

Star Wars:
Resistance, Rebellion, and Death a Long Time Ago in a Galaxy Far, Far Away

Media Studies 184-01: A First-Year Writing Seminar
Rockefeller Hall 112: T/TR 10:30 – 11:45

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Office: Library, room 29

Office Hours: T/R 9:00am – 10:00am and by appointment



Course Description: In a September 19, 1944 article for the French resistance newspaper, *Combat*, Albert Camus wrote, “Revolution is not revolt. What carried the Resistance for four years was revolt—the complete, obstinate, and at first nearly blind refusal to accept an order that would bring men to their knees. Revolt begins first in the human heart. But there comes a time when revolt spreads from heart to spirit, when a feeling becomes an idea, when impulse leads to concerted action. This is the moment of revolution.” The theatrical release of *Star Wars* in 1977 was itself a revolutionary cultural moment—one that invites a closer examination of why and how this franchise has enjoyed such wide-ranging cultural impact and longevity. Together, we will examine the rhetoric of conquest and empire, freedom and rebellion in the *Star Wars* canon by situating the films in a theoretical context at the crossroads of postcolonial studies and media studies. You will have the opportunity to design and conduct your own research-based, multimodal writing projects that consider representations of the intersections between Imperialism, revolution, and identity politics on the one hand, and form, rhetoric, and the cultural implications of various *Star Wars* media objects on the other.

Course Context: The theatrical release of *Star Wars* in 1977 was itself a revolutionary cultural moment—one that invites a closer examination of why and how these films have enjoyed such wide-

ranging cultural impact and longevity. Yet surprisingly little scholarly work has been done to situate *Star Wars* within the field of Postcolonial Studies. Surprising not only because Empire and rebellion are central to the plot and themes of this space opera, but also because its release coincided with the publication of Edward Said's influential intellectual history of the Western imperial project, *Orientalism* (1978), and the subsequent explosion of the Western literary canon.

As multimodal literary critics, our collective aim this semester is to bring postcolonial studies into dialogue with media studies through a sustained, critical analysis of the *Star Wars* narrative. We'll move beyond depoliticized appreciations of the films to examine their historical, political, and cultural significance across the millennial divide. This means using theory to better appreciate and understand the ways in which *Star Wars* reinforces, complicates, and undermines postcolonial discourse, while simultaneously positioning the films as a lens that can help us interrogate postcolonial and media theories. In other words, *Star Wars* offers us an opportunity to examine and write toward what Michel Foucault refers to as "subjugated knowledge"¹—that is, those discourses that are routinely disqualified by dominant ones: in the *Star Wars* universe, the Galactic Empire is evil and the Rebellion is not only Just, but admirable. Yet one could imagine another scenario in which the Rebellion is deemed a terrorist group. You will have an opportunity to focus your interests as you work to compose a multimodal essay of about 10-12 pages (divided into three drafts) that employs film and/or audio clips, hyperlinks, still images, and quoted text to substantiate your argumentative claims. Your essays will then be collected and organized as part of our open access WordPress Anthology. For detailed guidelines, see the course schedule beginning on 11/13.

While each of you may explore topics ranging widely from, say, a Feminist reproach of the portrayal of women to a consideration of Droid Rights, and from Just War Theory to Wookiee linguistics ("Can the subaltern speak?"²), the subject of our anthology is the relationship between representation—understood especially in terms of genre and medium—and the historical phenomenon of imperialism and of resistance to colonialism. As a paragon of political resistance and the rhetoric of retributive violence, *Star Wars* invites us to consider the possibilities of organized rebellion as a crucible for self-knowledge and deliberate action.

Course Texts:

- Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*, 9th Edition
- Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism, A Very Short Introduction*
- Various Authors, *Star Wars: From a Certain Point of View*
- Roy Thomas and Howard Chaykin, *Marvel Comics Star Wars #1* (.pdf scans)
- [Imaginary Worlds Podcast](#) Episodes 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 56
- *Star Wars films* (On Reserve)

Recommended Supplementary Materials:

- Gerald Graff and Cathy Berkenstein, *They Say, I Say* (3rd Edition)
- [Grammarly](#)

Habits and Practices of Literary Scholars: Studying representational mass media (print, television, radio, film), reading what others have said about these media in peer-reviewed texts and in new media (podcasts, YouTube videos, Twitter conversations, etc.), and entering into conversation with these texts via our own arguments is the work of professional literary scholars. Once you begin grappling with the ideas of others and responding accordingly, you will have produced literary

¹ Foucault, Michel, and Colin Gordon. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980): pp. 81-82.

² Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Eds. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg. (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan Education, 1988): pp. 271-313.

criticism! Our aim is to hone our ability to do this work well through the deliberate practice of active reading, sound research, cooperative discussion, and recursive writing. Along the way, we will engage writing as a social act that requires feedback at each stage of the process from germination to presentation, and from various readers (including colleagues in class, Writing Center consultants, research librarians, and, of course, me).

You are authors, and you should think of yourselves as such. I will therefore read and respond to your work with the same respect and interest that I give to the authors who submit their writing to the journals I referee. That means, however, that I expect you to learn about and follow the social and cultural conventions of professional academic behavior, which (of course) I will help you learn during the semester as some of these conventions can be a bit mysterious. To be sure, these behaviors aren't specific to academia—this is just the context in which we will discuss them. This means that you should find the skills you develop and the knowledge that you gain as a result of this course valuable in the increasingly mediated world in which we live. That being said, learning requires a certain amount of experimentation, which can be intimidating and may or may not result in failed attempts. I hope that you do not view these intermittent failures in a negative light as they will surely be of great value to each of you as you work to discover your individual identities as readers, thinkers, writers, and communicators. After all, knowing what doesn't work is equally as valuable as knowing what does. The end goal of the written components of this course is to deepen your knowledge of how you write and speak—knowledge that will aid you throughout this course, your academic programs, and professional careers. To gain this insight, we will work to develop a strong foundation in the elements of rhetoric that govern all multimodal communication (e.g., audience, purpose, occasion, community, context, and medium).

My hope is that the seminar structure of this course (a joint exploration) will help you feel comfortable experimenting with ideas and strategies that may be new to you, and which may not initially work as intended. I believe that you are capable of excelling in this course, and as such I have designed both informal and formal writing assignments that include peer and instructor feedback as well as multiple opportunities for revision so that you can achieve the course learning outcomes. You should expect to receive timely and detailed feedback on your in-progress work (you will receive my constructive comments no later than one week after you've submitted an assignment). For, just as telling an author that a journal has rejected their work for publication without any explanation as to why does not make that person a better writer in the profession, so too assigning a letter or number grade without an audience-based narrative likely won't help you improve as a writer. You should expect my comments on your work to reflect the thoughts of a curious yet discerning reader; in return, I'll expect that you consider incorporating my feedback into subsequent drafts in meaningful—rather than perfunctory—ways.

Learning Outcomes:

First-Year Writing

1. **Formulating an Argument:** Participate in a scholarly conversation by crafting a paper with a clear, well-organized argument and establishing its relevance to the intended audience.
2. **Marshalling Evidence:** Identify, evaluate, and accurately represent an understanding of primary and secondary source materials (g. summary, paraphrase, quotation) and show the relevance of those materials to their own arguments.

3. **Writing as Process:** Engage various strategies for using writing to analyze and develop their ideas (free-writing, idea-mapping, reverse-outlining, revising, etc.).
4. **Academic Integrity:** Distinguish between plagiarism and the responsible use of sources and cite according to disciplinary conventions.
5. **Mechanics and Usage:** Formulate their ideas in clear and cogent prose while adhering to rules of grammatical correctness.

Postcolonial Media Studies

While the First-Year Writing Seminar Program has a set of shared outcomes (listed above), each individual course within the program has its own content-based objectives. This particular class aims to introduce you to postcolonial theory and criticism. As such, you will learn, analyze, and apply central concepts of postcolonial theory, including Orientalism, The Subaltern, Hybridity, and Manichaeism. Additionally, because our primary text is film, you will develop the ability to analyze and construct complex arguments about digital storytelling. For example, *Star Wars* does not simply transport preexisting ideas about empire and resistance, but is itself a cultural actor influencing the ways in which we identify and criticize imperial practices as well as paramilitary revolt in the 21st Century. To this extent, we will:

1. Examine the social, mediated construction of identities and world knowledge by race, gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, nation of origin, and so forth;
2. Demonstrate sensitivity to cultural differences by recognizing your own and others' biases and work to understand how such biases impact social interactions/mediated communication;
3. Differentiate between personal discomfort and intellectual disagreement in social and cultural conflict situations; and,
4. Develop strategies for deconstructing the old boundaries between elite and pop culture, scholarship and entertainment, media and its message.

