

Film Criticism – Interpreting Reality

Your homework this week is challenging. It asks you to apply what we talked about in class. Film criticism, or different ways of interpreting a movie as a “text” – a reflection of personal experience and reality – isn’t easy, but it is rewarding.

Your first required film is **The Bicycle Thief**. As we discussed in class, this is an Italian neorealist film. It is about a small, almost mundane incident in one family’s life. It is filmed in real places with real people rather than actors. It may bore you; it may win your heart; it may do both. I have 2 questions for you about this film:

1. Neorealism and Cinema Verite are both about social causes and the human condition. In the Bicycle Thief, what is the social problem? Is it human nature or is it social oppression? Prove it to me; why do you come to that conclusion?
2. Neorealism tried very hard to stay away from the typical “Hollywood” way of making a movie. In the film, what is “real” and what is “artistic”? What part of the “real” is effective for you as a viewer?

Your second required film is a totally different one - **Fight Club**. Fight Club is all about interpreting reality. It is the opposite of *The Bicycle Thief* in that it does NOT try to just show reality. The director actively manipulates reality and your (the viewer’s) perception of it. The film is a wonderful opportunity for you to use your newly –acquired film criticism knowledge. I only have 2 questions for you here as well, but the second one is a biggie!

What does the viewer see/not see in the process of the movie? How do the decisions of the film maker actively craft the viewer’s “reality”?

Okay...now...

The “reality” in *Fight Club* can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Pick **one** of the following ways of interpreting it:

- Psychological
- Structural
- Marxist

And write a brief (like 1-2 paragraph) interpretation of the film on the basis of that viewpoint.