

PSY/COM 250: The Psychology/Rhetoric of Film (Spring, 2010)

Dr. Stephen Dine Young
Classroom: 147 Science Center
Class Times: M, T, W, Th, F -- 9-1
Office: Science Center 156
Office Hours: M,W,TH,F – after class & by appointment
Phone: 866-7319
e-mail: youngst@hanover.edu

Course Description & Goals

Movies can be approached by psychologically-minded investigators from a number of different directions. From one direction, film is a representational medium that is capable of symbolizing an enormous range of human actions using such cinematic/narrative devices as character, plot, theme, editing, camera movement, etc. These represented actions are analyzable from a variety of psychological perspectives.

Approached from another direction, motion pictures are technical, rhetorical and artistic objects created by groups of individuals working collaboratively within particular social and historical contexts. These film-makers can be thought of as having identifiable “psychological characteristics” (e.g., conscious beliefs and attitudes, behavioral predispositions, unconscious complexes, etc.) that shape the nature of their work.

Finally, a critical observer can make the assumption that there are psychological mechanisms operating within audience members as they watch films. These mechanisms can be understood at different levels: perceptual (e.g., the perception of motion), behavioral (e.g., the impact of violent films on behavior) and cognitive (e.g., the complex meaning making process that occurs while watching any movie, from Citizen Kane to Mall Cop).

The primary goal of this course will be to engage students in viewing narrative fiction film from each of these three directions. Through the use of representative movies, critical commentaries and empirical studies, students will come to be familiar each orientation. Hopefully, students will learn to see movies as “psychologically alive”--creations of the mind that are capable of representing the full range of human concerns through cognitive and symbolic processes occurring within viewers.

In order to accomplish the goals of this course, an interdisciplinary approach will be used; we will draw relevant work from psychology, film studies, literary criticism and mass communication. There will some opportunities to compare and contrast film with other narrative and visual media such as television, theater, literate, etc.

Reading Materials

There are no text books for this course. However, assigned reading will be of central importance. These readings will be in the form of articles, chapters, and excerpts from a variety of magazines, journals and books. These materials are listed with the class schedule and will be reserved at the library.

Class Attendance & Participation

Classroom participation will be absolutely essential. Since the format will be primarily

discussion based, your contribution will have a large impact on how much you and the other students learn. Therefore, for every unexcused absence after the first (either film or discussion/lecture), you will have 5 points subtracted from your final grade.

In addition, your classroom participation will be worth 100 points and will be assigned a grade as follows:

Outstanding	95+ points
Excellent	90 points
Very Good	85 points
Good	80 points
Average	75 points
Below Average	70 or below points

Weekly Journal

Each week you will turn in a journal that captures your reflections about important aspects of the class—movies, readings, class discussions, & projects. The intention of these journals is for you to demonstrate your engagement in the material—your questions, your emotional reactions, your speculations, your insights, your criticisms, etc. This journal is worth a total of 75 points.

Class Projects

You will be required to do 4 projects. These projects are designed to parallel the topic of the course that week. The projects will involve applying the readings, doing library research, watching additional movies, doing interviews, etc. Each project will be discussed in detail the week it is due. The first project will be in class and will be worth 50 points. The second project will be worth 75 points. The last two projects will be worth 100 points each. Late projects will be deducted 10% for every class day they are late.

Exams

There are no exams. Have a nice spring.

Grading

(Total of 600 points)

450-500	A
400-449	B
350-399	C
300-349	D
299 & Below	F

Class Schedule & Readings (Psychology of Film)

WEEK 1—INTERPRETION AND RHETORIC IN FILM

May 3

Topic: Introduction to course; Psychology in the movies

Reading: None

Film: Excerpts from *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Leone, 1966)

May 4

Topic: None

Reading: Dine Young, “Representation of Mental Health Professionals”

Film: *Good Will Hunting* (Van Sant, 1997)

May 5

Topic: Interpreting *Toy Story* & Other Fairy Tales

Reading: Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (pp. 3-19; 159-183)

Film: *Toy Story* (Lasseter; 1995)

May 6

Topic: Feminist interpretation; stylistic interpretation

Reading: Mulvey, “Visual pleasure in narrative cinema”; Flitterman-Lewis, “Point-of-view in *Notorious*”

Film: *Notorious* (Hitchcock, 1946)

