

# Road Movies



**Dr. Bob Bednar**

**Department of  
Communication Studies**

**Southwestern University**

**COM 75-684-51**

**Summer 2019**

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**OFFICE HOURS:** by appointment

**CLASS MEETINGS:** M-F 10:00-12:30, FWO 111

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The general purpose of this course is to integrate the study of broad issues within communication studies, media studies, and cultural studies with more in-depth experience working with film as a medium in general and with the genre of “road movies” in particular. Working not only with approaches to film textual analysis, spectatorship, and audiencing within film studies but also with approaches to textual analysis and discourse analysis located within critical/cultural communication studies, this course explores the road movie as a contemporary cultural form--as a film genre but also a site of cultural work where representations, histories, futures, identities, bodies, and ideas converge and collide to *do* things. The course unfolds roughly chronologically, situating case study films within their historically-specific cultural discourses while over time developing a detailed analysis of the development of the road movie as a genre and cultural site, with a special focus on defining moments in the genre, particularly within the subgenre of “outlaw couple” and “buddy” road films in the late 1940s, the late 1960s-early 1970s, and the early 1990s.

**Prerequisites:** none

## **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

**David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie* (Austin: UT Press, 2002)**

All other readings for the class will be located at the course web resource page:

<http://people.southwestern.edu/~bednarb/road-movies/>

The following films: ***Wanderlust* (2006), *Gun Crazy* (1949), *Bonnie & Clyde* (1967), *Easy Rider* (1969), *Badlands* (1973), *Thelma & Louise* (1991), *True Romance* (1993), *Natural Born Killers* (1994), *Get on the Bus* (1996)**

**GRADING:**

Your final grade for this class will be determined according to the following percentages and will be evaluated according to a plus/minus system (e.g., 88-89=B+, 83-87=B, 80-82=B-, etc.):

4 Critical Connections Essays	40%
Road Movie Research Project	25%
Road Movie Analysis Project	15%
Do-it-Yourself Road Movie Project	10%
Class Participation	10%

**COURSE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

The Learning Outcomes for this course focus on developing proficiency in engaging in scholarly analysis, research, and writing that are central to work in both the Communication Studies major and the Situating Place Paideia Cluster.

By the end of the course, students will demonstrate:

- Proficiency in critically engaging critical/cultural theory and critical methodologies in framing arguments that analyze and interpret particular cultural texts and discourses.
- Proficiency in argumentative writing that has a clear object of analysis and logically and coherently develops a clearly identifiable persuasive thesis.
- Proficiency in developing effective research strategies for identifying primary and secondary sources pertinent to the analysis and interpretation of films and their cultural discourses.
- Proficiency in understanding how road movies function as both a film genre and cultural form.
- Proficiency in understanding how characters in road movies construct community, identity, and mobility in relation to place.
- Proficiency in analyzing the way road movies stage conflicts about places of belonging and exclusion where cultural power and privilege are both reinforced and contested.
- Proficiency in understanding how road movies shape perceptions and experiences of place and how existing cultural perceptions about specific places, place-making, and mobility shape how road movies look, feel, and function.

**PROCEDURES AND POLICIES:**

We will discuss more specific guidelines for the class assignments as the course progresses, but here is a short outline to help orient you at the outset:

- **ROAD MOVIE ANALYSIS PROJECT:** This project will require you to produce a (5-7pp) detailed, critically engaged analysis/interpretation of particular elements of **one** of the films we will screen and discuss in the first half of the course: *Gun Crazy*, *Bonnie & Clyde*, *Easy Rider*, or *Badlands*. This assignment will be preceded by a handout; it will be evaluated on a letter-grade plus/minus system.
- **ROAD MOVIE RESEARCH PROJECT:** For this project, you will study a road movie we don't screen in class and use the perspectives of other scholars, theorists, and film critics who have written about the film to place the film into the context of the class. The project involves a significant amount of research into the perspectives of other film critics and reviewers who have written about the film and road movies as a genre and cultural form. The final project will be comprised of a 5-7pp researched analytical/interpretive essay and an annotated bibliography of scholarly film theory, film criticism, and film reviews important for critically engaging the film. Before the Final Film Analysis Project is completed, you must first submit a Project Proposal that outlines the project you intend to perform. This assignment will be preceded by a handout; it will be evaluated on a letter-grade plus/minus system.
- **CRITICAL CONNECTIONS ESSAYS:** These 3-4 pp typed essays are designed to help you sharpen your ability to critically engage the readings as you work to critically analyze each of the films we study in the class separately and together. Beyond that, they also will help you prepare for our class discussions, and they will help me confirm that you are reading and comprehending the course readings. These assignments will be preceded by a handout; it will be evaluated on a 10-point system.
- **CLASS PARTICIPATION:** Because this course revolves around group discussion of materials we have all screened, read, and thought about, daily Class Participation is vital. This is not a lecture class; it demands and rewards your active critical engagement with the course materials as well as with me and

