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Scene Analysis Project

second quarter out-of-class assignment

Your out of class assignment for the second quarter allows you to choose between two options. Both are due on the same day: Monday 16 May 2011. Both are worth an equal number of points-200.

For the first option, you may make a film that runs no longer than 5 minutes. While this has not been a course in film production, we have closely examined the elements of film. The best entries will be able to demonstrate knowledge and mastery of *mise en scene*, cinematography, editing, and sound. More important than a plot or a narrative, these films need to show a strong grasp of technique and how and why techniques are used.

These films will demonstrate a process that is planned, executed, and edited. They will result in a unified and thoughtful final product. While many people may produce the film, only the director will be evaluated and receive a grade.

So that you can focus on the technical aspects of the assignment and not have to spend too much time writing a script, we have included a list of possible scenarios to get you started.

- falling in love
- breaking up
- a missed connection
- an argument with a friend
- a good or bad retail experience
- a fantasy or a dream
- being lied to or deceived
- an interaction with a child
- a bad clothing, hair, or make up experience
- almost, but not quite making it
- a holiday story
- being locked out
- an homage
- an experience from work
- a date or a party
- breaking something—especially if it didn't belong to you
- road trip

For the second option, you need to submit a typed analysis of a scene from a film. This is the skill we are focused on this quarter. Your analysis should describe the technical components of the clip and connect them to the director's purpose. (Two examples of scene analyses follow this list.)

When you analyze the clip, look at the *mise-en-scene*, cinematography, sound and editing. Examine the ways in which these aspects of the film serve to convey mood and emotion, reveal character, and/or produce a response from the audience.

- Aspects of *mise-en-scene* to note include costume, settings, and frame composition (balanced/symmetrical).

- Elements of cinematography to watch for include use of light and color, as well as focus, camera position, and movement.
- Elements of editing including the length of shots and the ways they are edited together (transitions).
- Notice how the sound elements enhance the scene.

Eight film clips are listed below. The clips come from these five films.

Notorious, Alfred Hitchcock, 1946

Raging Bull, Martin Scorsese, 1980

8 ½, Federico Fellini, 1963

The Birds, Alfred Hitchcock, 1963

Hannah and Her Sisters, Woody Allen, 1986

Use this link to view the film clips: <http://d219tv.niles-hs.k12.il.us/film-study-clips/>

Scene analysis sample #1

Klingenberg

Psycho

Alfred Hitchcock (1960)

1:34:36 to 1:35:42

This is a scene of suspense. Like most examples of real suspense, we in the audience know more than the characters on the screen. In this particular scene from Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film *Psycho*, that knowledge is combined with point-of-view shots, odd angles, ominous music, and cool, measured editing to ratchet up the tension in the audience.

This clip lasts from 1:34:36 to 1:35:42. There are 21 shots over the 66 seconds so it is an average of just three seconds per shot. A few shots are about two seconds and just two shots are longer: the initial approach to the house (which runs about 8 seconds) and the final shot (#21) when we are stretched out screaming "No don't go in the house!" and she does. That shot, after all the shorter shots, lasts an excruciating 22 seconds—seven times longer than almost any other shot in the sequence.

The clip begins with a long shot that establishes Lila Crane as just outside the Bates Motel: a place where we in the audience know a killer lurks. This shot is also done at eye level, and as she reaches the end of the porch she seems to look back at us in the audience and wonder if it is safe to go on. ("It's not Lila. Don't!") A low, ominous score undergirds the entire clip. It has a somewhat slow tempo, almost like the footsteps that lead her toward the house.

There is a cut on the movement and the next shot is also a long shot that establishes that she has come around the back of the motel and is now looking up at the Bates house. We can see odds and ends piled about; there's even an old car. There has been a marked shift in angle from the previous shot; here we have a high angle looking down on her. It seems odd after the eye-level shot that preceded it, but we do know that there is an old woman sometimes up in the window of the house. Perhaps, this angle signals, it is her looking down.

The third shot is a point-of-view shot of the house from Lila. This puts us in her shoes, a place we will inhabit every other shot now for the remainder of the scene, and, because of where she stands, it is also a low angle shot: the house ominously looms over her and us.

The fourth shot is the same camera set up as the second shot in this clip but in this shot, as Lila moves, the camera moves with her. Almost all the remaining shots of this clip will have movement.

From the fifth shot through the 20th shot—the majority of this clip—we have alternating, moving (tracking?) shots of roughly three seconds of a low-angle, POV of the house from Lila and a moving, three-second, high-angle shot of Lila. This second shot is like a POV from the house. Lila is the even-numbered shots; the house is the odd-numbered shots. The movement of the shots is fairly controlled—possibly crane or tracking shots—but there is a slight sense of handheld to some Lila's POV shots to add to our identification with her.

