

## 4. The Lens Essay

### Guidelines: The Lens Essay

The lens essay uses one text to shed light on another in order to show readers something they would not have been able to see if they had examined the texts in isolation. In most assignments, the lens essay challenges students by requiring them to analyze texts on a theoretical level in addition to the thematic level that was emphasized in the close reading essay. Because it requires the use of two sources, the lens essay assignment sequence is typically taught after the close reading essay. The typical length of a lens essay assignment is between seven and nine pages.

#### Goals

- The primary goal of the lens essay is for students to be able to achieve a baseline reading of some piece of culture using a lens text. In other words, students should be able to defend some central claim about the text they are examining by linking moments in that text to categories or ideas in the lens text.
- Students should continue to use and improve the close reading skills they employed in the first essay.
- For more advanced students who are able to produce a compelling baseline lens reading of a text, the ideal of the lens essay would be for those students to complicate their baseline reading using some counterevidence from the text and then to use that complicating evidence to reflect critically back on the lens text itself.

#### Guidelines

- Type of texts: The lens essay typically employs a theoretical text as the lens and uses it to examine a piece of art or culture (the same type of text used in the close reading essay). It is possible to use a non-theoretical text as a lens if you employ it in a theoretical way. For example, you could use Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" as an example of one genre of satire that you would then use to analyze a more modern transformation of the genre.
- Two types of lens essays: Your expectations for the lens essay will differ depending on the complexity of the text you assign your students to examine through the lens. You may choose to ask students to analyze a relatively straightforward piece of popular culture or a complex piece of art. If examining a piece of pop culture, the goal in applying the lens will be to develop a thesis about the deeper meaning or cultural significance of a text that may have initially seemed to be pure entertainment. For example, the application of a Foucauldian lens could turn *The 40 Year Old Virgin* from a gratuitous sequence of crass jokes into a film about overcoming the pathologization of sex in Western culture. If you are examining a more complex piece of art, the goal in applying the lens will typically be to establish new connections and, in turn, new meanings, within the work of art. For example, a piece of Freudian dream theory could be used to explore Poe's world in "The Tell-Tale Heart."

- Pre-draft assignments: The lens essay assignment sequence should require at least two pre-draft assignments. It is recommended that one assignment focus on applying a lens and another should emphasize an element of the academic essay (a different one than the close reading assignment sequence). Model pre-draft assignments for the lens essay are listed on the following page.

## **Pre-Draft Assignments: Lens Essay**

UWS instructors are required to assign at least two pre-drafts for the lens essay. It is recommended that one pre-draft assignment focus primarily on using the lens and another focus on a specific “element of the academic essay,” in this case, defining the motive. Though I offer potential variations on these assignments in a few cases, they have been left somewhat vague in order to allow instructors to creatively adapt them to their own courses in more specific ways.

Pre-draft assignments should not be self-contained. In addition to using them as building blocks for the lens essay, instructors are encouraged to use pre-draft assignments as foundations for in class exercises. In most cases, I relate these assignments to exercises that can be performed either in class or on Webct message boards (or both).

### ***Assignment #1: Reflection on the Lens Text***

The most crucial element in any successful lens essay is a clear and nuanced understanding of the lens text itself. In order to allow students to grapple with the lens text—and especially its language, which they will be using in their essays—ask them to apply their newly acquired close reading skills to the lens text by exploring a difficult passage or concept in 1-2 pages of writing. You may choose the passages/concepts you would like students to write about, or you may leave it up to their choice. I would recommend assigning passages to students that might be most helpful in writing their lens essays. This assignment is especially helpful if the lens text is particularly complex or challenging.

### ***Assignment #2: Mini Lens Reading***

Though you may perform numerous lens readings during class discussion, it is helpful for students to practice applying a theoretical lens *in writing* before they begin composing their lens essays. One method for doing this is to ask students to read an object or event outside of class through the lens text in 1-2 pages of writing. It is usually advisable to have students focus on the everyday—a Freudian analysis of a dream they had last night or two ways they were “hailed” à la Althusser on their walk back to their dorm room. Students will often provide simple baseline readings that you can then use to demonstrate how to complicate and add complexity to a lens reading in subsequent class discussions.

Courses that offer students a choice between two or more lens texts allow for a more sophisticated version of this assignment. Using a single object or event (chosen by either the instructor or the student), assign students to write 1-2 pages that place the two sources in dialogue. The students should first describe one author’s reading of the object or event and then propose a reading that the other lens author would offer in response. If possible, students may continue with a series of responses and counter-responses.

