

**Movie Review**  
**(10% of your total course grade)**

Imagine you are a professional movie critic who works for the *Rockingham County Chronicle*—a newspaper with 25,000 subscribers. It’s been nearly a decade since the Coen brothers’ film *A Serious Man* (2009) was released and your boss wants you to prepare a special review of it for the next, retrospective issue. She needs the final version of your review by **Sunday, October 7, 2018, at 5pm.**

As a newspaper employee, you are used to doing things last minute. The following steps will help you successfully complete your movie review in a more timely fashion.

<b>Steps</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
1. Overview: What is a movie review?	Read examples of movie reviews; discover what a typical movie review entails; identify what makes a movie review effective	Monday, 9/10	Credit/no credit; Attendance & Engagement grade
2. Response Paper: Summary	Practice one important part of movie review; receive instructor feedback	Wednesday, 9/19	A-F scale (part of your Response Paper grade) + professor feedback
3. Response Paper: Evaluation	Practice one important part of movie review; receive instructor feedback	Wednesday, 9/26	A-F scale (part of your Response Paper grade) + professor feedback
4. In-Class Workshop	Complete an initial draft of the paper; receive peer feedback before final submission	Wednesday, 10/3	Attendance & Engagement grade
5. Final Paper: Movie Review	Integrate all of the previous pieces in order to create a successful movie review	Sunday, 10/7	A-F scale; Movie Review rubric attached

The assignment contributes to the following learning outcomes for the course:

- Apply the techniques of film analysis in order to interpret films and to clearly articulate your interpretation verbally and/or in writing
- Create common examples of film studies writing, such as a movie review
- Participate in and respond to a community of viewers with diverse perspectives

## Step 1: What is a Movie Review?

### The Purpose:

The purpose of this assignment is threefold: 1) to find and read several examples of movie reviews; 2) to discover what these examples have in common, so that you can recognize what a typical movie review entails; and 3) to begin to identify and articulate what makes a movie review strong or effective. This assignment will provide you with models and an initial guide to the genre of the movie review, which will set you up to succeed when creating your own later on.

Due: in class on Monday, September 10, 2018

### The Process:

First, choose a movie you have recently seen and are interested in; it doesn't need to be related to religion, though it can be! Next, locate three different movie reviews of this movie. One review should be from a professional news source (e.g., *The Washington Post*), one should be from a more popular source (e.g., one linked on the website Rotten Tomatoes like *Vanity Fair*), and one should be from a source of your choosing. Print out each of the reviews and read them at least twice. (Don't worry; they'll be short!) As you read the reviews, take brief notes in the margins on the following:

- Who does the review seem to be written for? What does the review presume this audience knows or does not know? How can you tell?
- What kinds of details about the movie does the review provide? Why do you think this is?
- Are there different parts of the review? What do they seem to be? How do you know? What function(s) do these different parts serve?
- What seems to be the overall purpose of the review? Why was it written?
- As a reader, what did you gain from reading the review? What did you take away from it?
- What kind of language does the review use? Why do you think this language was chosen?

Based on your notes, list any similarities you can find among the three reviews and, based on those similarities, write a one-paragraph description that represents your understanding of a typical movie review. In a second paragraph, indicate which of the three movie reviews you think is the most effective and explain why you have come to this conclusion (refer to your reading notes).

### The End Result:

Bring to class your list of similarities among the movie reviews, a brief description of a typical movie review, and your evaluation of which movie review is the most effective. Be prepared to discuss these materials with the class; we'll generate an understanding of the genre of movie review together.

### Assessment:

It's simple! You'll receive full credit for this assignment if you bring all of the required materials with you to class (list, description, and evaluation). You won't receive credit if you don't. Contributions during discussion will also be incorporated into your daily Attendance & Engagement grade.

## Steps 2-3: Response Papers

See Response Paper Assignment sheet.

## Step 4: In-Class Workshop

The Purpose:

Because movie reviews are intended to be public pieces of writing, consumed by a wide readership, it is important that you get feedback from... you guessed it, some of your actual peers! In general, though, it is very helpful to get feedback from your peers on any piece of writing. Your peers can point out, as readers, what worked and what didn't about your writing; these are often places that are difficult for us to see on our own. In addition, and perhaps even more importantly, through the process of peer review, you will become more adept and comfortable with the assignment and its expectations, which you can then use to improve your own writing.

Occurring: In class on Wednesday, October 3, 2018

The Process:

Bring three printed copies of your movie review. In class, we will get into small groups and swap papers. You will each read and offer directed feedback on your peers' papers, based on the rubric.

These are the sorts of questions you may expect to answer when reviewing your peers' papers:

- Is the summary of the film complete? Is anything missing? Is there too much detail?
- What is the worth of the film, according to the reviewer? Should we go see it?
- List the specifically visual and aural details the review includes to support its review.
- Are there any places where a statement or conclusion needs to be supported with more evidence from the film itself? Put a check next to them.
- Are there any places that you don't understand or are confused? Put a star next to them.
- \* Do not check for grammatical or typographical errors.

The End Result:

At the end of the workshop, you will leave with your own notes, as well as your peers', on their feedback about your draft of the movie review. The idea is for you to use these notes to improve your movie review before the final deadline. You will also have honed your ability to critique, which I encourage you to then apply to your own writing before you turn anything in for a grade.

Assessment:

It's simple! You will receive full credit for attending and engaging in the workshop activity in class.

## Step 5 (Putting it all together!): The Movie Review

The Purpose:

Movie reviews are a common form of writing that professional film critics produce, so it's important for you to practice creating one too.

Due: Sunday, October 7, 2018, at 5pm on CANVAS

The End Result:

A movie review of (at least) five pages, typed and double-spaced, in 12-pt, Times New Roman font.

Assessment:

Sections	A (outstanding)	B	C (average)	D	F (unacceptable)
Summary	Review provides information about the most important aspects of the film, giving readers who have not seen the film a basic and clear understanding of it.		Review provides select important information about the film, but includes either too many unnecessary details or not enough necessary ones.		Film would be incomprehensible to someone who has not seen it; there are gaps, jumps, or key missing details.
Evaluation	Review clearly indicates the worth of the film; the estimation is consistent; the appraisal is generalizable and could apply to a wide range of readers; language indicating critique is used throughout the review.		The worth of the film is not always clear; the estimation of the film is inconsistent; the appraisal seems personal or subjective; language of critique is sometimes used, but is mostly neutral.		No assessment of the film is provided; language is solely neutral and descriptive.
Evidence	Supports all claims or assertions about the film with specific details from the film as evidence.		Occasionally supports claims or assertions with details from the film.		Little detail from the film is marshalled as evidence to support claims or assertions.
Filmic elements	Review includes details about the visual and aural elements of the film, in addition to its narrative (plot, characters, etc.).		Some details about the visual and aural elements of the film are included, but infrequently or disconnected from larger claims/assertions.		The only detail provided about the film is related to its narrative (plot, characters, etc.)
Polish	Free of typos and grammatical mistakes.		Scattered, frequent, or patterns of typos and grammatical mistakes.		Typos and grammatical mistakes inhibit understanding the review.