

A Semiotic Analysis of Crash

This assignment is the first major assignment for the Zooming In portion of our learning community. The end result will be a five –seven page paper which analyzes the movie Crash through a semiotic lens.

Reading

We have just touched on Semiotics in class and you have read a tiny bit about it Chapter One of Practices of Looking. The next step in this process will be to do some extra research so that your understanding of Semiotics deepens. Some possible resources to include are:

Berger, Asa, Signs in Contemporary Culture: An Introduction to Semiotics

Barthes, Roland, The Elements of Semiology (dense reading)

Introducing Semiotics, Paul Copley and Litza Jansz

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html>

This web site has a lot of information and some specific applications of semiotics to film and TV.

Watching

Beginning Wednesday, October 5, 2005, I will put the DVD Crash on reserve in the language lab. You will need to watch and re-watch it, looking for specific examples of signs, metaphor, metonymy and other signifiers. Think about the notion of poses, objects and technical signifiers, like camera angle, distance from viewer, focus, as well,

Analyzing

Based on your readings, find specific signs that occur either once or over time in the film, signs that contribute to motifs, and/or signs that evolve throughout the course of the film. How did the director, Paul Haggis, (who also wrote the screenplay) use these visual signifiers to deepen and layer the narrative of the film? What struck you personally while watching the film? What sense did you make personally about Crash?

Organizing: Think about how to organize your thoughts and analyses. You may try to outline or creating an idea map or web or anything that will help you to structure your thoughts so that they comprise a logical, compelling whole.

Drafting

Write a first draft of your paper based on all the work you have accomplished so far. Try to make this draft as polished as possible—a final draft first draft. Check to make sure your sentences make sense and hang together structurally. Check for spelling, word choice and grammatical errors. Stretch yourself. Use words you don't normally use. Find new ways of

helping us to “see” and understand the connections you are making with the signs that Paul Haggis employs to tell his story.

Peer Review

Exchange papers with someone at your pod in the classroom. You should each get feedback from at least one other peer and you should give feedback to one other peer. Be specific with the feedback you give: if you don't understand something, if something isn't clear, let your partner know. If you are particularly impressed with a phrase or sentence, let your partner know.

Review by Amy

If you need more help or want more feedback you may also submit your paper to Amy.

Revising

When you get feedback from her you may edit and revise. Please submit the final draft to me, and include with it all previous drafts, with comments, and your original outline or idea map.

Timetable:

October 14, 2005 {By this time you should have completed your research, viewed the DVD, analyzed the film and have pulled your thoughts together in some sort of organizational structure}

October 21 exchange papers

October 28 return papers to each other and if you want to have Amy do an edit, get the paper to her in enough time to let you revise and finish by November 4th when you will hand in final paper to me. [You may want to discuss the paper with me before you hand in the final. In this case you need to make an appointment with me so we can discuss the draft.]