everyone else in the class throughout the term. Good Class Participation means more than merely attending class, which to me is a given. Minimally, it means screening and reading the assigned course materials and coming to class ready to critically engage them—and actively contributing to the class discussion by speaking *and* listening not only to me, but to your classmates as well. More substantially, it means working to make our class a space of open, respectful, responsible, and challenging engagement with ideas, perspectives, and voices both similar to and different from your own.

- **ATTENDANCE:** I expect you to be prepared and in class every day. I will grant one free absence to account for contingencies, but starting with the second, each absence thereafter will cost you ten points off of your final grade—in addition to any negative evaluation of your overall class participation. Please note that documenting an illness or other non-scheduled absence with the Office of Academic Success does not “excuse” an absence; it merely shows why you were absent. If you have absences that are scheduled in advance and officially sanctioned by the University as excused absences—such as absences for religious holidays or for required travel for academic purposes or for intercollegiate athletics--you are responsible for notifying me of the absence in advance and are responsible for arranging the means of making up applicable work in advance of the absence. It is also always the student’s responsibility to arrange for make-up work.

- **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:** Unless indicated explicitly otherwise, you should assume that all writing assignments for this class must be produced using a word processor. The page limits assume standard 1” margins, double-spacing, and the default of Times 12-point font. Citations should be rendered in Chicago, MLA, or Harvard format, with in-text citations in the essay and full bibliographic citations in a separate “Works Cited” section at the end of the paper. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the days indicated in the schedule. Late papers will be penalized a full letter grade for each day that they are late.

- **READING ASSIGNMENTS:** All reading assignments must be completed before class on the day scheduled for discussion of the readings.

- **LATE PAPERS:** Because the Critical Connections assignments are designed to help prepare you to better participate in class discussions and because our discussions will thus work through the material in class, you cannot receive full credit for late Critical Connections papers. Thus: *late papers for missed Critical Connections papers will count for no more than half of the original assignment grade, meaning that you would be able to score at most 5 out of 10 points instead of 10 out of 10.* Late papers for all other assignments will be penalized a full letter grade for each day that they are late.

- **ACCOMMODATIONS:** Southwestern University will make reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. To arrange accommodations students should contact the Center for Academic Success. Students seeking accommodations should notify the Access and Academic Resource Coordinator at least two weeks before services are needed. It is the student's responsibility to discuss any necessary accommodations with me as well.

- **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** It is your responsibility to understand and live by the Honor System, so it will be a good idea to review the policies and procedures outlined in the *SU Student Handbook*. All in-class and out-of-class assignments are subject to the Honor Code; therefore, I will assume that everything you turn in that is not accompanied by a full statement of the Pledge (“I have acted with honesty and integrity in producing this work and am unaware of anyone who has not.”) and your signature will indicate that you have witnessed an Honor Code violation and wish to pursue it. Students who violate University policies on Academic Dishonesty by representing another’s work as their own are subject to review by the Honor Code Council, which includes the possibility of significant disciplinary penalties.

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## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

### Week one:

May 15: Introduction to Road Movies; Screen *Wanderlust* (2006)

May 16: Screen *Gun Crazy, or Deadly is the Female* (1949)

**Read:** Archer, "Introduction: A Road Map for the Road Movie"; Cohan & Hark, "Introduction to *The Road Movie Book*"; Uhlman & Heitmann, "Stealing Freedom"

May 17: Screen *Bonnie & Clyde* (1967)

**Read:** Laderman, Ch. 1; Orgeron, "Introduction: Road Work"; Corrigan, "Genre, Gender, and Hysteria"; Silva, "*Gun Crazy*: Cinematic Amour Fou"