### ***Assignment #3: Quotation Exercise***

Ask students to choose one quotation from the lens text and use it to provide a deeper understanding of a scene from a film or novel that you are reading in class. In addition to teaching lens reading skills, you can use this assignment to focus on the mechanics of quotation. The assignment should require that every quotation have three parts: 1) the lead-in, 2) a parenthetical citation, and 3) substantial analysis.

### ***Assignment #4: Supplying a Motive***

After discussing Kerry Walk’s eight “motivating moves,”<sup>1</sup> ask students to bring to class a thesis and motive for their lens essays printed on separate sheets of paper. In groups of three, students should pass the sheets of paper with their thesis statements on them to their partners while keeping the motives to themselves. Each member of the group should formulate a motive—writing it beneath the thesis on the sheet of paper—that conforms to one of Walk’s “motivating moves.” After each member of the group has supplied a motive for the other members, the authors can reveal the motives they have chosen one at a time, discussing differences in opinion with the other members of the group. At the end of group work, you may choose a few examples to model during class discussion.

### ***Assignment #5: Peer Critique of Introductory Paragraph (Motive)***

After discussing Kerry Walk’s eight motivating moves, ask students to draft the introductory paragraphs for their lens essays and bring several copies to class. In small groups, students should 1) identify the motive in each introductory paragraph and 2) identify the “motivating move” that the author has chosen. Students should then discuss how that motive could be strengthened or supply a possible motive if one is found to be nonexistent. In order to save class time, this assignment can also be done on Webct (especially good for classes that meet only once a week). Have students post their introductory paragraphs and assign two students to respond to each post in the same manner they would in small groups in class. In addition to exposing students to the writing of their peers and emphasizing the importance of peer feedback, this assignment allows the instructor access to each student’s thesis and motive before the lens essay is written, allowing him or her to troubleshoot off track assignments *before* the student composes an entire draft.

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<sup>1</sup> Kerry Walk’s motivating moves are:

1. The truth isn’t what one would expect, or what it might appear to be on first reading.
2. The knowledge on the topic has heretofore been limited.
3. There’s a mystery or puzzle or question here that needs answering.
4. Published views of the matter conflict.
5. We can learn about a larger phenomenon by studying this smaller one.
6. This seemingly tangential or insignificant matter is actually important or interesting.
7. There’s an inconsistency, contradiction, or tension here that needs explaining.
8. The standard opinion(s) need challenging or qualifying.

## Sample Lens Essay Questions

1. Develop an argument about three episodes of *I Love Lucy* as seen through the lens of Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and the work of Judith Butler. In what ways does *Lucy* conform to and/or resist mid-century and post modernist ideals of gender, domesticity, or sexuality?
2. Choose one of the major figures from the "Heroic Age" of Antarctic exploration: Scott, Shackleton, Amundsen, Mawson, or Byrd. Using at least one of our critical sources, develop an argument about how ideologies of empire influenced your chosen explorer's expedition. How have new ways of viewing the past reshaped the legacies of Antarctic explorers and exploration? What is at stake in the way explorers are represented?
3. Using primary texts in literature, art, and law (Nella Larsen's *Passing*, Kara Walker's silhouette museum installations, and the transcript of an important Supreme Court decision), along with a richly evidenced secondary text by critic Randall Kennedy, understand some implications and problems surrounding the social practice of "passing," the feigning of membership in a dominant racial group. Locate problems, arguments, and questions—both stated and implied—in both the primary and secondary sources. Then, building on the practice you gained in discovering an argument in Essay #1, and using the cases most pertinent to your purpose, formulate and pursue a question of your own. The question will not have been fully highlighted or analyzed in the readings, giving you and your reader the motivation to address it.
4. Bearing in mind the concerns we raised about biological determinism (nature not nurture) in biotechnology and the genome project, develop an argument on the ethical consequences of designing humans through genetic engineering or cloning technologies using either Charles Darwin, Richard Lewontin, or Stephen Jay Gould **and** Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*.
5. Using the primary source documents on the blackouts, make an argument that extends, complicates, and/or contradicts Jane Jacobs's thesis in "The Uses of the Sidewalk: Safety" or the thesis of James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in "Broken Windows."
6. Chose a key "mad" scene from one of the musician biopics listed below. Use the theories of Susan Sontag or Albert Rothenberg to critique the director's dramatization of madness and its relationship to musical creativity.
7. For the essay assignment, you will choose a particular contemporary practice of friendship as it is represented in popular culture or scholarly literature. Using the sources from this unit, you will make an argument about the ethical and/or political foundations and implications of your chosen friendship practice.
8. Like Hobbes and Rousseau, the American Framers believed they were promoting liberty when they drafted the US Constitution; unlike Hobbes and Rousseau, the Framers came away with a limited government. Compare the US Constitution to either *Leviathan* or the *Social Contract*. Measure the Framers' success in establishing

the type of liberty they cared about against their theoretical predecessor's. How did suppressing the power of government affect their level of success?

