

Preparing for Viewing & Reading

Reviewing Films & Readings

These movies were made to be entertaining, but you should not approach them the same way you would a film you're watching solely for enjoyment.

- You should **take notes** while viewing the films and pay very close attention, especially as some have very complex plots (and I don't expect you'll have time to watch them more than once, though that would be ideal).
- Even if you have seen a film before this class, you should absolutely watch it again, as you are viewing it for and with a different purpose.
- Many of these movies have 'bad guys'. Keep in mind, though, that they are rarely one-dimensional characters. Rather, they likely to rationalization and justify their actions, which is not to say you should accept them without question.
- Key characters, as well as film themes, tend to be complex. If you find yourself thinking that only one thing motivates a character, you should reconsider.
- Note that 'key' characters do not exclusively equate to 'main' characters in each set of films. Some minor characters are essential to the dynamics of the film, and are worth mentioning.
- Since individuals, states, and international organizations are actors in the global scene, consider their significance in the films and readings.
- Consider the historical context of and/or impact on the events/issues raised in the films and readings. Think about how those events influenced why the film was made and how those events relate to/impact the real-world events in the readings.
- You may absolutely quote lines from the films, but keep them short, make sure they're accurate, and be sure to properly format them (see Referencing Films below).

Preparing Films & Readings for the Discussion Board

The purpose of the discussion board and the assigned questions is to discuss the films/articles with specific supporting details, not just some abstract way. You need to discuss the characters by name, give relevant scene descriptions, and explain characters' interactions.

What to avoid

- Avoid discussing each film in turn.
- Do not summarize plots.
- Do not summarize the readings.

What to do

- Compare and contrast the key characters in each set of films. Consider the situations they're in, the decisions they confront, the choices they make, and the consequences they face.
- Don't forget about minor characters. Some serve an important purpose- to advance the plot, foil a main character, or give context to a situation.
- Identify the common themes that run through the sets of films and what message the film is attempting to convey about international politics.
- Identify the common themes that run through the sets of films and how they connect to real-world situations. Consider how realistic the film portrayals of actual events.
- Discuss the films collectively, using examples from the films and readings to support your points.
- At times, discussing elements of the plot or reading will be important to a point you're attempting to make, but avoid reviewing/summarizing the plots.
- Make sure to read previous comments to avoid just echoing what has already been asked or answered
- Remember that to potentially earn full credit for a section, you cannot just post answers, but must also respond to others' posts.

Referencing films

- Focus on discussing the significance of issues and events in the films collectively to the course concepts rather than giving summaries of them. Give equal attention to each film.
- Film titles are always *italicized*.
- Names should always refer to the characters, not the actors
- The United States (US), America, or Americans should **never** be referenced as 'we' or 'us', but rather in the third person as a proper noun or abbreviation.
- Fact-check your information: you should have the correct character names/ titles of the characters and references to information for the films. Correctly spell character names, places referenced, etc. A good reference for film characters can be found at imdb.com.
- Direct quoting films or referenced media should be avoided, with the exception of referring to dialogue in the films, at which time you may directly quote that content, so long as you use quotation marks to distinguish the quote, and indicate the speaker. Also be sure you put the quote into context. For example:
 - "Toto, I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore," since everything is in Technicolor (Dorothy).
 - After everything appears in Technicolor, Dorothy says to Toto, "I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

- Organize your ideas around the question concepts (and your sub-points for them) as they relate to the films collectively and connect to the themes/characters/situations in them. Strive to make connections between the like ideas addressed in the films, rather than treating them as separate entities.
- You should only refer to information included in the introductory reading, films, and assigned articles. That is, you need not do any outside reading for this course or reference any outside material in discussions or papers. In reviewing your discussion board comments and papers, I will only be looking for the assigned information. Use what I assigned to give examples and support your points.
 - If you want to read film reviews for insight into the themes or characters, that's fine, though it should be from a reliable source (major newspapers) versus 'Bob's take on killer flixxx'. If you feel the need to reference that information, do not directly quote, just summarize the information, and be sure to properly cite it.

Referencing readings (and the one video)

- Focus on discussing the significance of the information reported in the readings to the course concepts rather than giving summaries of them.
- When you discuss these articles, it is not necessary to use the full name of the article when you introduce it for discussion; just refer to them informally such as 'the situation in Ukraine'. As such, you do not need to reference the sources of the articles that I have provided for you.
- Do not directly quote or paraphrase any of the articles; all information should be in your own words. For this reason, you do not need citations for the articles.
- Avoid saying 'the article says,' 'according to the Ukraine article,' etc. Just relate the significance of the information presented in the article.

Commonly Made Grammatical Errors and Techniques that Drive me Crazy

Reread your discussion board posts and papers before hitting send. Common grammatical errors and other issues that detract from succinct writing result in point deductions include:

- Not writing in the 3rd person, esp. when discussing the U.S. (it's not 'we' or 'our', it's 'the U.S.' or 'American')
- Russia was part of the Soviet Union until 1991, therefore, depending on the film you're discussing, be sure to use the correct name
- Colombia is the country (not Columbia)
- Not properly formatting film titles with case capital and italics- for ex. *Dr. Strangelove*
 - Note: It is completely acceptable to drop the post-colon parts of titles, as in *Dr. Strangelove's* title, after giving the full title upon first use.
- Not using the characters' names (but instead using the actors' names)

- Using the correct name, title, rank, etc., with accurate spelling (check imdb.com when in doubt)
 - For ex., Ripper is a Brigadier General (BG Ripper is fine)
- Posing rhetorical questions instead of discussing ideas in statements
 - Do not use rhetorical statements. Full stop. Explain what you mean rather than posing questions.
- There is no need to write out full titles for the readings. Instead, just refer to them and, as they are unique, everyone should know to what you're referring.
- When using abbreviations, spell out the term first, then acronym in parentheses like so: international governmental organizations (IGOs)
- For both the films and articles, you should absolutely refrain from saying anything along the lines of 'in the reading, 'in the film', 'in the first part of the film', 'in paragraph one of X reading', etc. Instead, just describe the points. Avoiding this unnecessary text will save you words and help you to be more succinct in your points.
- Do you mean Soviet Union or Russia? Do you mean Soviets or Russians? They differ. Ask the Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, etc.
- 'Nation' and 'state' are not synonymous. Reread The Enemy & Security if you've forgotten the difference.
- Common errors: Cold War is capitalized, the possessive is United States' (not United State's), and do you really mean it's (as opposed to its)?
- Write in the 3rd person, most of the time. It's okay to say I from time to time, but for the most part you should use he, she, it, they, their, his, her, its, etc.
 - Never use 'you'. That is 2nd person and doesn't belong in a paper unless you're including information about survey questions to which you are referring.
- Along these lines, the grammatically correct way to refer to people is humans (not man), humankind (v. mankind), and one, he, or she.
- If you're going to define a term, avoid citing a dictionary and/or directly quoting it. It's better to define the term in your own words, as you've come to understand it.