Successful Participation: You should expect to contribute in an active and generous way to the work of the class as a whole by asking questions, offering interpretations, politely challenging your classmates, graciously accepting challenges in return, and being a productive group member. This means completing the reading and writing assignments prior to each class session and preparing some ideas or questions you'd like to raise with the group. You should expect to invest about 12-15 hours per week reading, writing, attending class meetings, etc. Through discussions, group work, and assignment drafts you should demonstrate that you understand and can apply ideas relating to postcolonial and media theory. This means reasoning logically and creatively to address issues raised by the films, secondary criticism, your peers and me by recognizing the value of different ways of thinking and communicating through a variety of media. In short, teachers, scholars, and students shift between and share all three roles. As such, this course is structured around lectures, discussion, collaboration, workshopping, and reflection.

Participation, Late Assignments, and Attendance: Since participation forms the nucleus of this class, it is imperative that both you and I are prepared to discuss the readings prior to each class session and submit assignments on time. I will lower by one letter grade any late work. Work that is over one week late will not be accepted. Extensions on assignments may be granted, but only on a case-by-case basis. I understand that unexpected emergencies arise, so please budget your time so that you aren't working on these projects at the last minute in case something does come up. If you run into such a problem that affects your ability to complete a particular assignment on time, I urge you to contact me as soon as possible, and before the assignment is due. Please note, however, that extensions are not automatic upon request.

Diversity: As given in its mission statement, Vassar "strives to pursue diversity, inclusion, and equity as essential components of a rich intellectual and cultural environment in which all members, including those from underrepresented and marginalized groups, are valued and empowered to thrive." As such, this course will serve students from all backgrounds. The wide array of perspectives

that each of us contributes to this class is a resource that will strengthen and enhance our intellectual community. What this means for you, a college student, is that you must use this time to prepare to venture forth into a world where diversity and different cultures are the norm.

Academic Integrity and Honesty: You should feel free to study and discuss class concepts with your classmates. Working with a group can be beneficial to your understanding of the course material, and this working style is highly encouraged. However, you should refrain from claiming someone else's work as your own. You should read through [*Going to the Source: A Guide to Academic Integrity and Attribution at Vassar College*](#) and bring any questions or concerns you have to class. I am also happy to discuss issues of academic integrity and attribution one-to-one during office hours.

Writing Center: In addition to meeting with me during office hours to discuss coursework and my written comments, I strongly encourage you to visit the Writing Center. Getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels, and Writing Center consultants can offer a fresh perspective on any writing project, multimedia project, and oral presentation. They offer one-to-one and small group consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and effectively using sources. You should feel free to drop in at any point in your writing process—from planning and drafting to revising and editing. To make an appointment visit mywco.com/vassar

Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity: Academic accommodations are available for students registered with the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (AEO). Students in need of disability (ADA/504) accommodations should schedule an appointment early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course that have been approved by the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity, as indicated in your AEO accommodation letter.

EOAA and Title IX: Please be aware all Vassar faculty members are “responsible employees,” which means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I must share that information with the Title IX Coordinator. Although I have to make that notification, you will control how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need. If you wish to speak to someone privately, you can contact a SART (Sexual Assault Response Team) advocate 24/7 by calling the CRC at 845-437-7333.

Course Feedback: I encourage you to provide feedback to me on how the course is progressing for you. You will have the opportunity to fill out a mid-semester course evaluation, and the course will conclude with the College's official CEQ (Course Evaluation Questionnaire). I welcome your personal feedback in the interim either through e-mail or in person during my office hours.

Grading Criteria for Written Work

- A Applies to compositions that are clearly superior in their development and expression of ideas. An A paper may not be flawlessly proportioned or totally error-free, but it does all of the following:
- engages the topic thoughtfully and imaginatively; in addition to a detailed understanding of the topic, it has interesting, new or important insights to convey
 - develops a thesis or idea using a logical structure; it has sound organization and offers detailed analyses of the evidence cited to support arguments
 - uses sentences varied in structure and complexity to achieve a clear and eloquent expression of the ideas it discusses
 - makes few or no mechanical mistakes (i.e. spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc.)
- B Applies to good, solid and competent compositions. A B paper does most of the following well:
- responds intelligently to the topic with a clear thesis that is solid but not striking; ideas do not progress much beyond readings or classroom discussions
 - is focused and provides an orderly progression of the argument or ideas, which are reasonable and anchored in examples drawn from readings and classroom discussions
 - uses clearly written sentences, though the style may be slightly awkward at times
 - makes some minor mechanical errors, but no major ones
- C Applies to satisfactory compositions. A C paper usually:
- responds reasonably, if unimaginatively, to the topic; it may have a weak or fuzzy thesis and show some confusion about the topic
 - shows some sense of overall structure, but the organization and connection between ideas may not always be clear; it may ramble at times and does not adequately back up points with evidence from readings or class discussions
 - uses understandable if not always eloquent sentences; some sentences may not accurately or clearly convey the ideas being presented
 - makes many minor mechanical errors and distracting mistakes (words are missing, diction is inconsistent); proofreading is weak
- D Applies to less-than-satisfactory compositions. These papers usually lack the coherence and developments of C papers and exhibit significant deficiencies. In addition, a D paper often:
- offers a simplistic or inappropriate response to the topic; the thesis is usually missing or may be entirely incorrect (a serious misreading of a text, for instance)
 - shows little sense of structure and organization
 - makes frequent and serious mechanical errors that impede communication and understanding
- F Applies to papers with serious weaknesses in many errors. An F paper shows severe difficulties in writing. It:
- offers little substance and may disregard the topic's demands
 - lacks any focus, organization, or development
 - misuses words and contains abundant mechanical errors
 - is plagiarized in part or as a whole