May 7

Topic: The process of interpretation

Reading: Bordwell, *Making Meaning* (pp. 1-18, 36, 40-42, 145)

Film: Mystery film & In-class Project #1

WEEK 2--FROM THE MINDS OF THE MOVIE MAKERS

May 10

Topic: *Psycho* & the process of interpretation

Reading: Bordwell, *Making Meaning* (pp. 224-248)

Film: *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960)

May 11

Topic: None

Reading: None

Film: Class choice

May 12

Topic: Auteurs

Reading: Wollen, "The auteur theory"; Freud, "Creative writers and day-dreaming"

Film: *The Big Sleep* (Hawks, 1946)

May 13

Topic: Analyzing Woody Allen

Reading: Several reviews of *Husbands and Wives*

Film: *Husbands and Wives* (Allen, 1992)

May 14

Topic: Analyzing Alfred Hitchcock

Reading: Spoto, *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock* (pp. 263-299) & Spoto, *The Dark Side of Genius* (pp. 384-402)

Film: *Vertigo* (Hitchcock, 1959)

WEEK 3--THE AUDIENCE RESPONDS**May 17** (Project #2 due)

Topic: The effects of film

Reading: Wilson & Hunter, "Movie-inspired violence"; Bozzuto, "Cinematic neurosis following *The Exorcist*"

Film: *Taxi Driver* (Scorcese, 1976) & various film clips of violence in film

May 18

Topic: None

Reading: None

Film: *The Persuaders*

May 19

Topic: The effects of film (continued)

Reading: Bandura, Ross & Ross, "The imitation of film-mediated aggressive models"; Linz
Donnerstein & Penrod, "The effects of long-term exposure to violent and sexually
degrading depictions of women"

Film: *Thelma & Louise* (Scott, 1991)

May 20

Topic: Viewer response

Reading: Radway, "Readers and their Romances"

Film: Class choice of romantic comedy

May 21

Topic: Viewer response (continued)

Reading: Radway, "Readers and their Romances" (cont.)

Film: *Northern Exposure*, "Rosebud" episode

WEEK 4--SELF AS VIEWER**May 24 (Project #3 due)**

Topic: The functions of film; Cinematherapy

Reading: Tesser, Millar & Wu, "On the perceived functions of movies"; McMillan, "*The Wizard of Oz*"; Hesley & Hesley, *Rent Two Films* (pp. 3-25)

Film: *The Hustler* (Rosen, 1961)

May 25

Topic: None

Reading: None

Film: Class choice

May 26

Topic: Movies as equipment for living (i.e., "*Star Wars* and Me")

Reading: Burke, "Literature as equipment for living"; Dine Young, "Movies as equipment for living"; Dine Young, "Movies that Change Our Lives"; McAdams, *Stories We Live By* (pp. 11-35)

Film: Class choice

May 27

Topic: Movies as equipment for living, continued

Reading: None

Film: None

May 28 (Project #4 due at noon)

No class

Psychology of Film--Reading List

- Bandura, A., Ross & Ross, D. Imitation of Film-Mediated Aggressive Models. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 66 (1), 3-11.
- Bettleheim, B. (1976). *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairytales*. Knopf, Inc.
- Bordwell, D. (1989). *Making Meaning; Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema*. Harvard University Press.
- Bozzuto, J.C. (1975). Cinematic Neurosis Following "The Exorcist." *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 161 (1), 43-48.
- Burke, K. (1967). Literature as equipment for living. In *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*.
- Dine Young, S. (2000). Movies as Equipment for Living. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 17 (4), 447-46.
- Dine Young, S. (in progress). *Movies that Change Our Lives: Cinematic Memories, Dreams and Reflections*.
- Dine Young, S., Boester, A., Whitt, M.T., & Stevens, M. (2008). Character motivation in the representations of mental health professionals in popular film. *Mass Communication and Society*, 11(1), 82-99.
- Donnerstein, E., Linz, D., & Penrod, S. (1988). Effects of Long Term Exposure to Violent and Sexually Degrading Depictions of Women. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 55 (5), 758-768.
- Freud, Sigmund. Creative Writers and Day Dreaming. In Peter Gay (Ed). *The Freud Reader* (pp. 436-443). New York: W.W. Norton.
- Flitterman-Lewis, S. (1951). To See and Not to Be: Female Subjectivity and the Law in Hitchcock's Notorious. *Literature and Psychology* (pp. 1-15).
- Hesley, J.W. & Hesley, J.G. (1998). *Rent Two Films and Let's Talk in the Morning: Using Popular Movies in Psychotherapy*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- McAdams, D.P. (1993). *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of the Self* (pp. 11-37). New York: Guilford Press.