### Week two:

May 20: Discuss *Gun Crazy* and *Bonnie & Clyde*

**Read:** Leong, Sell, & Thomas, "Mad Love, Mobile Homes"; Creekmur, "On the Run and On the Road"; Leggett, "Convergence and Divergence in the Movie Review"  
>**Due:** Critical Connections Essay 1: *Gun Crazy* and *Bonnie & Clyde*

May 21: Screen *Easy Rider* (1969)

**Read:** Mills, "What Automobility Offers Cultural Studies"

May 22: Screen *Badlands* (1973)

**Read:** Laderman, Ch. 2; Klinger, "The Road to Dystopia" [CP]; Orgeron, "Misreading America in Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider*" [CP]

May 23: Discuss *Easy Rider* and *Badlands*

**Read:** Laderman, Ch. 3; Brickman, "Coming of Age in the 1970s"  
>**Due:** Critical Connections Essay 2: *Easy Rider* and *Badlands*

May 24: <<No Class—Writing Day>>

### Week three:

May 27: <<No Class—Memorial Day>>

May 28: Screen *True Romance* (1993)

**Read:** Morris, "The Reflexivity of the Road Film"

May 29: Do-it-Yourself Road Movie Filmmaking Workshop

>**Due: Road Movie Analysis Project**

May 30: Screen *Natural Born Killers* (1994)

**Read:** Carlson, "The Comeback Corpse in Hollywood"; Barra, "Why Bonnie & Clyde Won't Die"

May 31: Discuss *True Romance* and *Natural Born Killers*

**Read:** Boyle, "What's Natural About Killing"; Orgeron, "Roads and Movies as Another Century Turns: Stone & Lynch"  
>**Due:** Critical Connections Essay 3: *True Romance* and *Natural Born Killers*

### Week four:

June 3: Screen *Thelma & Louise* (1991)

**Read:** Laderman, Ch. 5

June 4: Screen *Get on the Bus* (1996)

**Read:** Man, "Gender, Genre, and Myth in *Thelma & Louise*"; Cooper, "'Chick Flicks' as Feminist Texts"; Heller-Nicholas, "The F Word"

June 5: Discuss *Thelma & Louise* and *Get on the Bus*

**Read:** Holt & Jackson, "Reconstructing Black Manhood"

>**Due:** Critical Synthesis Essay 4: *Thelma & Louise* and *Get on the Bus*  
**Collaborative DIY Road Movie Filmmaking Project**

June 6: **Due: Road Movie Research Project**  
**[electronic submission, by 12:30PM]**

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**Road Movies**  
**Course PDF Readings**  
**Summer 2019**

