

Bednar  
Roadside America

**Individual Project #1: Critical Connections Analysis of *Gun Crazy* and *Thelma & Louise* in relation to our assigned readings.** Email submission to [bednarb@southwestern.edu](mailto:bednarb@southwestern.edu) by 9am Friday.

**Assignment:**

Write a 2-page, double-spaced typed essay that analyzes *Gun Crazy* and *Thelma & Louise* and argues a coherent thesis within the framework of the following prompt:

*In road stories and in many Americans' ideas about automobility more generally, physical mobility is connected to social mobility—not only in terms of where you come from and who you are (as well as who people think you are) and where you want to go and who you want to be, but also what physical and social forces encourage and/or keep that from happening, which are often tied to cultural ideologies about gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and ability. To convey this defining feature of American automobility and road stories, which often contain a dual emphasis on moving away from and moving toward different social realities, film theorist Corey Creekmur has developed the useful visual metaphor of the windshield vs. the rear-view mirror (Creekmur 1997: 90-91).*

*Your job here is to apply the windshield/rear-view metaphor to build an analytical argument about physical/social mobility in *Gun Crazy* and *Thelma & Louise*: What are Bart, Laurie, Thelma, and Louise each running from and running toward at different times in these two films? More specifically, who and where are they when we first meet them, and how does their engagement with mobility change them both as individual characters and as “couples-on-the-run”—particularly their shifting perspectives on what is in their windshields and rear-views?*

**Notes:**

To get 10 out of 10 on this assignment, you **must** argue a clear thesis obviously connected to the prompt, you **must** directly refer to specific scenes from the 2 films, and you **must** directly quote and cite each of the 5 assigned readings (Albert, Brigham, Laderman, Man, and Sorin).

As you construct this essay, remember that the main purpose of a Critical Connection essay in this class is to help you articulate your own thoughts about the course materials so that we will have more specific and critically engaged discussions together in class. Think clearly about your audience here: you are writing to me and your colleagues in the class. We all have engaged the course materials ourselves, so we don't need you to summarize plots or convey other known information. We want to know **how you interpret** and **what you think about** what we are all reading/watching.

Additionally, I am using these writing assignments to help me evaluate how you (individually and as a group) have comprehended, retained, and extended the course materials and how you think/write about these issues/phenomena. Therefore, your basic goal throughout should be:

- 1) to show that you have critically engaged the course materials—not only the primary sources like the movies (and later nonfictional written narratives), but also the secondary critical essays you read alongside them from the Course Webpage, and
- 2) to show that you are learning to identify patterns among the different aspects of the class as well as learning to articulate your own interpretive perspectives on what you are learning.