McMillan, T. (1991). The Wizard of Oz. In David Rosenberg (Ed.) *The Movie That Changed My Life* (pp.253-265). New York: Penguin.

Mulvey, L. (1986). Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. In Philip Rosen (Ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* (pp.198-209). New York: Columbia University Press.

Radway, J. (2001). Readers and their romances. In J.L. Machor and P. Goldstein (Eds.) *Reception study: From literary theory to cultural studies*. New York: Routledge.

Spoto, D. (1992). Excerpts from *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock*. & *The Darkside of Genius*.

Tesser, A., Millar, K., & Wu, C. On the Perceived Functions of Movies. *The Journal of Psychology*, 122 (5), 441-449.

Wilson, W., & Hunter, R. (1983). Movie Inspired Violence. *Psychological Reports*, 55, 435-441.

Wollen, P. The Auteur Theory. In Bill Nichols (Ed.), *Movies and Methods* (pp. 529-542). Berkeley: University of California Press.

The Psychology of Film (PSY250); Spring 2009
Project #1
Due May 7, 2010

For this project, I want you to interpret Film X. Keep in mind Bordwell's distinction between comprehension and interpretation and the four levels of making meaning. In part you will have to demonstrate that you comprehend the plot and other details of the film because I want your interpretation to be as grounded in content of the film as possible. The emphasis will be on the level of interpretation however--i.e., the deeper, hidden and more subtle meanings that the film might contain.

I want your interpretation to answer the question, "What does this film have to say about about "Human Nature"—this can be at many different levels—interpersonal, emotional cultural, political, philosophical, etc. In some way or another I want you to discuss how the film reflects/comments on human beings and on how human beings interact. You may use a formal theoretical system (e.g., Freudian psychoanalysis) to help you with your interpretation, but this is not required.

I want you to integrate Bordwell into your paper, as well as other readings if possible.

The project will be worth 50 points. It should be approximately 4-5 pages. Your ability to make connections between details of the film and your interpreted meanings will be an important part of your grade.

The Psychology of Film (PSY250)
Spring 2010; Dr. Dine Young
Project #2
Due May 17, 2009

- 1) Identify an individual associated with motion pictures that you would consider to be an *auteur*. In other words, pick a director (or producer, actor, screenwriter, etc.) that you believe leaves an identifiable stamp on the movies he or she is a part of. Briefly introduce this individual (role in film, time period of career, a few film credits, etc.). Try to find at least a little biographical information about your auteur.
- 2) Watch at least three films made by this individual.
- 3) From the films you watched, identify the stylistic **and** thematic motifs that run through your auteur's films. Be sure to cite specific textual cues from the movies to make your points.
- 4) Make the assumption that the motifs you identified in the films are in one way or another a representation of the auteur's "psyche" (i.e., "mind," "self," or "personality"). What does your analysis say about the thinking, behavior, attitudes, virtues, pathologies, etc. of this individual (you can integrate biographical information if you have any). This section is the key to this project. Be creative. Go out on a limb (although be sure to connect your speculation to evidence in the movies). You do not have to be "correct"—this exercise has a high degree of speculation on our part.
- 5) Conclusion: This might also be an opportunity for you to reflect on validity of this undertaking. In addition, anything else you might want to say about project would be appropriate here.
- 6) At some point in your paper, I would like you to integrate the Freud and Wollen articles into your paper.

The project will be worth 75 points. It should be approximately 5-6 pages.

Project #3; Spring 2010
The Psychology of Film; Dr. Dine Young
Due May 18, 2009

This project will require the collection of qualitative data about viewers' reactions to movies. I want you to arrange to show a video of your choice to at least three individuals at a mutually agreed upon time. Let the people know prior to the viewing that you are taking this class and that you want to understand their personal reaction to a particular film.

At the meeting time have each participant in your study sign a consent form. Then show the film. After it is over, arrange to set up an interview with at least three of the participants. Explain that the interview will last from 30 minutes to an hour. (Another option is to do a group interview).