- Archer, Neil, "Introduction: A Road Map for the Road Movie," in Neil Archer, *The Road Movie: In Search of Meaning* (London: Wallflower Press, 2016), pp. 1-9.
- Barra, Allen, "Why Bonnie and Clyde Won't Die" *The Atlantic* 9 December 2013. URL: [www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2013/12/why-bonnie-and-clyde-wont-die/282146/](http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2013/12/why-bonnie-and-clyde-wont-die/282146/)
- Boyle, Karen, "What's Natural About Killing? Gender, Copycat Violence and *Natural Born Killers*," *Journal of Gender Studies*, 10/3 (2001), pp. 311-321.
- Brickman, Barbara Jane, "Coming of Age in the 1970s: Revision, Fantasy, and Rage in the Teen-Girl Badlands," *Camera Obscura* 22/3 (2007), pp. 24-59.
- Carlson, Thomas C., "The Comeback Corpse in Hollywood: *Mystery Train*, *True Romance*, and the Politics of Elvis in the 90s," *Popular Music and Society* 22/2, pp. 1-10.
- Cohan, Steven & Hark, Ina Rae, "Introduction," in Steven Cohan & Ina Rae Hark (eds.), *The Road Movie Book* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1-14.
- Cooper, Brenda, "'Chick Flicks' as Feminist Texts: The Appropriation of the Male Gaze in *Thelma & Louise*," *Women's Studies in Communication*, 23/3 (2000), pp. 277-306.
- Corrigan, Timothy, "Genre, Gender, and Hysteria: The Road Movie in Outer Space," in Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 137-160.
- Creekmur, Corey K., "On the Run and On the Road: Fame and the Outlaw Couple in American Cinema," in Steven Cohan & Ina Rae Hark (eds.), *The Road Movie Book* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 90-109.
- Heller-Nicholas, Alexandra, "The F Word: Power and Gender in *Thelma & Louise*," *Screen Education* 66 (2012), pp. 105-110.
- Holt, Elvin, & Jackson, William H., "Reconstructing Black Manhood: Message and Meaning in Spike Lee's 'Get on the Bus'," *CLA Journal*, 47/4 (2004), pp. 409-426.
- Klinger, Barbara, "The Road to Dystopia: Landscaping the Nation in *Easy Rider*," in Steven Cohan & Ina Rae Hark (eds.), *The Road Movie Book* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 179-203.
- Leggett, B. J., "Convergence and Divergence in the Movie Review: *Bonnie & Clyde*," *Film Criticism*, 30/2 (2005-6), pp. 1-23.
- Leong, Ian, Sell, Mike, & Thomas, Kelly, "Mad Love, Mobile Homes, and Dysfunctional Dicks: On the Road with Bonnie & Clyde" in Steven Cohan & Ina Rae Hark (eds.), *The Road Movie Book* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 70-89.
- Man, Glenn, "Gender, Genre, and Myth in *Thelma & Louise*" *Film Criticism* 18/1 (1993), pp. 36-53.
- Mills, Katie, "Introduction: What Automobility Offers Cultural Studies," in Katie Mills, *The Road Story and the Rebel: Moving Through Film, Fiction, and Television* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 1-16; 227-229; 250-262.
- Morris, Christopher, "The Reflexivity of the Road Film," *Film Criticism* 28/1 (2003), pp. 24-52.
- Orgeron, Devin, "Introduction: Road Work Ahead," from Devin Orgeron, *Road Movies: From *Muybridge* and *Melies* to *Lynch* and *Kiarostami** (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 1-12.
- Orgeron, Devin, "Misreading American in Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider*," from Devin Orgeron, *Road Movies: From *Muybridge* and *Melies* to *Lynch* and *Kiarostami** (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 101-128.
- Orgeron, Devin, "Roads and Movies as Another Century Turns: Oliver Stone and David Lynch," from Devin Orgeron, *Road Movies: From *Muybridge* and *Melies* to *Lynch* and *Kiarostami** (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 155-181.
- Silva, Arturo, "*Gun Crazy*: Cinematic Amour Fou," *Film Criticism*, 33/1 (2008), pp. 1-24.
- Uhlman, James Todd, and Heitmann, John, "Stealing Freedom: Auto Theft and Autonomous Individualism in American Film," *Journal of Popular Culture*, 48/1 (2015), pp. 86-101.

### **Critical Connections Essays**

These 3-4 pp typed essays are designed to help you sharpen your ability to critically engage the individual readings as you work to critically analyze and interpret each of the films we study in the class. Your primary job here is to develop an analytical and interpretive perspective on each film and/or set of films that critically engages the films and the readings to articulate and explore specific and explicit connections between the readings and your own analysis/interpretation of the films we are studying.

To me, "critically engaging" the readings and films means two things. At minimum, it means that instead of talking about ideas and facts as if you just "know" them and talking about the films in vague, overarching terms, you are making direct citations to ALL of the readings assigned with a particular film as the sources where you learned (and/or learned to articulate how you think about) the things you are discussing, and you are making direct references to, analyzing, and interpreting particular elements of the films. It also means that you are not only watching the films for entertainment and reading the course materials for information but also paying attention to them as "texts"—as interpretations and arguments that come from particular perspectives instead of as neutral representations of "the way things are." I assign these writing assignments so I can evaluate *how* you are watching and reading as well as *that* you are watching and reading. I want to know what you think about the movies and the things you are reading, and the best way for me to know that is to see you explicitly showing me how your ideas are connected to the ideas, analyses, interpretations, and arguments you are reading. In the short term, thinking of the films, the readings, and the writing assignments this way will help you do better on the assignments and strengthen our class discussions, but it will also prepare you to do well on the Road Movie Analysis Project and the Road Movie Research Project, which both demand that you effectively construct your own analytical/interpretive perspectives in relation to your research into how other people make sense of the films you are studying.