Adapted from: Harry Edmund Shaw, "Chapter 5," in *Teaching Prose*, Ed. Fredric V. Bogel and Katherine K. Gottschalk. New York: W.W. Norton, 1984.

Grading Criteria for Course Participation

	Exemplary	Proficient	Minimally Acceptable	Developing	Unacceptable
Attendance and Punctuality	Student is always present and on-time.	Student is almost always present and on-time, but may have been late or absent on one or two occasions.	Student is almost always present, but has been late or left class early on a few occasions.	Student has missed more than two class sessions and may also have been late or left early on several occasions.	Student is consistently late or leaves early and/or has missed more than three class sessions.
Preparation	Student always exhibits evidence of having completed all assignments and has reviewed and synthesized reading and material from previous class sessions.	Student almost always exhibits evidence of having completed all assignments, having reviewed and synthesized reading and material from previous class sessions.	Student usually exhibits evidence of having completed all assignments, having reviewed and synthesized reading and material from previous class sessions.	Student occasionally exhibits evidence of having completed all assignments, or often seems unprepared and with only superficial preparation.	Student consistently exhibits little evidence of having prepared, read, and/or thought about assigned material and material from previous class sessions.
Frequency of in-class participation	Student initiates quality contributions at least once in each class period.	Student initiates quality contributions at least once per week.	Student initiates quality contributions on occasion.	Student does not initiate contributions and requires instructor to solicit input.	Student does not initiate contributions or provide adequate responses to instructor solicitations for input.
Quality of comments/responses	Comments/responses are consistently insightful and constructive, and use appropriate terminology. Student asks clarifying questions in a constructive way.	Comments/responses are mostly insightful and constructive, and use appropriate terminology.	Comments/responses are sometimes constructive, with occasional signs of insight. Student does not consistently use appropriate terminology. Occasionally, comments are not relevant to the topic at hand.	Comments/responses are rarely constructive. Student rarely uses appropriate terminology. Comments are not usually relevant to the topic at hand and/or betray a lack of preparation.	Comments/responses are not constructive. Student does not use appropriate terminology. Comments are not relevant to the topic at hand.
Listening Skills	Student consistently listens attentively when material is being presented by others and demonstrates this attentiveness through thoughtful comments and responses.	Student consistently listens attentively when material is being presented by others.	Student is mostly attentive when material is being presented by others.	Student is often inattentive.	Student does not listen, detracts from class activities, sleeps, and/or uses electronic devices inappropriately.
Group Work	Student always engages fully in group activities, and shows a good balance between contributing to the group and giving others the space to contribute.	Student typically engages fully in group activities. Occasionally, the student struggles with the balance between contributing to the group and giving others the space to contribute.	Student always participates in group activities, but often has difficulty balancing their contributions to the group with giving others the space to contribute.	Student typically participates in group activities, but rarely contributes fully or rarely giving others the space to contribute.	Student disengages during group activities and works alone or dominates the group in a way that does not give other the space to contribute.
Participation Outside of Class	Student regularly attends office hours and other department activities, and consults outside academic resources (e.g. research librarians, Writing Center).	Student sometimes attends office hours and other department activities, and consults outside academic resources (e.g. research librarians, Writing Center).	Student occasionally attends office hours and consults outside academic resources (e.g. research librarians, Writing Center).	Student has attended office hours and consulted outside academic resources at least once.	Student does not attend office hours or consult outside academic resources.

Class Schedule

Below is a tentative course schedule with reading and writing assignments. You should read the sections of the text listed in the schedule and complete any written assignments before the associated class meeting. While this course will require hard work (expect 12-15 hours per week including class meetings, reading, and homework) you will learn a great deal, and, hopefully, enjoy the process.

