

Course work on music and soundscapes

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



\n[[toc title="Table of Contents"](#)]\n

\n \t

1. [Film Studies Questions](#) \n \t
2. [The Cinematic Auteurist](#) \n \t
3. [Elements of Genre](#) \n \t
4. [Focus on Society](#) \n \t
5. [Criticism and Commentary](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

Film Studies Questions

There are three basic categories of sound in a movie: dialogue, special effects and music (Goodykoontz & Jacobs, 2011, ch. 6. 4). In the film *When Harry Met Sally*, the film relies heavily upon the dialogue between Harry and Sally; they are two witty, intelligent characters whose friendship develops into romance and it is through their dialogue that we witness this happening. In *Jaws*, the film relies upon its music to engage the viewer in the fear that the various scenes exude. For instance, as the shark begins to enter the scene and is leading up to its attack, the music plays to create tension. In *The Mask*, the film uses special effects to conjure up the ‘cartoon’ style of the film’s central character – he is something ‘more than human’ and in adding the special effects, this is portrayed to the viewer.

Goodykoontz, B. & Jacobs, C. P. (2011). *Sound and Music*. In Goodykoontz, B. & Jacobs, C. P. (Eds.), *Film: From Watching to Seeing*. San Diego: Bridgepoint Education Inc.

The Cinematic Auteurist

Auteurist Theory refers to the person whose primary vision is the basis for the film and usually, that person is the Director who has supreme artistic control over the production. Auteurist Theory has become central to the critical discussion of films as many see it as the basis for the film's overall 'mise-en-scene' and its final product (Goodykoontz & Jacobs, 2011, ch. 7. 3). For instance, in *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, its director, Jack Arnold, wanted to portray the creature as being menacing and shows it stalking the female protagonist as she enjoys a carefree swim in the lagoon. Equally, in *The Big Country*, the director, William Wyler wanted to emphasise the film's setting in the American West and portrays it through a presentation of horses, southern women and Mexican servants. And in *Planet of the Apes*, the director, Franklin J. Schaffner wanted to portray the human beings as innocent against the terrifying backdrop of the apes and does by showing two of the film's central human characters riding naked on a horse – a sign of their natural innocence. However, critics of Auteurist Theory suggest that a film is the product of many people's visions and as such, it cannot be solely down to one person and indeed, a lot of different people perform different roles on film sets and so, it is more likely that the film takes shape based around everyone involved rather than just the Director, for example.

Goodykoontz, B. & Jacobs, C. P. (2011). *Directing and Style*. In Goodykoontz, B. & Jacobs, C. P. (Eds.), *Film: From Watching to Seeing*. San Diego: Bridgepoint Education Inc.

Elements of Genre

A film's genre refers to its subject matter and its nature and it is portrayed through elements such as costume, dialogue, lighting and music (Goodykoontz & Jacobs, 2011, ch. 8. 1). In *Creature From the Black Lagoon*, the viewer is made aware of its horror genre through the music which lends a 'sinister' air to the scene as well as the ugly monster stalking the attractive young woman. Whereas in *The Big Country*, it is clear that it is a western film due to its setting – it is placed in a dusty, desert-like place and it features a wide range of horses and other Western genre signifiers. Equally, in *Planet of the Apes*, it is clear that the film is a sort of sci-fi genre because the Statue of Liberty is embedded in the beach – a modern icon reduced to a relic of a bygone age which demonstrates that the film is set in the future.

Goodykoontz, B. & Jacobs, C. P. (2011). *Movie Genres*. In Goodykoontz, B. & Jacobs, C. P. (Eds.), *Film: From Watching to Seeing*. San Diego: Bridgepoint Education Inc.

Focus on Society

Whether films influence society or society influences films is a drawn-out debate which can be argued in either way. For instance, many viewers watch films for the escapism element – to get away from the humdrum of their normal life (Goodykoontz & Jacobs, 2011, ch. 9. 2) such as in *Planet of the Apes*, the film is so far-fetched and detached from our own society that it serves as pure entertainment value (although it is arguably influenced by our own treatment of black slaves and therefore, the film is influenced by society). Whereas in *The Big Country*, it is set in normal circumstances –

even if the setting and backdrop are not ‘normal’ to modern audiences, the film deals with everyday issues between family which many audience members can relate to meaning that the film addresses issues in society.

Goodykoontz, B. & Jacobs, C. P. (2011). Film and its Impact on Society. In Goodykoontz, B. & Jacobs, C. P. (Eds.), Film: From Watching to Seeing. San Diego: Bridgepoint Education Inc.

Criticism and Commentary

Two reviews of the same film can often paint a very different picture. For example, one review of Black Swan focuses on the film’s action as being “melodramatic” and dull (Turan, 2010) whilst another discusses how it is “artful, epic, operatic even” (Moore, 2010). The words chosen here capture the reviewer’s interpretation of the film and clearly contrast with one another with regard to their overall opinions of the film. Ultimately, a review is just that: an opinion and therefore, either reviewer is justified in drawing the conclusion they drew. The negative reviewer portrays the film as being “over the top” and “sensationalistic” (Turan, 2010) whilst the other reviewer focuses more on plot and discusses the motivations behind the characters, demonstrating that he perhaps engaged deeper with the film.

Moore, R. (2010). Movie Review: Black Swan. Retrieved from http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/entertainment_movies_blog/2010/12/movie-review-black-swan.html

Turan, K. (2010). Movie Review: ' Black Swan'. Retrieved from <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/dec/03/entertainment/la-et-black-swan-20101203>