A note on documentation: You should directly critically engage each assigned reading at least once. Document all references (including direct quotations, paraphrases, and "general indebtedness") using MLA, Harvard, Chicago, or some other standard in-text citation format within the essay and then list all of your cited sources at the end of your essay in a Works Cited section. Here's an example of an in-text citation (please notice how the punctuation works around the quotes and citations:

As Patrick Phillips argues in "Genre, Star and Auteur," "There is a fine line between determining and overdetermining the meaning of a film text" (Phillips, 157). When we do film criticism, then, "the purpose is not to package and make it conform to some standard but precisely the opposite: to unpack its meaning and in the process identify what is distinctive in the particular combination of elements" (157).

### **Works Cited**

Phillips, Patrick, "Genre, Star and Auteur: An Approach to Hollywood Cinema," in Jill Nelmes (ed.), *An Introduction to Film Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996): pp. 122-163.

### **Road Movie Analysis Project**

As an intermediate assignment that is meant to help prepare you for your final Road Movie Research Project, the purpose of this project is for you to gain more hands-on experience writing detailed film analysis while you are still not required to do extensive outside research. To make it function that way, I want you to write an analytical/interpretive essay that critically engages some specific aspect of one of the films we will have watched in the first half of the course—*Gun Crazy*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Easy Rider*, or *Badlands* --within the context we have developed for them in our readings and class discussions. Your job will be to take that context as a point of departure for doing some outside reading of scholarship on the film and developing a more individual critical analysis/interpretation of one of the films. Think of it as your specific and sustained contribution to the conversation that is already going on about the particular film and about film in general in our class.

These essays will be obviously selective. There is no way that you can account for *all* of the things you see in a film in any meaningful way in 5-7 pages, so you will need to make good choices. See the handout on "Film Analysis Interventions" for places to start. Also, when you make your choices, remember your **audience**: you are writing to me and your colleagues in the class, which means that you should assume two things: (1) that we have seen the film (steer clear of extensive plot summaries!), and (2) that even though we have seen the film and probably have our own ideas about how we would "read" the film, we always want to consider other critical analyses that will help us understand it more fully. Show us that you have thought about the film and course materials enough to select out the issues/aspects you are most interested in, build an argument, and show us that you are interested in participating in a written dialogue in the same way that you participate in our group discussions. Do not try to be definitive, just provocative. Stay focused, but ask questions and search for answers.

While you begin to make your choices and ask your questions, I want you to know that when I evaluate these papers I will be looking first to see that you show clear evidence of four things: (1) that you have watched the film and thought critically about the ways it functions as a form of communication (in terms of form *and* content), (2) that you have read and understood any readings assigned in conjunction with the film and have critically engaged them (that is, articulated the ways that they impinge on what you are saying and have made direct citations to them), (3) that you have located, read, and critically engaged at least one outside piece of film theory/criticism pertinent to the film, and (4) that you have tried to connect your analysis/interpretation to the other films and the rest of the film theory/criticism we have encountered throughout the course.

The more specific your essay is, the better it will be. This means that you must constantly refer specifically and directly to the films and written texts you are studying. Generalizations are more meaningful when they have been developed explicitly from analysis and interpretation of specific examples, so it is important to draw your generalizations directly from your analysis/interpretation of specifics, and not vice-versa. Work from the inside out. Move towards the big picture, but always keep your eye on the details and detailed analysis/interpretation of them. It should go without saying that an essay cannot be effective unless it is also organized and expressed clearly. Efficient, concise writing can communicate much in few words.



### **Road Movie Research Project**

The purpose of this project is to study a film we won't screen or discuss in class and use the perspectives of other scholars and cultural critics who have written about the film and any pertinent film theory to place the film into the context of this course. The best way to succeed at it is to think of yourself as a research assistant for the course who is researching an additional film to add to the ones we have studied in the class and making an argument about where it would fit (or not) into the class. This final project will be comprised of two complementary components: a short (5-7pp) researched analytical/interpretive essay and an annotated bibliography.