By the fifth shot in the sequence Hitchcock also tightens the framing with each shot. Yes we get a little closer to Lila and a little closer to the house, but the camera also frames each one more tightly. All of this adds to the tension and suspense.

By the twelfth shot of the sequence we have moved from a long shot that began the clip, to medium shots of Lila, to finally a close up. The motel and other surroundings from earlier in the clip are gone and this framing and the shallow focus give us nothing on the screen but Lila Crane's question face.

In shot 14, a shot of Lila, the camera begins in motion but comes to a stop. The cut to shot 15 gives us the other still image in this sequence, a still POV of the house. We now recognize that not only are we in Lila's POV but that the camera moves when she moves and stops when she stops: all increasing audience identification (fear? dread? apprehension?) with the action. These still shots are also her last chance to turn around. "Don't do it! Turn around!" we scream. Of course she goes forward.

The camera movement and shot alternation pick up again with shot 16 and continues until the end.

The final shot—the painful 22 second shot—is Lila opening the door. There is a final, sharp music cue as she clicks the doorknob and after that there is silence for the rest of the clip. There is a slight tracking forward to tighten the frame her as she walks into the house, and then a slight, almost imperceptible pan right to follow her as she moves that way. Other than that, there is almost no camera movement in this shot. All—sound and camera—is still.

Deciding to go forward, Lila shuts the door in the audience's face. She now belongs to whatever will happen inside the house.

Scene analysis sample #2

Jackson

The Shining Scene Analysis

At first glance, Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980) may seem like a horror film about a maniacal killer, but really it is a family drama; it is a film about a troubled relationship, a failing marriage, and the impact this has on the members of the family in crisis. There are problems in the Torrance family, and the relationship between Jack and his wife and son has been strained. Early in the film we learn that Jack injured his son, Danny, after a night of drinking and has been sober ever since. Wendy, his wife, tells the doctor that Jack returned home drunk and in a violent rage pulled Danny's arm so hard that his shoulder dislocated. Since that night he hasn't had a drop to drink, and the family starts a new chapter in their lives by relocating for the winter to the Overlook Hotel. Over the course of the film, the relationship crumbles and the marriage falls apart despite the efforts of the earnest wife, Wendy. The deterioration of the marriage and family unit can be seen through the mise-en-scene and cinematography in a scene (34:10–37:00) at the beginning of their stay in the Overlook Hotel.

In the scene, Wendy brings Jack breakfast in bed and they discuss their initial experiences at the Overlook. The scene begins with an establishing shot of the Overlook hotel in morning light; a distant, haunting sound of a loon is the only sound heard in this shot. The long shot shows the beautiful hotel in the foreground with a dark, looming mountain in the background creating an unsettled feeling in the viewer when paired with the ominous sound of the bird. The next cut is a one-shot of Wendy walking through the brightly lit hall of the hotel pushing a food cart laden with silver serving pieces. She is wearing a bathrobe and her hair is pulled back in a ponytail. The fourth shot shows Wendy in the hallway, a pleasant look on her face as she opens the door to the bedroom; the colors in this shot are cool blues mixed with some warm yellows in both the décor of the hotel and her bathrobe. These colors suggest a conflict, or juxtaposition

between cold and warmth, perhaps reflecting her feelings about their life in the hotel or perhaps her feelings about her relationship with Jack.

As she enters the bedroom the fifth shot starts with a medium/close-up shot of Jack asleep in bed. The camera zooms out slowly, revealing a mirror through which we see him. This suggests that the viewers aren't seeing the "real" Jack. Wendy enters through the door to the right of the mirror and for a moment Wendy's reflection appears in the mirror while the camera still has her body in the frame, thus we see two images of her and one of Jack. The camera zooms back in so that Jack is in the center of the frame; he notices his reflection and makes a face of disapproval as he looks at himself in the mirror. He doesn't like what he sees and is critical of himself and perhaps his relationship since Wendy is framed within the mirror as well.

As Wendy brings him his breakfast, he looks happy with a smile on his face, reclining and accepting her offering. Light appears to be coming in through the window and lights Jack's face producing something of a morning glow about him. He seems content and happy. This shot of them in the mirror remains until the final shot of the scene where the couple is framed in the same way, with Jack reclining in bed at the center of the frame and Wendy sitting close to him on the edge of the bed. This scene starts with one-shot, ends with two-shot. The mise-en-scene and cinematography of the scene it is evident that the couple is close and has some warmth in their relationship, but it is not a balanced relationship. The framing of the two-shots are asymmetrical with Jack horizontal and Wendy slightly out of the frame. The dialogue also shows that Jack is removing himself emotionally and physically from the relationship when he tells Wendy he doesn't have time to go for a walk with her. The tight framing of the couple shows that they have some intimacy, but that is lost by the end of the film.