



Academic Writing Guide: Film Review vs. Analysis

What is the value of analyzing film as part of an academic discipline?

Academic writing about film requires that you see beyond your enjoyment of the film experience and consider the “invisible things,” such as camera angles, composition and editing, lighting, sound and mise-en-scene (sets, costumes, makeup). These are the “film elements” that are distinctive to this art form.

It is important to know the specific terms associated with Film Studies. Here are some helpful websites:

- <http://www.fimland.com/glossary/Dictionary.html>
- <http://www.filmsite.org/filmterms.html>

When we are caught up in the excitement or emotion of the film's story, we often become passive viewers, swept along in the entertainment. Of course, these responses are important, but they are just a beginning point when it comes to writing thoughtfully about film.

Film Review vs. Film Analysis: What's the Difference?

FILM REVIEW:

- Reviews tend to focus on the surface story, providing a lengthy description of the plot.
- They typically make recommendations about whether the film is worth watching, so it is highly subjective and rather simplistic.
- They do not meet the standards of academic writing.

FILM ANALYSIS:

- A critical analysis of a film involves research, critical thinking and analysis.
- It avoids a lengthy reprise of the plot except where it is necessary to remind the reader of important themes or elements.
- The film essay supports a clearly articulated argument (your thesis) by looking closely at some feature(s) of the film.
- An analysis means that you must engage on a level beyond that of storytelling.
- An analysis is not a presentation of your personal feelings or impressions.

- Although it DOES ask you to take a stand on a particular question or issue.
- An argumentative essay for FILM 101 involves using your analytical and interpretative skills to develop and argue your position based on your thesis.

Film Analysis: Basic Steps

1. Break it down. What is this assignment asking you to do?
2. Watch the film. Watch it again. Take notes!
3. Research your topic using the AC Library website.
4. State your position in a thesis statement.
5. Organize your thoughts into an outline.
6. Begin writing your essay.
7. Review your essay for grammar, spelling and rationality prior to submitting.

What is a Thesis Statement?

- Before you write your essay, you should be able to state in a single short sentence exactly what you want to prove or argue.
- This statement of what your paper is about is your THESIS statement.
 - Ex. In the film *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) directed by Tim Burton, the lighting and colour palette is used to show the isolation of the main character from the community in which he is living.
 - Ex. In the film *Moonlight* (2016) directed by Barry Jenkins, the segmentation of the main character's life into three parts is used to show how the character and his life develop over time.
- **REMEMBER:** writing a film analysis means that there must be a specific point that you are trying to convince the reader to accept. (I.e., you must argue in support of your position).

Argumentative Essay Structure:

Introduction:	<p>Introduce your essay (Hook: make it interesting).</p> <p>Background: What happened? When? Why did it happen? Who was involved? Where?</p> <p>Thesis Statement: What is your essay going to look at? What is your argument? (take a position). How will you support this thesis?</p>
Body Paragraph 1:	Supporting point(s) in line with your thesis statement.
Body Paragraph 2:	Supporting point(s) in line with your thesis statement.
Body Paragraph 3:	Supporting point(s) in line with your thesis statement.
	<i>Can have more supporting paragraphs if necessary.</i>
Rebuttal Paragraph:	Acknowledging a different/opposing view (Include a refutation).
Conclusion:	<p>Re-state thesis statement (use different words)</p> <p>Summarize the arguments from your body paragraphs.</p> <p>Make a statement based on your ideas (without using personal language such as I, you, we, us, our). Make sure this agrees with your thesis statement. You want to leave your readers pondering your essay topic!</p>

**For additional help, please make an appointment with a Writing & Learning
Centre Humanities specialist at: <https://alexander.mywconline.com/>**