Guiding Questions:

- How does *Star Wars*, explicitly or allegorically, represent various aspects of colonial oppression?
- What does *Star Wars* reveal about the problematics of post-colonial identity, including the relationship between personal and cultural identity and such issues as double consciousness and hybridity?
- What person(s) or groups does *Star Wars* identify as "other" or stranger? How are such persons/groups described and treated?
- What does *Star Wars* reveal about the politics and/or psychology of anti-colonialist resistance?
- What does *Star Wars* reveal about the operations of cultural difference—the ways in which race, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, cultural beliefs, and customs intersect to form individual identity—in shaping our perceptions of ourselves, others, and the world in which we live?
- How does *Star Wars* respond to or comment upon its own characters, themes, or assumptions?
- How does *Star Wars*, a piece of media in the Western pop-culture canon, reinforce or undermine colonialist ideology through its representation of colonialization?
- What are the implications of removing *Star Wars* from its original cultural and theatrical contexts?

Week One: Postcolonial Media Studies

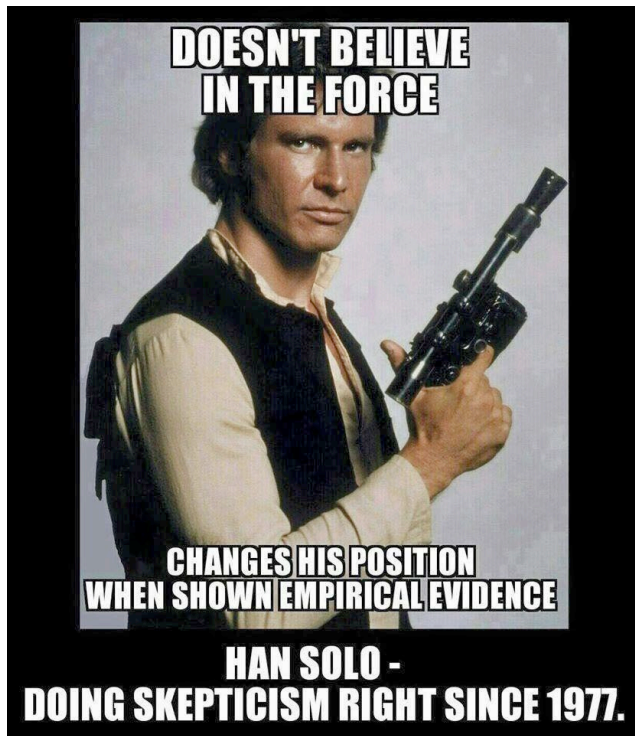
Tue. 9/4 “You must unlearn what you have learned” (Yoda, *The Empire Strikes Back*).

Small group rhetorical analysis of *Star Wars* propaganda posters. While images certainly contain information, they are not primarily conveyers of this inert information. Rather, images are rhetorically purposeful messages aimed at effecting some change in the reader’s view of the subject. As readers become more aware that images are trying to change their views in some way, we can interrogate them more actively, trying to decide what to accept and what to doubt. What do we learn about the Empire or the Rebellion from reading their propaganda posters?



Thurs. 9/6 Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* pp. 1–18

- 8 **Han Solo:** “I’ve flown from one side of this galaxy to the other. I’ve seen a lot of strange stuff, but I’ve never seen anything to make me believe there’s one all-powerful force controlling everything. There’s no mystical energy field that controls my destiny” (*Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*).



Week Two: Aestheticization of Culture and Politics

Tue. 9/11 Young, *Postcolonialism* pp. 1–68

Marginalia

The goal of this assignment is to carry on a dialogue with the author in the margins. Use the margins to summarize the text, ask questions, give assent, protest vehemently—don't just color the pages with highlighter. Every time you highlight something, write out in the margins why you wanted to underline it. Why is that passage important? Is it a major new point in the argument? A significant piece of support? A summary or the opposition? A particularly strong or particularly weak point?

Thurs. 9/13 Young, *Postcolonialism* pp. 69–147

Summary (required Writing Center consultation: www.mywco.com/vassar)

Summary writing requires that the reader separate main ideas from supporting details, thereby providing practice at finding the hierarchical structure of an essay. Moreover, it requires that readers suspend their own egocentrism, leaving out their own ideas in order to listen carefully to the author. For this assignment, you'll craft a one-page summary of a single chapter from *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, which will be a restatement of the text's main argument in your own words. You can write a summary, make an outline, or design a flowchart or a diagram of the reading. The purpose of this page is to help you understand as fully as possible the structure and details of Young's argument. This page should help you recall the chapter in some detail several weeks from now.