At the arranged time, you will engage in a semi-structured interview where you will attempt to explore the individual's reaction to the film in as much detail as possible. You should record this interview (either by taking notes or with a tape recorder). You can use the list of questions on the following page as a guide. However you do not have to ask every one of these questions, nor do you have to stick rigidly to the order. You can ask any appropriate follow-up questions designed to get the participants to expand on their answers. You can add additional questions if you want, but make sure to ask the question of each individual.

Your paper should consist of the following components:

- Introduction (use the Radway readings to make a case for the approach you are using)
- A brief description of the film
- Summary of similar responses to the film (be specific)
- Your understanding of the similar responses
- Summary of variations in responses to the film (be specific)
- Your understanding of these variations
- Conclusions (should include your reflections on this experience)

The project will be worth 100 points. It should be approximately 6-8 pages.

Possible Question for Interviews

Age:

Major:

Year in college:

Gender:

Have you ever seen this film before? If so, when and in what context?

What was this movie about?

What were some of the themes you saw in the movie?

What were the most interesting parts of the film to you?

Describe your experience while watching this movie?

Did you have any emotional reactions to the movie? What were they? During what scenes? [Specific possibilities: fear, anger, joy, excitement, sadness, despair, boredom, etc]. Did your emotional reactions last after the movie was over?

Were there any characters that you particularly liked? Any characters that you identified with?

Do you think you will remember this movie? What about it do you think you will remember?

Did you see any similarities, even indirectly, between the film and your own life?

Did you like the movie? Why or why not? Did you think it was a good movie? Why or why not?

Project #4; Spring 2010
The Psychology of Film; Dr. Dine Young
Due 5/28/10

The final project will also involve interviewing people. This time you will help your participants to explore their autobiographical memories of movies by asking them which movies they believe have been most meaningful or important to them through out their lives. The attached pages give you a list of possible questions that you might ask them. As with the other assignment, the interviews you conduct will be open-ended and semi-structured.

I want you to interview three people. Or as an alternative, you can interview two people and use your own experience as the third participant. Have each participant sign a consent form and record the interview (with written notes or an audio recorder).

A paper will report the results of you interviews. It should have the following components:

- Brief intro & description of method (use reading materials to help establish your approach)

- Case study of each person you interviewed

- An integrated analysis where you establish some “categories of experience” in regard to the role that film can have in viewer’s lives. You will use your data to exemplify these categories.

- Conclusion

The project will be worth 100 points. It should be approximately 6-8 pages. I will be looking for how well you work with the data that you have.

Possible Questions for Project #4 Interviews

Some Framing Questions

--Has there ever been a movie that you have seen in your life that you would say has been particular important to you?

--Has a movie ever had a significant influence on you?

--Would you say that a movie has ever served particular function in your life?

--Has any film ever changed your behavior in anyway?

--Has a film ever changed your attitudes or thinking in anyway?

Some Context Questions

--How old were you?

--Where did you see the film?

--Did you see it with anyone?

--Why was it so meaningful?

Some Probe Questions

--Say more.

--Could you be more specific?

--Give me an example?

Psych/Rhetoric of Film

Study Questions for Dine Young, et al.s' "Character Motivations" article

1. What are the 5 different character motivations for mental health professionals identified?
2. What were some of the findings about character motivations?
3. What is meant by the claim that these motivations can lead to distortions and insights about mental health practice?

Psych/Rhetoric of Film

Study Questions for Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*

Introduction

1. What is wrong with modern children's literature?
2. Why are fairy tales important?
3. What is the role of the unconscious in fairy tales?
4. What does Bettelheim mean by 'polarization' and how is this opposed to simple wish-fulfillment (p. 9-10)?
5. Why are fairy tales relevant to modern children (p. 11)?

"Hansel & Gretel"

1. What are they symbols in "Hansel & Gretel" and what do they mean (according to Bettelheim)?

Psychology/Rhetoric of Film

Study Questions for Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"

[Warning: While provocative, you will probably find much of this article impenetrable. Don't worry about it. I read it every year and I still don't get half of it. Do your best to abstract answers to the following questions.]

1. Why would anybody want to destroy pleasure?
2. What are two forms of pleasure offered by cinema?
3. What is wrong with cinematic pleasure?

