WRIT 100: Pretty Hurts

Paper II Assignment

Paper I asked you to compare two scenes in a single text. For Paper II, you will compare two different texts, in this case, *Imitation of Life* and a second film of your choice. Your goal in this paper will be to identify a specific aspect that you observe in both films and make an argument about 1) how that aspect functions in each of the films and 2) why it is important to look at this particular element in both films together. You should show your reader what can be gained by thinking about the two films together that would not be evident after viewing them each in isolation.

Writing your paper in 6 easy steps

1. **Pick a second film**
   The first thing you need to do is pick a film to analyze alongside *Imitation of Life*. You have three choices, each of which is available on reserve at Leyburn Library:
   - *Pinky* (1949)
   - *Carmen Jones* (1954)
   - *Imitation of Life* (1959)
   If you have some other film in mind, you are welcome to propose it, but you **must** get prior approval from me to write about a film not on the list.

2. **Watch the film**
   Once you’ve chosen a second film, you should watch it. While you’re at it, go back and watch *Imitation of Life* again. **Make sure to take good notes!** As you watch, consider the following questions, and be sure to make notes about your answers:
   - What do you notice about how the film looks?
   - What do you notice about the costumes?
   - What do you notice about the sets?
   - What do you notice about the characters?
   - How do the characters talk?
   - What do you notice about the music?

3. **Compare the films**
   Look back over your notes. When you think about these two films together, what stands out to you? Does one film make you reconsider the other? Does one film help you understand the other? What are you able to see when you think about the two films together that you didn’t notice before? Take lots of notes as you think about these questions.

4. **Decide on a structure**
   At this point, you’ll want to think carefully about how best to structure your paper. You could, of course, have three sections: one that analyzes the first film, one that analyzes the second, and one that compares the two. But with this kind of structure, you’ll risk repeating yourself, or playing ping pong in the final comparison section. What are the main claims that you want to make about these two films? Is there an order that will make more sense to your reader? What information does your reader need first, and what claims need to be saved for last? Aim to let the needs of your particular argument guide the organization of your paper.

5. **Write your paper**
   Use your notes and your conclusions about the best structure for your argument to guide you as you get your ideas all out onto the page.

6. **Look back at the beginning and end**
   You probably had a thesis in mind when you started writing, but once you’ve drafted your paper, take some time and re-visit that thesis. Is your initial thesis actually what you ended up writing about? Often, your argument changes—sometimes substantially—as you work through your analysis. If that’s the case, re-write your thesis to reflect your new argument. Use your conclusion to remind your reader why your argument is important: that is, how does your thesis help your reader better understand the films?
Who your paper should address

Your audience for this paper should be a hypothetical classmate who has attended class, done the reading and watched both films you are writing about, but has not been overly studious or attentive. This classmate will definitely notice if you make an obvious claim, but there is also room to teach her something new about the films and concepts from class. Your classmate does not need full, detailed summaries of the films, because she has already seen them, but she does need concise reminders to help locate herself in the film and to remind her of what the important points were.

What your paper should do

- **Compare** *Imitation of Life* with one of the three film choices
- **Make an argument** that shows how viewing the two films together, with close attention to textual details, helps us better understand something about the films
- Use **specific textual details** to support each claim in the paper, and follow each piece of evidence with **analysis** explaining how those textual details prove your claim
- Have a brief **introduction** that introduces your reader to the two films you’ll be analyzing, what you’ll be arguing, and why that argument is important
- Have a brief **conclusion** that reminds your reader what your argument and most important points were, and how and why that argument is important
- Be **1500-2000 words** long
- Be formatted according to **MLA style**

After your paper is written

**Peer review and submission instructions**

We will conduct peer reviews of your papers in class on **Tuesday, Feb. 16**. You should bring a copy of your paper with you to class; you should also upload your paper to the “Paper II peer review” folder on Sakai.

After our in-class peer review session, you should revise your paper according to your classmates’ feedback and upload it to the “Paper II” folder on Sakai by **midnight on Friday, Feb. 19**.

**Grading**

Paper II is worth 16 points. Two of those points are allocated to peer review, one for submitting a completed draft by the appointed time, and another for participating in the in-class session and submitting feedback. The final paper will be graded on the 14-point scale; for more details on that scale, see the “Grading Scale” handout.

**Revisions**

While you may continue to revise your paper throughout the semester, your initial revision must be submitted to me by **Thursday, March 10** in order to be eligible for further revision. This policy is both to help you keep up with the many writing dates, and to help me comment on and return papers to you in a timely fashion.

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