Your one-page chapter summary (whatever form it takes) should illustrate that you:

- Understand the meaning. Look up words or concepts you don't know so that you understand Said's sentences and how they relate to one another.

- Understand the organization. Work through the text to identify its sections—single paragraphs or groups of paragraphs focused on a single topic. To understand how parts of a work relate to one another, try creating a reverse outline.
- Distill each section. Write a one or two-sentence summary of each section. Focus on the main point of the section, omitting example, facts, and other supporting evidence.
- State the main idea. Write a sentence or two capturing the central idea.
- Support the main idea. Write a full paragraph (or more, if needed) that begins with the central idea and supports it with the sentences that summarize sections of the work. The paragraph should concisely and accurately state the thrust of the entire work.
- Use your own words. Re-create the meaning of the work in a way that makes sense for you and your reader.

Week Three: Not that long ago; not that far away

Tue. 9/18 Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* pp. 19–85
Imaginary Worlds Podcast, “[1977](#)”

In his “Theses on the Concept of History,” Walter Benjamin asks us to think about the ways in which historical narratives are (re)produced and consumed. (1) Who, for instance, are the victors of history; who gets left behind? (2) Who gets to define, label, and categorize time within the boundaries of history, and who does not? (3) How does dogmatism and ideology shape the frames through which we understand history? (4) How can we recover the lived, material experiences that are left out of history when it is only conceived of as progressive, or as marching toward some teleological end? (5) And, what is *authenticity*, and what are the *mechanics* of the constitution of perceived authenticity?

Ultimately, why might these questions be significant given our postcolonial focus on the *Star Wars* canon? While this is not a formal writing assignment, I would suggest preparing written comments (that may even include questions for further discussion) that you can rely upon during our conversation.

Thurs. 9/20 *Star Wars: Episode IV—A New Hope* (1977)



Week Four: Can the Subaltern Speak?³

Tue. 9/25 *From A Certain Point of View* pp. 3–92

Discussion Questions: Group One

For each cluster of stories we read in *From A Certain Point of View*, a small group will be responsible for writing five or six discussion questions. Your questions may voice interpretive assumptions about the text at hand, but try to develop open-ended queries that you don't necessarily know the answer to, but that you feel strike in some way to the heart of the narrative under consideration. You may, of course, present questions that attempt to understand how postcolonialism helps us to better understand *Star Wars* and vice versa, but you might also want to consider narrative or aesthetic choices as well. Please post your questions to the "Discussion Questions Google Doc" no later than 5pm the day before our meeting. Some points to consider when constructing quality questions:

1. The question should be open ended. Open-ended questions invite discussion and debate and lead to an informed position; close-ended questions can be answered with a simple yes or no. Good questions tend to generate more questions. For example, "Why does it matter that Han shot first in the original theatrical release of *Star Wars*? And how does Lucas's editing in the 1990s that has Greedo shoot first impact Han's character development?"
2. The questions should build on what we have studied. They should engage the issues under the discussion in the class or the readings; they should use information and concepts understood by the other class members; they should explore ways of incorporating new information into what is already known. For example, in Robert J.C. Young's *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*, postcolonial feminism is generally defined as, "any challenge to dominant patriarchal ideologies by women of the third world" (109). In what ways does Beru Whitesun Lars's story challenge the patriarchy of *Star Wars*?
3. The questions should be directed at the assumptions and conclusions of the discussed topic. They should challenge assertions and conclusions that are illogical or weak; they should illustrate a general refusal to accept easy answers to complex questions; they should always be directed to specific points of the subject under analysis. For example, *Star Wars* famously contradicts itself time and time again. In the story "Time of Death," Obi-Wan Kenobi informs us that he is narrating from beyond the grave: "I am dead... This is happening... At least, I think it is" (333). Obi-Wan's uncertainty here is troubling given his final declaration to Darth Vader that, "If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you can ever imagine" (333). Should we question Obi-Wan's knowledge of the force? Or is this a rumination on the mystery of death even for a spiritual master? What does such uncertainty teach us about religious faith?

Thurs. 9/27 *From A Certain Point of View* pp. 93–196
Imaginary Worlds Podcast, "[Han Shot Solo](#)"

Discussion Questions: Group Two

Week Five: Can the Subaltern Speak?

Tue. 10/2 *From A Certain Point of View* pp. 197–296
Imaginary Worlds Podcast, "[Empire vs Rebels](#)"

Discussion Questions: Group Three

Thurs. 10/4 *From A Certain Point of View* pp. 297–366

³ Recommended further reading: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988. 271-313.