Study Questions for "Flitterman-Lewis' "To See and Not To Be"

1. What does Flitterman-Lewis mean by "The Gaze" or "The Look"?
2. What cinematic evidence do we have that Alicia controls "The Look" early in the film?
3. When does Alicia lose "The Look"? How is this cinematically portrayed?
4. What happens to "The Look" in the end of the film? How is this cinematically portrayed?
 5. What is the symbolic meaning of the end of the film in reference to the "The Look"?

Psych/Rhetoric of Film
Study Guide for Bordwell *Making Meaning*

Ch. 1

1. What distinction does Bordwell make between “comprehension” and “interpretation”?
2. What does Bordwell mean by film meaning being “constructed”?
3. What is the role of theory in film criticism? [Warning: Bordwell doesn’t really answer this question, but his discussion about various possible ways of answering is interesting.]
4. What are the four types of meaning?
5. On pages 10-13, Bordwell discusses how the four levels of meaning are not as clear cut as they seem. How does his example regarding *Stand By Me* help him make his point in this regard?
6. What does Bordwell see as some of the important historical traditions in the development of interpretative practices?

Page 36

1. Why is this cartoon funny?

Pages 40-42 & 145

1. What does Bordwell mean by the “anatomy of criticism”? [Warning: You probably won’t understand the way he is using a number of terms on these few pages. Don’t worry about it. Just do the best you can. We will talk about it in class.]

Ch. 10

1. Compare and contrast each of the 7 interpretations of *Psycho* that Bordwell summarizes.

Psych/Rhetoric of Film
Study questions of auteurs articles

Freud "The Creative Writer and Day-Dreaming"

1. What is the connection Freud made between the play of children and everyday adult behavior?
2. Why do children play?
3. Why do adults fantasize?
4. What is the relationship between fantasy and time (p. 439)?
5. What is the relationship between creative writing and fantasy?

Wollen "The Auteur Theory"

1. What are the two types of auteurs?
2. What motifs are characteristic of Hawk's films?
3. What motifs are characteristic of Ford's films?

Psych/Rhetoric of Film

Study Guide for *Husbands and Wives* reviews

1. Read the Corliss article first. It summarizes the real life battle between Woody Allen and Mia Farrow. What are the undisputed facts of this story? What are some of Allen's claims about Farrow? What are some of Farrow's claims about Allen?
2. Now read the three short movie reviews of the film *Husbands and Wives* that came out a month or so after the news story broke. What connections do the movie reviewers draw between the movie and the real life situation?

Psych/Rhetoric of Film
Study Guide for *Vertigo* and related articles

Spoto The Darkside of Genius and The Art of Alfred Hitchcock (excerpts)

1. Read the pages from *The Darkside of Genius* (p. 384-402) first. This section gives some details about Hitchcock's real life during the time that he was making *Vertigo*.
2. Then read chapter (p. 263-299) of *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock* that analyzes *Vertigo*. Make 3 connections between some element of the film and some aspect of Hitchcock's personality of something that was happening in Hitchcock's life.

Psych/Rhetoric of Film

Reading questions of extreme reaction articles

Bozzuto "Cinematic Neuroses following The Exorcist"

1. What is Freud's interpretation of demonic possession?
2. Review each of the four cases with an eye towards similarities and differences.
3. What is Bozzuto's interpretation of why *The Exorcist* affected these individuals the way it did?
4. How was therapy conducted in each of these cases?
5. Advanced Question: If one believed in the message of *The Exorcist*, how would one interpret this article?

Wilson & Hunter "Movie-Inspired Violence"

1. Can you think of any examples from the news recently of the kind of examples that are given in this article?
2. Pay attention to the range of impacts that various films seemed to have.
3. What are the three steps that occur in the viewer that the authors argue are present in all of these scenarios?

Psych/Rhetoric of Film
Study Guide for “effects of film” research

Bandura, Ross & Ross article

1. How do you understand the theory behind this experiment?
2. Who were the subjects?
3. What was the experimental procedure?
4. What was the independent variable (what groups are being compared?)?
5. What was the dependent variable (i.e., what is being measured?)?
6. What were the results in regard to aggression in general and imitative aggressive responses?
7. What conclusions were drawn from this research?

Linz, Donnerstein & Penrod article

1. What does “desensitization” mean in this article, and how is it related to this experiment’s hypothesis?
2. What were the independent variables?
3. What were the dependent variables (pay particular attention to the trial variables)?
4. What were the primary results?
5. What conclusions were drawn from this study?

