

FILM 104 / Stephen W. DaVega

Essay #1

5-7 typed pages, double-spaced

Due: **Thur, July. 8<sup>th</sup>**

Choose one of the following topics for you essay:

1. Write a paper analyzing the use of mise-en-scene in The General, or Scarface or Stagecoach. Choose 3 or 4 scenes and analyze them in regards to setting, props, costumes, lighting, framing, and actors' performances. How do these elements function together to inform/create the films diegesis and its narrative cohesion? Do these elements suggest meaning, motivation, tone, do they create structure/form?
2. Compare and contrast the narrative structure of Maltese Falcon and the Stagecoach. Think in terms of narrative voice, plot, story, subjectivity and objectivity, expectations, privileged view points, exposition, pacing, time, parallel actions. How are they similar? How do they differ? What elements in common or in contrast are most significant?
3. Write a paper discussing and analyzing the techniques of Buster Keaton's performance in The General. What are the techniques? How are they applied? How do they function in juxtaposition to other elements, performances, setting, etc.? Why has Keaton's performance stood the test of time? Is it understated? Is it over-the-top? Explain, give examples.
4. Analyze The Maltese Falcon according to its numerous expressionist elements. Be specific about characters, scenes, cinematic, filmic and thematic elements that make up its expressionistic style.
5. Analyze the use of montage in a detailed shot-by-shot analysis of the first 5 to 6 minutes of Stagecoach, explaining how the editing techniques (juxtaposition, cuts, fades, wipes, pacing, types of shots, duration of shots, etc.) function to inform and create meaning, mood, etc.
6. Analyze Mr. Smith Goes to Washington according to its specifically "American" themes and motifs. Frank Capra's films are idiosyncratic, revisiting similar themes of home town American values and beliefs time and again. How these values could function as a bulwark against cynicism and corruption. Be specific about what the themes are, who expresses them, when and in what scenes, and how they inform the movie as a whole. Even at the time of these film releases, Capra was seen as being sentimental and nostalgic, why did do these film resonate still today.
7. Analyze/breakdown the narrative structure of Stagecoach in detail. Describe patterns, narrative arc, temporal and special juxtapositions, motivation, plot, story, subjectivity and objectivity, expectations, privileged view points, exposition, pacing, time, parallel actions, etc., etc., etc.

