

# *Film Criticism the Beginning*

## *Yojimbo*

## *Pulp Fiction*

This week we head into scary territory...actual film **criticism**. Film is a form of art and many critics believe it is a form of literature. Schools, or groups of critics have looked at film in different ways, and we'll be exploring some of those schools of criticism over the remainder of the course.

This week, we're going to look at 2 major considerations of film criticism: **Cultural Context** and **Film & Reality**

Your first film, Yojimbo addresses cultural context. The film is directed by a man considered to be one of the greatest film makers of all time: Akira Kurosawa. Kurosawa has a remarkable sense of cinematography, composition, and humor. But he is also Thoroughly and Deeply Japanese. Yojimbo is a Japanese Western. I want you to watch it because it takes something inherently American (a culture that I assume you know *something* about) and reinterprets it. Certainly Kurosawa has rich cultural history in his own country to interpret the Western, but his take will be a little different. Watch the film and tell me...

- What elements of the Western do you recognize?
- What does Sanjuro (the main character) have in common with your typical Western hero? What is different?
- Tell me about cultural context – what did you NOT understand because of cultural differences?

The second film Pulp Fiction is highly critically acclaimed. A lot of you are not going to like this film, but I assigned it for a particular reason. One of the FIRST attractions in film was its ability to capture life and control time...you could speed things up, slow them down, or stop them completely. Pulp Fiction plays with our reality. It uses non-linear chronology, and it shows us a "reality" very unlike what most are comfortable with.

- How does the non-linear narrative impact the way the plot unfolds? Would the movie be more or less effective if it were told "in order"? Why?
- Certain parts of the film (as bizarre as it is) are very realistic. What elements come off as more "real" than most movies? What about them is different?