Discussion Questions: Group Four

Week Six: Strangers and Narrative Complications

Tue. 10/9 *From A Certain Point of View* pp. 367-459

Discussion Questions: Group Five

Thurs. 10/11 **Midterm Writing Assignment**

Write an approximately 500-word response to one of the discussion questions to *Star Wars: From a Certain Point of View*. This can be one of the questions you wrote on during class, discussed in small groups, or that we didn't directly engage. Your response should have an argumentative claim that addresses the question at hand, evidence in support of your claim drawn from two sources: (1) at least one story from the collection and (2) the filmed version of *A New Hope*. Additionally, you may want to draw on the Imaginary Worlds podcast or *A Very Short Introduction to Postcolonialism* in order to provide definitions to contested terms (how, for instance, might one define 'rebellion' or even 'postcolonial' for that matter), and you'll want to indicate the significance or implications of your argument. In short, how does your reading of Wuhur's story, for example, change the way in which you view or think about *Star Wars*?

A useful resource to help structure your response might be *They Say, I Say*, which offers strategies and templates for presenting different types of arguments. You should email your response papers to me by class-time today.

October Break: 10/12 – 10/21

Week Seven: Expanded Universe//Alternative Media

Tue. 10/23 Roy Thomas and Howard Chaykin, *Marvel Comics Star Wars #1* (.pdf scans)
Imaginary Worlds Podcast, "[The Expanded Universe](#)"

Thurs. 10/25 Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* pp. 112–130

Week Eight: The Empire Strikes Back



Tue. 10/30 *Star Wars Episode V—The Empire Strikes Back* (1980)

Thurs. 11/1 3-minute Research Presentations

Abstract Due

“A rhetorician,” writes Kenneth Burke, “is like one voice in a dialogue. Put several such voices together, with each voicing its own special assertion, let them act upon one another in co-operative competition, and you get a dialectic that, properly developed, can lead to views transcending the limitations of each” (“Rhetoric—Old and New”). To achieve such transcendence, one must (in the words of Joseph Harris), “respond to the work of others in a way that is both generous and assertive” (1). Despite the fact that an abstract is quite brief, about 250 words, it must do almost as much work as the multi-page article that follows it. There are a number of required elements to any successful abstract which must be stylistically combined to create an engaging piece of prose for your intended audience (in this case, an anthology editor). This means providing a bit of background information—what is the ‘gap’ in current *Star Wars* scholarship that you hope to fill? What is your original argument? What approach will you take in your textual analysis? And what are the implications of your research?

Week Nine: Return of the Jedi



Tue. 11/6 *Star Wars Episode VI—Return of the Jedi* (1983)

Thurs. 11/8 Ritu Tyagi, “Understanding Postcolonial Feminism in Relation with Postcolonial and Feminist Theories.” *International Journal of Language and Linguistics* 1.2 (2014): 45-50 (.pdf).
Imaginary Worlds Podcast, “[Slave Leia](#)”

Persuasion

While texts certainly contain information, they are not primarily conveyers of this inert knowledge. Rather, texts are rhetorically purposeful messages aimed at effecting some change in the reader’s view of the subject. As readers become more aware that texts are trying to change their views in some way, we can interrogate texts more actively, trying to decide what to accept and what to doubt. Write brief responses (100-200 words) to each of the following questions:

1. Before I read “Understanding Po-co Feminism,” Tyagi assumed that I believed...
2. After I finished reading “Understanding Po-co Feminism,” Tyagi wanted me to believe...
3. Tyagi was/was not successful in changing my view. How so? Why or why not?

Week Ten: Writing

Workshop

Tue. 11/13 In-class Peer-review

Draft 1: 4-5 multimodal pages (plus Annotated Bibliography)

This brief exploratory research and literary analysis assignment should be based on your own close reading of assigned course texts, including both postcolonial theory and the *Star Wars* films; your argument should be couched in a careful theoretical context and substantiated with examples from the films. You should also begin to look for additional scholarly sources appropriate to your specific argument.

The draft that you submit should be carefully proofread and formatted according to correct MLA style. The “Works Cited” page will not be counted as part of the required page length. Although this draft is much shorter than the final term paper for the course, I will evaluate these papers as though they are final drafts, and will expect academic language, a clear thesis, incorporation of criticism, support in the form of quotation and analysis, logical organization, and professional presentation.

Below I’ve provided a sample outline for organizing your essays. You may modify this structure as it suits your needs; the number of paragraphs in each section may vary, for example. Nonetheless, every successful paper will include an argumentative thesis, effective use of relevant academic sources, and supporting textual analysis.

I. Introduction

Paragraphs 1-2: Briefly introduce the issue that your paper addresses and provide a specific and original thesis that maps out the structure of your subsequent argument.