9. Venus figurines have been recovered in multiple sites in Europe and the Middle East, yet archaeologists remain uncertain about their true meaning. Offer a new interpretation of the Venus figurines based on your understanding of hunter-gatherer society. Use the assigned articles as sources of evidence and to provide a theoretical context for the understanding of iconography.

## Sample Assignment Sequence: Lens Analysis, Literature Focus Text (from Andrew Albin)

Now that you have a solid grounding in the analytical technique of close reading and the literary genre of medieval romance, we can begin to apply that knowledge to more modern texts—ones that you might expect to balk at the in-depth criticism and analysis we perform in this course. We will focus on two texts for this essay: an excerpt from Edward Said's *Orientalism*, a revolutionizing critical work that left few humanistic fields untouched, and C. S. Lewis' classic children's story *The Horse and His Boy*, the third volume of *The Chronicles of Narnia* and what *The New Yorker*'s Adam Gopnik called "[one of] the best of the books... where the allegory is at a minimum and the images just flow." While these two texts may seem an unlikely pairing, with your assistance, they can develop an intriguing rapport.

For this assignment, you will use *Orientalism* as a lens to examine the way Lewis' tale betrays deeply rooted British attitudes towards "the Orient": the Arabian influenced regions of the Middle East and North Africa. Said offers us a careful description of how the European West has historically cultivated knowledge and power with the goal of casting the Orient as its inferior, thus subject, opposite. Your aim is to synthesize your understanding of Said's concepts with your interpretation of a specific passage or theme in the Lewis' story in order to create an argument you could not have made through close reading alone. You seek to inform your readers, to open up this children's story in new ways for them—and, in doing so, to help your readers see the potential for producing critical readings of popular cultural texts.

This assignment presents you with a number of new challenges:

- You will be transferring your close reading skills from literary to popular texts. While it may seem a violation to seek out potentially pernicious themes embedded within an innocent children's story, it's important to remember that all texts emerge from the cultural context in which they're written. Though Lewis probably didn't intend to write an Orientalizing book, it would have been quite difficult for him to avoid internalizing the Orientalist attitudes of the declining English empire in which he lived, and similarly difficult for those attitudes not to appear in his writings.
- *Orientalism* is a complex and challenging text. You will encounter many difficult texts during your career at Brandeis, and it is essential that you learn how to effectively make sense of them. Part of your task for this paper is to let your readers know what Said is trying to say and do, and why. You will also need to take a stance on Said's ideas; if you agree with and want to use only parts of his text, you must state which parts you agree with and why, as well as which parts you disagree with and why.
- You will be offering an interpretation of *The Horse and His Boy* informed by a critical text that will help you investigate what the book has to say, how it constructs its meanings, and what the implications of those meanings are. As a result, you will be able to reflect back on Said's ideas with a refined and even critical perspective.

Your essay should be 7-8 pages long and should follow the formatting guidelines in the Classroom Expectations of our syllabus.

### **GOALS OF THE ESSAY**

In addition to continuing work on the goals of Essay 1, this assignment asks you to:

