

COMPARATIVE STUDY—ADOPT A THEORIST

Film theory is difficult

"If we see very few things in a film image, this is because we do not know how to read it properly."

Gilles Deleuze

For many students, teachers and scholars, the prospect of an extended foray into film theory can be daunting.

Theory is often equated with arcane or obscure vocabulary and the logic-defying cognitive gymnastics sometimes employed by theorists themselves.

But there is a different way to understand the importance of film theory, and that is to begin to think about why a person would ever wish to think or write about film in such a dense and complicated manner to begin with.

Here's the secret about film theory: it takes films, television, online media (in fact, any kind of moving image) very seriously.

Theory believes that the moving image is one of the most significant developments to appear in all of human history. Why is the moving image so important? Because films, television and online media saturate the lives of every 21st-century person.

Moving images provide daily and incessant templates for how to live, love and relate to each other. Some of these templates are not kind or just or reflective of the full diversity of human potential. Sometimes the images and media surrounding us can be reductive, simplistic or even actively limit the ways in which we might wish to live, love and relate to one another.

Without theory—a film theorist might insist—how else could someone talk back to these images in order to find room for human freedom and individuality? That is also why there are so many different film theories to contend with: the more ways we can talk back to the moving image, the better.

So film theorists believe that they have a fairly consequential mission and, whether one agrees with that estimation or not, it can be a useful jumping off point for understanding why theory can seem so intimidating, lofty or abstract.

A film focus on theory asks us to consider the conceptual implications posed by particular film texts using specific film theories.

Theorists and theories disagree about these implications even when examining the same film title. And that's OK. Film is an art to be explored, probed and scrutinized.

Film texts, even those that might not be masterpieces, deserve our full attention—and that's what theories about film offer.

Talking the Talk

Look over the list of prominent film theories that are often encountered in the study of film located here.

Choose one of the listed theories to explore further and try to stretch yourself and pick something you do not know a lot about.

Then, pick a film you have seen that you would like to further explore, and using both classroom, school-based, and online resources to help you, locate a short work written about this film by a film theorist working within your chosen area. You may pick a chapter from a book, an article, an interview, or even a video essay.

Citing from that chapter, article, interview, or video essay at least three times, write a reaction to this film theorist's analysis.

- o Why do you think the film theorist chose this particular film theory to analyse the film?
- o How did applying this particular film theory shed light on the film?
- o Be sure to avoid generalities (such as 'I thought his/her analysis was good') and instead to speak specifically about points your film theorist made about the film, and to be specific in turn in your reaction to them
- o What did you agree or disagree with? Why?

Your reply should be anywhere between one to two double-spaced pages using 12 point font.

Please make sure to also include a Works Cited page and again, to cite at least three times from your film theorist's analysis.

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

Talking the Talk

Compile your responses in a PDF document for submission.

Note: For all assignments, title your document in the following way -

(Title of assignment) (First name) (Initial of your second name)

For example, if your name is Sanjay Kumar, and you are submitting this assignment, Talking the Talk Submission, the file will be titled -

Talking the Talk Submission Sanjay K.