

FILM 118 / Stephen W. DaVega/ FALL 2005

Essay #1

5-7 typed pages, double-spaced

Due: Nov. 2nd Wednesday

“Film lovers are sick people.” - [Francois Truffaut](#)

Write an analytical paper between 5-7 typed pgs. Choose one of the following questions, and frame paper/discourse in standard essay format (i.e. 3 to 7 paragraphs, thesis statement, supporting paragraphs, conclusion/summation):

1. Write an analysis of the various themes Robert Wise's *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. Why does this film stand apart from others in the same sci-fi genre? How are these themes (Utopia vs. Dystopia, Science/Scientist as saviors of mankind, etc.) developed differently than in other films? How does *The Day the Earth Stood Still* differ in tone and message from other "Alien Invasion" films of the 50's? Do not ignore the obvious religious references, motifs and themes expressed. How and when are these various themes expressed and by whom? What visual, musical or other motifs support your interpretation?
2. John Ford's *Stagecoach* is often credited with the elevation of the Western genre into A status, in large part to its themes of social status and conflict. These socially conscious themes are evident throughout the film, how are they expressed, who expresses them, how do they tie into the larger western theme of Civilization vs. the frontier?
3. Analyze/discuss George Miller's *Mad Max 2/Road Warrior* in terms of its semantic status of sci-fi and its syntactic status as Western.
4. Analyze/discuss Chris Marker's photoplay *La Jetee* from an existentialist point of view? How does the story's plot, narrative structure and/or form suggest/express this philosophical viewpoint? What about the nature of this photo-play support its underlying viewpoint about memory? How do the film's circular structure inform or work with those motifs and themes? How do these elements function together to inform/create the mood and tone of the film?
5. Analyze George Steven's *Shane* for its grander mythic themes and motifs. When and where are these themes expressed visually or by characters? What function does Joey serve in the deification of Shane? How do these themes contrast with the more realistic visual and political landscape of the film's story? What was Steven's trying to say about what was happening to the image of heroes of more classical westerns?
6. Compare and contrast the difference between Howard Hawkes' *The Thing From Another Planet* and John Carpenter's *The Thing*. What are the fundamental differences in the story's themes, what are its similarities? What visual and/or

narrative motifs/patterns are different/similar in the films, and how do these reinforce those themes?

7. Zinneman's *Highnoon* is atypical of Western genre in terms of if Hero's relationship to his community, his wife, and his code of ethics. How do these relationships define Highnoon as a revisionist western? What other elements, if any (narrative pattern, visual patterns, etc) support this interpretation?