- **Open with an engaging introduction that makes clear your motive.** Recall Gordon Harvey’s description of motive as “the intellectual context that you establish for your topic and thesis at the start of your essay, in order to suggest why someone besides your instructor might want to read an essay on this topic or need to hear your particular thesis argued—why your thesis isn’t just obvious to all, why other people might hold other theses that you think are wrong.” Ask of your thesis, “So what? Why would someone care? What’s unexpected here? How is this interesting?” until you can respond with a satisfying answer. The answer will lead you to your motive. Underline your motive in all drafts and revisions of this paper so it can be quickly identified.
- **Create a dialogue between two texts.** Don’t settle for a baseline reading of the points of connection between Lewis’ story and Said’s essay. Rather, devise a thesis that identifies how (and how well) Said’s theory works as a lens to explain the form and function of Orientalist structures in *The Horse and His Boy*. You will also want to identify a “twist,” a place where your case and lens don’t match up. This is your opportunity to revise, refine, or even critique Said—you need not agree with him wholeheartedly, just remember to explain why you disagree and to logically examine merits and faults. Essentially, you are being asked to both *interpret the story and reflect on your lens*. As always, close readings of specific passages are required to support and/or complicate your argument.
- **Grapple with Said’s central ideas, rather than taking isolated passages out of context to support your ideas.** Whenever you are called on to bring a critical text into an assignment, your essay will not only be judged on the merit of your original ideas but also on how accurately you represent and make use of the critical text. Even when you disagree with the author, you must explain why you disagree, and that requires you to fully understand the author’s position to begin with. When you refer to Said, be sure you engage his main ideas and not a side detail of those ideas; since he presents multiple perspectives in his essay, all of which he does not agree with, be sure you accurately represent his point of view.

**Document quotations using MLA in-text citation method.** This citation method requires that you cite your sources parenthetically in the text of your essay (as opposed to using footnotes or endnotes) and that you append a correctly formatted list of Works Cited to your essay. Please note: discussion or lecture in the classroom is not considered a quotable/citable source unless your professor says otherwise. I do not say otherwise.

## PRE-DRAFT 2.1: UNDERSTANDING SAID

**Due Thursday, February 14**

“Exercises to Help You Read” from our course pack gives you some valuable tips and techniques on how to read difficult texts. One additional method for helping you grasp a difficult text like *Orientalism* is called “reverse outlining.” You may already use outlines to map out your own essays before you write them. By reversing this process and producing an outline for a text that’s already written, you’re forced to boil that text down into its constituent ideas, decide for yourself which ideas are the most important, and arrange those ideas in an organized hierarchy. At some level, it is reductive, but as a technique for working out complex ideas, it can be very useful.

Once you have actively read and marked up Said’s essay, I would like you to produce a reverse outline of the text, rephrasing difficult concepts/passages in your own words and noting any keywords Said introduces. Try to break the essay up into just a few major sections, then subdivide these into a few smaller points, then subdivide again into examples and evidence, and so on. The traditional Roman numeral format:

- I. first major section
  - i. first point
  - ii. second point
    - 1. evidence
    - 2. evidence
    - 3. example
  - iii. third point
  - ⋮

is probably the easiest and most familiar approach.

Once you’ve completed your outline, stand back from it and consider why Said chose to organize his essay in this way. What rhetorical effect was he aiming for? Why? How successful was he? Record these thoughts on the structure of Said’s essay in a short paragraph.

## **PRE-DRAFT 2.2: LOCATING ORIENTALISM**

**Due midnight, Sunday, February 24 on LATTE**

Lens analysis asks you to put two texts in conversation in order to produce a reading you couldn't have through close reading alone. After reading and considering your two texts in detail, you next will need to find points of conversation between them that will open up into a new and original insight.

The logic of the lens analysis paper suggests that these points of conversation can vary in kind. Baseline readings catalogue one-to-one matches between lens and case, while readings “with a twist” notice more nuanced and complex interactions; similarly, points of conversation can be straightforward or more subtle and provocative.

For this Pre-Draft, I would like you to locate three kinds of points of conversation:

- 1) **Obvious baseline match.** Find one passage in *The Horse and His Boy* that is an obvious example of a racist or xenophobic representation, what Said would call “\_\_\_\_\_.” (Notice that this is an intentional misreading of Said, since it strips away the more complex aspects of his argument.)
- 2) **Non-obvious baseline match.** Find one passage in *The Horse and His Boy* that responds to a more sophisticated version of Said's theory, one that's more faithful to his complex argument. Remember, Said isn't interested in labeling racism or xenophobia for its own sake—for him, it always ties back to a complicated discourse that powerfully impacts both Occident and Orient in material ways.
- 3) **Mismatch “with a twist.”** Find one passage in *The Horse and His Boy* which Said's theory cannot account for. That is, you're seeking out a mismatch between lens and case, one that could point you towards your own, original reading that ultimately will reflect back on the lens.

In the “Pre-Draft 2.2: Locating Orientalism” forum on our LATTE page, for each of the three kinds listed above, please type out the quote from Said and the quote from *The Horse and His Boy* you are using, indicate what kind of point of conversation you see between them, and reflect briefly on why it qualifies as such. Be sure to post your three points of conversation by midnight on Sunday, February 24.

