

English 345: Cine/Technology

Take-Home Final

Length and Due Date

Length: 6 pages, formatted as described in the "Article Critique" section of the syllabus

Due: Tuesday, March 13, by 5:00 p.m. via E-Submit

Assignment

For the take-home final, you will compose a comparative essay on two films screened since the midterm: *Blade Runner*, *Brazil*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *eXistenZ*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *The Matrix* and *The Terminator*. You may write on one of the following topics:

1. How does the treatment of technology in **two** of the following films reflect specific political, cultural, or historical contexts: *Blade Runner*, *Brazil*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *eXistenZ*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *The Matrix* and *The Terminator*? What statements do your selected films make on contemporary social thought regarding the relationship between humans and technology?
2. What commentary do *The Matrix* and *eXistenZ* make on the relationship between "virtual" and "real" worlds or technology's influence on our sense of the real? What pleasures and dangers do the films associate with these worlds?
3. How do **two** of the following films—*Blade Runner*, *The Terminator* and *Ghost in the Shell*—represent the cyborg? What questions do the films raise about the distinction between human and machine or technology's impact on our concept of the self, humanity, consciousness, and/or memory?
4. What critiques do **two** of the following films—*Brazil*, *Blade Runner*, *Dr. Strangelove*, and *Ghost in the Shell*—level at the institutions (government bodies, corporations, law enforcement, etc.) or social structures associated with technology?
5. How does technology or interacting with technology define or reshape gender roles in **two** of the following films: *Brazil*, *Blade Runner*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *eXistenZ*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *The Matrix* and *The Terminator*?

Although I have posed specific questions, you will need to formulate an argument about the similarities and differences between your selected films; you will develop this argument by analyzing the narrative, formal (setting, costume, lighting, shots, camera movement, editing, sound, etc.), ideological, and/or contextual elements of both films. Moreover, you must reference at least **one** course reading in your essay.

General Guidelines

1. The proposed topics allow for a variety of approaches. You will need to narrow the questions, developing your own angle of comparison/contrast.
2. Effective comparison/contrast essays highlight how similarities and differences reveal something important about each film. Rather than offering a catalogue of your observations regarding the films' similarities and differences, your essay should pose

an argument about the significance of the connection. For example, your thesis should not simply state that "films X and Y represent the cyborg similarly and differently." Ask yourself why it is important to examine these films together.

3. Although the essay examines a large-scale question, close textual analysis and reference to course readings will serve as your main sources of evidence. In supporting your argument, you will need to pay attention to how scholars interpret the films and/or their contexts and how the films themselves employ distinct narrative and/or cinematic techniques. Concentrate on specific shots or scenes and the cinematic codes at work in those shots or scenes.
4. Remember that you are addressing an audience who has already viewed the films. Therefore, your essay should not offer plot summaries. Instead, any reference to the films—dialogue quotations, scene descriptions, explanations of narrative movement—should support your analysis. When you quote, summarize, or paraphrase a source, please use MLA format. Since the class has read the articles and screened the films, you need not provide a works cited list.
5. The course "Essays" page contains sample essays from the Winter 2005 Cine/Technology course. Although the writers may not address your films, their essays illustrate options for developing a comparative film analysis.
6. Do not forget the arguments posed in class, the course packet or the discussion that has taken place on the electronic bulletin board. A review of lecture notes, readings and postings on a particular film may help you to ask key questions and shape your analysis. You will, of course, cite specific words and interpretations borrowed from classmates or other authors.
7. If you would like to address an alternative topic, you must clear it with me before submitting your final.
8. If you're having difficulty devising an approach to the essay, or if you want to discuss ideas-in-progress, come to my office hours or email me at kgb@u.washington.edu to set up an appointment.

Grading

I will use the attached grading scales to evaluate the take-home final. Late finals will receive a 10-point deduction per day late, including weekends and holidays. I will make exceptions to the lateness policy only in cases of documented illness or family emergency.