

Your task in this essay is to analyze what is taken for granted in a text.

General reminders:

Ideology is a system of thought; it's what registers as common sense, as the natural state of things. The implication for individuals is that it invisibly dictates their behavior (their actions, practices, rituals) and makes them understand themselves in a certain way (it dictates their subjectivity). Since texts reinforce cultural values, the ideology of a text can act to reinforce or encourage specific attitudes and beliefs in the audience.

Distinguishing the unit essays:

Subjectivity Essay	Ideology Critique
Emphasis on characters struggling with how their culture perceives them, their attempts to reposition themselves as subjects.	Emphasis on what likely goes unquestioned by the characters or the audience. If the text offers a social criticism, an emphasis on what the audience must believe for the criticism to seem valid.
Sharp focus on one / a few characters (~60%); begin / end with a discussion (40%) that helps develop the ideological implications (i.e., of what's interesting / revealing / strange / problematic about viewing/representing subjects this way).	Broader analysis of the characters, their backdrop, and what the text encourages the audience to believe about both.

Prompts: Consider the following; use them to generate the body of your essay.

- What is presented in the text as 'natural'? What is unquestioned by the characters? What assumptions does the text encourage the audience to accept without question?
- What features define the protagonist / the character held up as a mirror for the audience / the hero / the Subject? What features define the villain?
 - What does the film invite the audience to think about each kind of person?
- What narratives or paradigms does the text reinforce? Challenge?
- What fantasies does the text engage?
- In what cultural discourses does the text participate? (What it means to be X...)
- What values does the text reinforce? What anxieties does it address?
- If a struggle or transformation is involved, what is the nature of that change? What are we invited to think about both states (i.e., about the "before" and "after")?
- How would the text be different if it were produced in a different culture? (A socialist country, a Muslim country, America at a different time, etc.)

Conclusion: Consider these questions:

- What is interesting/revealing/strange/problematic/encouraging about a text that invites people to think this way?
- What does the text tell us about the society in which it was produced? What does the text's popularity tell us about ourselves?

Refer back to your essay directions for more explanation, and once again admire my restraint in this handout!