

Film and the Myth of Paradise in America

Length: 1500 words (write more if you wish but not less)

Format: MLA (see example in *SMG* or *Nuts and Bolts*)

Due Dates: on course calendar

Purpose: To explore how a film representation of American paradise attempts to reconcile competing cultural values and beliefs about an American cultural issue.

Evaluation Criteria

- An **introduction** identifies the cultural issue, briefly summarizes the competing values and ideas presented by the film, and explains how the film attempts to reconcile these values through scenes, images, characters, music, camera angles, scenery, lighting, etc. (your **thesis**).
- **Focused and detailed body paragraphs** have the following qualities: 1) a clear transitional link to the thesis or previous paragraph, 2) a focus on one scene, character, image, etc., 3) a logical and well organized discussion of how the scene, character, image, etc. identified in the topic sentence develops one or both sides of the value conflict OR undercuts and complicates the film's effort to reconcile these values. You may—and probably should—have more than one paragraph about one character, image, or scene, but no paragraphs should attempt to examine more than one character, scene, or image.
- **Compelling evidence** The paper analytically examines scenes, characters, images, etc. from the film. The writer avoids summary, focusing instead on interpreting how and why the film uses these images, characters, and scenes to represent conflicting cultural values and ideas. When appropriate, the essay refers to other relevant texts (for example, the Baum version of *The Wizard of Oz*) and applies analytical concepts taken from *Signs of Life* (remember to properly document all concepts or analytical approaches taken from SOL essays). While I am not requiring you to use the Baum text or *Signs of Life*, I do expect you to do so when you explore an issue or make an argument that would improve if you connected it to Baum or developed it via an analytical approach presented in *Signs of Life*. If, as I read your essay, I think to myself, "how come the writer did not refer to Wolf here?" or "ooh, this would have been a great place to mention how the movie redefines the witch to make her more powerful than the book" or other comments like that, then your paper has not successfully explored significant evidence relevant to its thesis.
- A **conclusion** evaluates whether or not the film successfully reconciles its competing values. If not, why not? If so, why so and how?
- **Style and Mechanics:** The essay uses active voice verbs—especially in thesis and topic sentences—employs concise diction, and demonstrates mastery of a variety of sentence forms and lengths. The essay also demonstrates mechanical correctness in areas such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, diction, etc. In this composition course, I will carefully grade style, grammar and usage, and I will not award a passing grade to a student unless that student demonstrates competency in these areas.
- **Reminder:** All of the essays in SOL offer ideas and analysis you could apply to your essay. Do not hesitate to explore them. The Superman essay provides an especially good model for the kind of analysis you should perform in this essay.
- **Use email for help:** Send me your intro and body paragraph by NOON on Thursday, and I will send you back individualized feedback.