## PRE-DRAFT 2.3: WORKING WITH QUOTATIONS

Due Thursday, February 28

Quotations all require three components—lead-in, citation, and analysis—to be most effective.

- **Lead-in.** The lead-in prepares your the reader for the source material you are about to reproduce. Give the author’s full name in your first quotation, with the exception of famous authors (i.e., Shakespeare, Hemmingway, Foucault) whose last name will suffice. After that, use the last name only. When necessary, give background to your quotations to help orient your reader. Fit quotations into your sentence’s grammatical structure by
  - changing your sentence structure to fit the quotation,
  - using only part of the quotation,
  - deleting words that impede the grammar with ellipses, or
  - adding words to aid the grammar with square brackets.

Finally, identify and introduce quotations smoothly, using one of the following methods:

- *Introduction and colon:* In fact, it is this question of mercy that Claudius immediately seizes upon: “Whereto serves mercy / But to confront the visage of offence?” (III.iii.46-47).
  - *Introductory phrase:* According to Freud, Hamlet is unable to “take vengeance on the man who did away with his father...” (qtd. in Jorgens 213).
  - *Subordination using that:* The plan proves Hamlet’s belief that “guilty creatures sitting at a play... [sometimes proclaim] their malefactions” (II.ii.546, 549).
  - *Interrupted quotation* (less common): “What would he do,” Hamlet wonders, “Had he the motive and the cue for passion / That I have?” (II.ii.516-18).
- **Citation.** Punctuate your citations correctly, and use proper MLA in-text citation format. Refer to *A Writer’s Reference* 370ff. for formatting guidelines.
  - **Analysis.** The distinction between evidence and analysis we made for Essay 1 carries over into this context, as well. Here, the citation is your evidence; you need to provide the analysis. A good rule of thumb: however long your citation is, your analysis should be at least one and a half times that length.

For this assignment, I would like you to choose one quote from *Orientalism* and one passage from *The Horse and His Boy*. Write 1-2 pages about that passage, incorporating Said in quotation as a lens to explain the scene's form and function. Make sure you use close reading to stay attuned to the ways the text, at the local level, makes impressions on you; use Said to make sense of those impressions and the cultural project of 1950's England they support. Be sure all three components of the quotation—lead-in, citation, and analysis—are present.

**Please bring two (2) copies to class**

**(for me and for your workshop partner)!**

## **ESSAY 2 ROUGH DRAFT**

**Due Thursday, March 6**

Please write a draft cover letter, addressed to your readers, in which you answer the following questions and present any other concerns that you have. This letter should be typed and should be about three-quarters to a full page long, single-spaced. Attach it to the front of your essay.

- What do you see as your thesis or main idea? How does this thesis engage both Said's and Lewis' texts?
- Select your motivating idea from the worksheet distributed in class and report it in your letter. What is your motive? Underline it in your rough draft.
- How well do you feel you have represented and engaged with *Orientalism*?
- How well do you feel you have performed close readings of *The Horse and His Boy*?
- What are the biggest problems you're having at this point in the writing process? What have you accomplished most successfully?
- What is your favorite sentence? Least favorite? Why?
- What's the number one concern about your essay—thesis, structure, use of evidence, persuasiveness, style, and so on—that you'd like your reader(s) to focus their comments on for you?
- When you revise, what's the one biggest thing you intend to focus on? How?

**Please bring three (3) copies to class  
(for me and the members of your peer review)!**

## **ESSAY 2 PEER REVIEW**

**Due Monday, March 10**

Your goal during peer review is to offer the writer constructive comments that will help him revise, literally to “see again,” from a fresh perspective. This is an opportunity to help your partner become a better writer by pushing for true revision, rather than cosmetic tweaking. As you carefully read each essay you have been given:

- Draw a line under awkwardly expressed sentences and phrases whose meanings are unclear.
- Write marginal notes to the writer on anything that puzzles you, explaining why.
- Label the topic of each paragraph; if you cannot determine the topic, put a question mark.