### **The Essay**

The essay is basically a literature review and teaching guide rolled into one. It should show the range and depth of your research into the film as well as outline and discuss some of the main analytical and interpretive issues that come up when people study the film as well as the main issues you see being important to understanding the film within the context of this particular course. To do that, you will need to do several things:

- 1) describe the film in general, including a discussion of its central themes/issues
- 2) describe and characterize the general shape and texture of the critical dialogue that has arisen around the film
- 3) explore how the film relates to the issues/themes/approaches we've explored in the class, particularly questions of how it is articulated as a "road movie"
- 4) make the case for why/how your chosen movie would work (or not work) as a movie shown and discussed in our class. Note that the movie does not have to fit perfectly with the other movies we've studied, but you must show how the movie is at least different from that context in specific ways and how that might "play" in the course.
- 5) here's the bottom line: critically engage the course context and add to it.

### **The Annotated Bibliography**

The rest of the paper will annotate your central sources. For most films, you will find many film reviews, but you will find fewer scholarly articles of film criticism and fewer reviews that are useful for this assignment in any sustained way. Your job is to gather and study as many sources as you can locate and choose between five and ten to annotate in detail. The more of these sources that represent scholarly film analysis and criticism, the better; if you have no scholarly sources, you must increase the total number of reviews you annotate (e.g. 10-20 vs. 5-10). For this assignment, annotating your sources means writing separate paragraphs for each source. Each of these paragraphs/entries should include three things:

- 1) a full citation in MLA, Chicago, or Harvard style
- 2) a short description of the source's content and approach to the film in general
- 3) a short description of how the source speaks to and from the issues, themes, and approaches we have explored in this class.

**Finally:** When you turn your final project in, please attach PDF copies of all of the articles that you have annotated and discussed in your essay.

**Notes on Significant Technical and/or Formal Features**

*This section focuses on the primary modes of communication used to convey a film narrative. Notes about formal and technical features are particularly useful if they identify features that are pertinent to the overall style and structure of the film.*

**CINEMATOGRAPHY** (includes distinctive lighting, color saturation (with color films) and contrast (with B/W), shot structure (camera angles/compositions, camera movement, depth of focus), and type of scene "coverage"--the relative use of close-ups/two-shots/wide shots/establishing shots, etc.)

**MISE-EN-SCENE** (includes costumes, props, and setting (especially in terms of cultural coding). For instance: What are the significant "pro-filmic" elements, and how and why are they significant? Is the film "shot on location" or in the "studio"? If it is a "period piece," how is the look and feel of the historical period represented on film?)

**SOUND** (includes music, dialogue, and sound effects)

**EDITING** (includes the sequencing and relative distribution of establishing shots, close-ups, inserts, montages, jump cuts, pan cuts, fades, etc. How are they used to shape/convey the narrative?)

**NARRATION** (How is the story told? Is there a narrator? Is the entire story told from a particular character's point of view (POV)--subjective narration-- or is it omniscient, etc.? Is part of it?)

**OTHER** (includes anything else you notice about the "look" or "feel" of the movie)

**Points of Interrogation**

*This section identifies several points of departure for you to organize your interpretation around that are applicable in some way to all of the films we will watch.*

**AUDIENCE/ MODE OF ADDRESS/SPECTATORSHIP.** Who does the film seem to be addressing and how? How do you know? What kinds of cultural references are used (visually and verbally) and how are they used? So what? What is there to say about the experience of watching the film from wherever you are positioned as a spectator?

**CHARACTER.** Trace the development of a particular character throughout the work, paying attention to what the character does and says and what other characters (including the voice-over narrator, if applicable) say about the character. What do these things mean in a larger context?

**RACE/ETHNICITY.** How are race and ethnic identity constructed in the work? How is ethnic conflict represented physically? How do questions of cultural identity complicate the representations of other elements in the film?

**GENDER/SEXUALITY.** How are men and women portrayed in the movie? What can these things tell us about the filmmaker's assumptions about the proper/improper, natural/unnatural roles and desires for males and females? What about presumed sexual orientation and its relationship to gender? What can representations of gender & sexuality tell us about the time and place represented in the movie and the time the movie was made?

**GENRE.** How does the film reference other films and film conventions to show its similarity and differentiation from other films within the road movie genre? What other genres does the film seem to reference as well?

**IMAGE/TEXT.** How much of the story is told visually; how much is told in the dialogue? What are the relationships between the two? Are there recurrent visual images or word images used in the work? How are they highlighted and how do they function? How and what do they mean?

**SETTING.** How does the physical environment of the work influence or give structure to the events and meaning? Which objects manipulated in the story are particularly symbolic or meaningful, and why?

