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Film and Media Studies 96: PROMPT FOR PAPER #3: SPACE

You may use drawings or charts to illustrate your points. Attach them at the end of your paper, though they do not count toward the paper length requirement. Remember to prepare for the second screening; take a moment to think through those scenes and sequences that might help to support your ideas for a possible thesis.

Aim to construct a more specific and complex argument, and to delineate the precise terms of your argument in a detailed thesis statement, which may be two to three sentences. Your thesis should enable you to present a coherent body of evidence in support of an argument that builds and develops over the course of your paper.

A few questions for brainstorming...

How is the narration's presentation of fabula information facilitated or blocked by the style's representation of space? How do the syuzhet and style work together to cue or constrain the understanding of space as coherent, continuous, and contiguous?

In terms of character(s), who occupies what spaces in the diegesis—and why? Are there cues that associate certain characters with certain spaces? How are settings and locations used to convey information about characters and the relationships between them?

How does the film construct spectatorial space? In other words, where are you positioned in the space of the film? Do you move through the space with or without the character(s)?

How does the film generate certain expectations about space? How does the film cheat expectations about space? Is the space mobile or static?

How does the spatial organization of the film contribute to its narrational strategies? How does the spatial organization help to tell the story? What feelings or tone does it encourage about situations or places or characters in the film?

Think of the overall film and its patterns. Are there any patterns created that link settings or characters? Do the patterns follow the conventions of classical Hollywood cinema or are they different? What are the significant variations and shifts in the film's patterns?

Are there any general patterns in the compositional elements--balance, movement, colors, size? How are close ups used? Long shots? Framing? Camera angles? Camera movement? Does offscreen space play an important role? What stylistic excesses are emphasized and what is/are the function/s? What role does lighting play in conveying an impression of the space?

In what kind of space does the film begin? --and end? Is there symmetry?

Are there any overall thematic concerns that are related to space in the film? How are elements of film style used to suggest and reinforce these spatial themes?

Terms and Concepts for Space:

SCENOGRAPHIC SPACE: "The imaginary space of fiction, the "world" in which the narration suggests that fabula events occur. On the basis of visual and auditory cues, we act to construct a space of figures, objects, and fields—a space of great depth, scope, coherence, and solidity" (Bordwell, 113). The scenographic space is comprised of a screen space and an action space.

SCREEN SPACE: two-dimensional surface that contains the compositional elements.

ACTION SPACE: diegetic space

Cues that help construct scenographic space:

- 1) SHOT SPACE: overlapping contours, texture differences, atmospheric perspective, familiar size, light and shade, color, camera movements like tracking, panning, tilting, and craning; depth—shallow space, deep space, ambiguous space.
- 2) EDITING SPACE: Questions: For any series of shots, ask how complete and consistent is the layout of space and what areas tend to be favored? How does the editing provide cues to use to make sense of the film's space? How does the editing encourage the creation of a "cognitive map" of the space of a scene or scenes?
- 3) SONIC SPACE: volume, sound perspective, acoustic cues, sound bridge, off-screen and on-screen sound, ambient noise.

Off-screen space: diegetic or nondiegetic



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