After you have marked it up, read the essay one more time and then write a letter in which you address the following questions:

- *Thesis and motive*: What is the essay’s thesis or controlling idea? How compelling is the thesis? How arguable is it? What motivating idea from the list distributed in class do you feel the text adopts, if any? What is the essay’s motive? Restate these in your own words. Don’t assume the writer knows what his own essay is about!
- *Introduction*: Does the essay invite you in with an effective opener? Are context, motive, and thesis clear and effective? What could the writer do to improve the introduction?
- *Lens*: Are Said’s ideas represented accurately? Are they engaged with in a full and meaningful way? Are they put in a productive interpretive conversation with the film, or are they simply inserted for the sake of the assignment? Could Said be removed from the essay without much injury?
- *Case*: How well does the essay close read specific details from *The Horse and His Boy*? Are textual details tagged to Said’s concepts in laundry list format, or are they analyzed in an engaged way (i.e., is this just a baseline reading)? Can you identify the “twist”? How effectively is it explored?

- *Quotation and Citation*: How has the writer incorporated material from their sources into the flow of the paper? Are all three components of a quote (lead in, citation, analysis) present? How well are quotations explained and analyzed? Any MLA citation mistakes?
- The writer has asked you one or more questions in their cover letter. What answers do you have to offer?

Be prepared not only to review your feedback with the author in class, but also to point out specific examples and discuss concrete revision possibilities.

**Please bring a copy of each review letter**

**to hand back to each author!**

## **ESSAY 2 REVISION AND COVER LETTER**

**Due Thursday, March 13**

Each time you hand in a revision, you'll hand in a cover letter along with it and your peer reviews. For Essay 2, please answer the following questions and discuss any other concerns you have.

- What is your thesis? How has it changed from draft to revision?
- What is your motive? Underline it in your revision. How has it changed from draft to revision?
- What are you most pleased about in this revision?
- What would you work on, if you had the chance to keep revising?
- What was most challenging in your drafting and revisions process? How did you approach those challenges?
- Choose two “Elements of the Academic Essay” (Gordon Harvey)—one that you think works well, and one that feels less successful—and describe, in each case, why.

## **Sample Assignment: Lens Essay, Advertisement Focus Text (from Sari Edelstein)**

For this essay, you will need to choose a recent American print advertisement from a major newspaper or magazine (not the internet). Once you have selected your ad, you will perform a **6-7 page** analysis of the advertisement using one of the essays we have read in this unit as a lens. You may use either “Hunger as Ideology,” “Framing Class,” or “Virtual Integration.” How does the essay enrich, alter, or complicate your interpretation of the advertisement?

You will continue to work on the goals you had with Essay #1: developing and stating a clear thesis, supporting your argument with textual evidence and analysis, structuring your essay in a logical, non-repetitive way, and orienting your reader.

However, the new challenge is adding a secondary source. You can fruitfully use secondary sources to (1) establish a problem or question worth addressing, such as motive, (2) supply context, background, or information, (3) provide key terms to concepts, and (4) grapple with another opinion or interpretation (such as found in literary criticism). Using a secondary source merely to support or authorize your own point of view is the weakest of several ways to integrate this kind of material into your essay.

Before choosing your ad, you may want to consider which essay you would like to use. This will help you to find an ad that evokes issues that interest you.

Please staple a photocopy (or original) of the ad you are using to your paper.

This essay will require a revision.

Rough draft due in class on Wednesday, March 5.

## **Sample Assignment: Lens Essay, Film Focus Text** (from Joe Wensink)

Analyze the film of your choosing through a theoretical lens drawn from the writings of Tania Modleski or Marshall McLuhan. Much like the close-reading paper, this essay will identify a central question that your reading of the film will illuminate through original interpretations of the details of the film. Unlike the close-reading assignment, however, your central question will be framed by the terms of your chosen theorist's essay, and his/her insights will inform your own.

Although not required, you may wish to use the following two-part strategy to interrogate your film:

1. How do the individuals within the film react to television and the mass media? How could you characterize their responses in terms of your theoretical lens? Are they fair and accurate representations of the critical positions your lens describes?
  
2. More importantly, what overall perspective does the film itself support? Which characters are criticized for their beliefs, and which ones, if any, are portrayed sympathetically? How does the film play on our preconceptions and prejudices about television? Does it perpetuate these preconceptions, or does it complicate them in any useful way?

Consider analyzing the explicit behaviors of the characters in terms of your framework (question 1), in order to draw out the more important implicit meaning of the film's portrayal of television media (question 2).

Remember that whatever strategy you pursue, the end result should be an explicit articulation of some implicit meaning in the film. In the lens essay, you will use your theoretical lens to help explicate this implicit meaning you have discovered.

When you turn in your draft, be sure to include a cover letter.