**STRUCTURE.** How does the story unfold in time and space? How does the filmmaker's use of organizational techniques affect/effect the work's meaning?

**STYLE.** How and why does the filmmaker's particular use of verbal and visual language as a rhetorical strategy determine meaning?

**THEME.** Identify the main theme or themes of the movie. How does the film make them apparent? How do you know they are important? How are they related to the overall point of the movie?

**FINAL THOUGHTS: SO WHAT?** What is the main point of the movie? How do separate elements of the film contribute to or conflict with it? Why do you think it was made how it was made? For whom was it made? Essentially, from and to where does the film "speak"? How do you know?

**Pronouns and Possessives:**

**its = possessive pronoun**

e.g. the essay's point of view => its point of view

**it's = contraction of it + is**

e.g. It is a fine day => It's a fine day

**their = possessive pronoun**

e.g. Hondo and Jo Jo's dog roams the neighborhood => Their dog roams the neighborhood

**there = adverb indicating place**

e.g. Their dog usually leaves its mark on that tree over there.

**they're = contraction of they + are**

e.g. Hondo and Jo Jo are looking for their dog => They're looking for their dog.

**Punctuation/Sentence Structure Problems:**

**fragment (frag)**

A fragment is an incomplete sentence that lacks a subject, a verb, or both.

e.g. Washing the car. (no subject, incomplete verb, and incomplete thought)

**comma splice (cs)**

A comma cannot, on its own, join two independent clauses.

e.g. Jo Jo likes barbecue, Hondo prefers tofu => Jo Jo likes barbecue; Hondo prefers tofu.  
=> Jo Jo likes barbecue, but Hondo prefers tofu.  
=> Jo Jo likes barbecue. Hondo prefers tofu.

**fused sentence (fs)**

A fused sentence lacks the punctuation necessary to separate two independent clauses.

e.g. Jo Jo likes barbecue Hondo prefers tofu => see comma splice corrections above

**semicolon errors**

A semicolon can only be used in an extensive series or to separate two independent clauses.

e.g. Hondo stumbled; washing the car => Hondo stumbled; he was washing the car.  
=> While he was washing the car, Hondo stumbled.

**run-on**

A run-on sentence proliferates verbs and subjects and objects without attention to grammatical structure.

**awkward (AWK)**

An awkward sentence stumbles over itself as it tries to communicate its point, rendering the writing confused/confusing. Often the fix is to "write to the point" more directly.

**using the word "however"**

The word "however" is not an interchangeable synonym for the word "but" or "although." It cannot be used to indicate contradiction unless you use punctuation to interrupt the flow of the sentence. If a sentence begins with the word, it must be followed by a comma; if a sentence ends with the word, it must be preceded with a comma. If it is used in the middle of a sentence, it must be set apart either with a set of commas before and after it or with a semicolon and a comma (see also **fs**, **cs**, and **run-ons**).

e.g. Jo Jo says she does not know how their dog gets out; however, I know that she does.  
e.g. Jo Jo says she does not know how their dog gets out. However, I know that she does.  
e.g. Jo Jo says she does not know how their dog gets out. I know, however, that she does.

**Apostrophes:**

A singular noun that does not end in "s" takes "'s" to indicate possession.

e.g. the woman's dog (the dog belongs to one woman)

A plural noun that already ends in "s" takes an "'s" only to indicate possession.

e.g. the boys' dog (the dog belongs to more than one boy)  
e.g. the ladies' house (the house belongs to more than one lady)

A plural noun that does not end in "s" takes "'s" to indicate possession.

e.g. the children's dog (the dog belongs to all the children)  
e.g. the women's house (the house belong to the women)

A singular noun that ends in "s" takes either "'s" or "'s" to indicate possession.

e.g. Charles' spaniel or Charles's spaniel (the spaniel belongs to Charles)

**Punctuating quotes and citations:**

I expect you to critically engage other writers as you develop your own arguments. Document all citations (including direct quotations, paraphrases, and "general indebtedness") using MLA, Harvard, Chicago, or some other standard in-text citation format within the essay and then list all of your cited sources in a Works Cited section at the end of the paper. Notice that the standard format for documenting a quote ends the quote, includes the citation, and only then provides the sentence's end punctuation, as in the following example: As Patrick Phillips argues, "There is a fine line between determining and overdetermining the meaning of a film text" (Phillips, 157).