring to directly previous footnote, use 'Ibid., p. 59.' Just 'Ibid.' if page reference is the same.

**Internet references:**

Address in angle brackets; access date in square brackets.

The Deanna Durbin Page,

<<http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Academy/5228/ddpage.html>> [accessed 7 April 2001].

See Anthony H. Cordesman, 'Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the Al Quds Force, and other intelligence and paramilitary forces' (rough working draft), 16 August 2007, Centre for Strategic and International Studies,

<[www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/070816\\_cordesman\\_report.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/070816_cordesman_report.pdf)> [accessed 24 September 2008], p. 10.

### **Details**

**Value:** 50% of Final Grade

**Deadline:** Midnight CET Sunday 27 October 2013

(Please send as PDF or Word file to [richard\\_nowell@hotmail.com](mailto:richard_nowell@hotmail.com))

### **Penalties for Late Submission of Work**

On the day following the due date – 5 marks out of 100 deducted

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day following the due to date – 10 marks out of 100 deducted

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day following the due date – 15 marks out of 100 deducted

On the 4<sup>th</sup> day following the due date – 20 marks out of 100 deducted

After the 4<sup>th</sup> day following the due date – all marks deducted

**Grading/Evaluation:** Grades from 1-4 will be awarded based on the following criteria:

	<b>Argumentation/Understanding</b>	<b>Sources/Evidence</b>	<b>Communication</b>
<b>1</b> <b>70&lt;</b>	Insightful, vigorous, and demonstrating considerable depth of understanding and a significant amount of original thought; addressing question directly through a wholly coherent synthesis of ideas; demonstrating a degree of mastery over subject;	A wide range of sources consulted; sources employed with significant discrimination and sound judgment; thorough assessment of evidence; use of a broad range of examples.	Near-Faultless typography and layout; near-flawless turns of phrase and expression; sophisticated and precise vocabulary; clear structure; exemplary citation

	demonstrating a deep and thorough understanding of key concepts.		and bibliography.
<b>2</b> <b>55–69.9</b>	Perceptive and insightful; some evidence of original thought; for the most part addressing question directly; mainly coherent synthesis of ideas; thorough and somewhat critical understanding of key concepts.	A fairly wide range of sources consulted; solid assessment of evidence; sophisticated use of a fairly broad range of examples.	Very Solid typography and layout; few errors in grammar; mainly sophisticated turns of phrase and expression; mostly clear structure; strong citation and bibliography.
<b>3</b> <b>40–54.9</b>	Solid understanding addressed, for the most part, to the question; good synthesis of ideas; reasonably solid understanding of key concepts; evidence of gaps in knowledge and some minor misunderstandings of key concepts.	Several sources consulted; evidence of some assessment of evidence; use of mostly workable examples.	Good typography and layout; comprehensible and largely error-free grammar, turns of phrase, and expression; reasonable clearly structured; some attempt to provide citation and bibliography.
<b>4 (Fail)</b> <b>&lt;40</b>	Barely if it all addressed to question; no real synthesis of ideas; mainly descriptive rather than analytical; weak and patchy understanding of key concepts; significant gaps in knowledge and misunderstanding of key concepts.	Restricted range of sources consulted; superficial understanding of evidence; limited range of examples, many of which are inappropriate.	Poor typography and layout; numerous errors of grammar; limited vocabulary; ambiguous or inaccurate turns of phrase; weak or missing citations and bibliography.