Psych/Rhetoric of Film
Study Guide for Janice Radway's writings

2. Who is Dot Evans (pp. 213-214)?
3. What procedure did Radway use in conducting her research (pp. 214-215).
4. What is the nature of the relationship between the publishers and the consumers of romance novels? (pp. 215-216)
5. What is the history of Dot's involvement in romance novels? (pp. 216-220)
6. What are the general demographics of the Smithton women? (pp. 220-222)
7. What are the patterns of reading of the Smithton women? (pp. 222-224)
8. Why did the Smithton women read romances? (pp. 224-226)
9. What kinds of romances do the Smithton women like? Why, according to Radway? (pp. 226-232)
10. What kinds of romances do the Smithton women dislike? Why, according to Radway? (pp. 232-237)
11. What kinds of heroines do the Smithton women like? Why, according to Radway? (pp. 237-241)
12. What kinds of heroes do the Smithton women like? Why, according to Radway? (pp. 241-243)

Psych/Rhetoric of Film

The functions of film reading questions

McMillan Article

1. What role did the film The Wizard of Oz have on Terry McMillan's life?

Tesser, Millar & Wu article

1. What is meant by "functions" of film?
2. What 3 functions of film do the authors identify?

Psych/Rhetoric of Film

Study Questions for McAdam's *The Stories We Live By*

1. What is McAdam's notion of identity (pp. 11-13)?
2. What does McAdams mean by "making ourselves" (p. 13)?
3. What is Margaret Sands' story? Do you understand it? Do you relate to it? Do you have any other reactions to it? (pp. 19-24)
4. According to McAdams, what are the components of a story (24-27)?
5. What does McAdams mean by the "narrating mind" (pp. 27-30)?
6. How can stories be healing (pp. 31-33)?
7. What is the relationship between myth and story (pp. 33-35)?
8. What are the stages of narrative development (pp. 35-37)?

Psych/Rhetoric of Film

Movies as equipment of living study questions

Burke Article

1. What does burke argue is the point of proverbs?
2. What is the relationship between proverbs and literature?
3. What is meant by “strategies”?
4. What is Burke’s criticism of “inspirational” and “naturalistic” literature?
5. What does burke mean by “sociological criticism”?

Dine Young articles

1. What does Dine Young mean by “movies as equipment for living”?
2. What is the method of the article?
3. What “developmental categories” are proposed for organizing reactions to movies? How does he use his interview data to support these categories?

Psych/Rhetoric of Film
Cinematherapy reading questions

1. What is meant by videowork in therapy?
2. What are the advantages of videowork?
3. In what ways can films be helpful in therapy?

Grading Criteria for Written Work

Here is the general criteria I use for grading:

'A' papers have all of the qualities of a 'B' paper. In addition, they demonstrate some special quality that makes them exceptional--creativity in style or content; an unusually high level of analytical complexity; significant integration of knowledge beyond the immediate course; an unusually high level of insight; etc.

'B' papers are solid in all areas. They do not have significant problems in any of the areas listed below in regard to 'C' papers. They are well-written; easy to follow; have a clear and coherent thesis; develop arguments in a reasonable matter; meet all the requirements of the assignment; display solid analytical skills; use evidence appropriately; and demonstrate a firm knowledge of all relevant domains.

'C' papers display significant deficiencies in important aspects of writing (or minor deficiencies in multiple aspects), such as:

- Repeated mistakes in grammar, punctuation, spelling and other technical aspects of writing.
- Lack of sufficient knowledge of the domain on which the assignment is based and that students should reasonably be expected to know.
- Inadequately addressing the major requirements of the assignment.
- Lack of a coherent thesis binding paper together.
- Lack of relevant evidence.
- Lack of rational analysis.
- Poor attention to detail.
- Poor organization.
- Inclusion of a significant amount of extraneous material that does not advance the thesis or address the requirements of the assignment.

'D' papers have major deficits in more than one of the above areas.

'F' papers grossly violate one or more of the above criteria and do not contain sufficient strengths to counter these deficits.

'+'s' & '-'s' are determined by the degree of violation of any of the above criteria. In some cases, strengths and weaknesses may balance themselves out (e.g., a paper that shows an 'A' level of creativity but displays a 'C' level of carelessness in spelling and punctuation might be graded as a 'B-').