Paragraphs 2-4: Give a short overview of relevant current critical arguments about the texts and issue you are considering, and explain how your argument responds to other critical positions (do you agree, disagree, or go in an entirely new direction?). This section should incorporate a number of sources from your own independent research.

Paragraph 4 or 5: Restate your thesis in more detail, and briefly map out the textual support that you will examine.

II. Body: The number of body paragraphs will vary, but your evidence should incorporate specific analysis of short passages from the text as support. Each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence explaining how the example to follow will support, complicate, and/or refine your overall thesis. Topic sentences should be followed by close readings of key passages. You may briefly refer to outside sources, where necessary, in the body paragraphs, but the main focus of this section of the paper should be on developing your own specific argument through careful textual analysis.

III. Conclusion: Your conclusion should not only restate your thesis and sum up your larger support; it should also gesture beyond the narrow scope of your paper toward the larger implications of your argument (ask yourself, “so what, who cares?”). You may also choose to revisit key secondary sources from a new perspective at the close of your argument.

Thurs 11/15 Imaginary Worlds Podcast, “[Workin’ on the Death Star](#)”

Week Eleven: Writing

Workshop

Tue. 11/20 In-class Peer-review

Draft 2: 6-8 multimodal pages (plus Annotated Bibliography)

The purpose of this draft is to produce a nearly-complete version of your final article. In this paper, you have several options for developing an argument:

1. You may significantly expand on the argument that you began in Draft 1 by analyzing additional elements in the text and adding new critical sources.
2. You may develop the argument of Draft 1 further by adding comparisons between the initial film or films you analyzed and another (later or earlier) film.
3. Finally, you may change the focus of your argument to an entirely new text or set of texts from the class.

Whichever option you choose, as in Draft 1, you should base your argument on careful textual analysis and relate it to ideas of Imperialism and/or rebellion in a meaningful way. In Draft 2, you should cite at least five sources. Coming to office hours to discuss your ideas for revising and expanding your argument in Draft 2 is strongly recommended, and required if you want to change your focus significantly. While I am not requiring that these drafts are the full length of your final article, I do strongly encourage you to write as much of the final version as you can. The more rigorous and serious you are about this assignment will certainly be apparent in your published essay. As with Draft 1, be sure to proofread carefully and follow appropriate MLA style and formatting guidelines for in-text citations and “Works Cited.”

Peer Review memo:

Write a brief memo of guidance for the peer who will review your rough draft. The memo includes two components: a context paragraph and a list of direct questions.

Context Paragraph: The context paragraph should explain anything you would like your peer reviewer to know (e.g., stage of development, purpose, struggles, intentions). This paragraph will clue your reader in to what you already know and what you need. For instance, if you know that a certain portion is incomplete or requires more work, you can save the reviewer effort by acknowledging this. You can also give the reviewer an idea of the level of criticism you are comfortable with (e.g., “I am confident with my introduction section, so I’m ready for a level-10 review there. But, please go gentler on the conclusion, as I could use help developing a broader argument.”). In your context paragraph, *you must answer the question*: “what area(s) do you most want to revisit?—i.e. which areas/aspects do you most want to rework in your next draft?”

Direct Questions: Your direct questions should solicit specific feedback and help your peer reviewer focus on what you need most. Peer review involves the art of asking good questions: the more effective your questions, the better your peer feedback will be. For instance, rather than asking “does my writing flow?”, identify a specific area or issue in the paper that could use attention: “I am struggling with the transition from my description of the pertinent theory (paragraph 7) to the summary of the most important work relating to the topic (paragraph 8). How could I make this connection better?”

Purpose: Peer review is an excellent opportunity for reciprocal student learning and allows you to receive more feedback and engage more frequently in the course content. Research shows that this process benefits both the students who receive and provide feedback. Getting useful feedback depends on how you frame your requests for it. Developing this skill can help you receive effective feedback while allowing you to also reflect on and analyze your own work. The first step is to frame the type of feedback you need to receive in order to improve your work.

Thanksgiving Break 11/21 – 11/25

Week Twelve: Communicating
Research



Tue. 11/27 *Star Wars Episode VII—The Force Awakens* (2015)

“In a culture like ours,” writes Marshall McLuhan, “long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical fact, the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.”⁴ Luke’s lost lightsaber plays a crucial role in Rey’s introduction to the force. In the words of Obi-Wan Kenobi, “This is the weapon of a Jedi Knight. Not as clumsy or as random as a blaster. An elegant weapon for a more civilized age” (*Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*). This ancient media (advanced in our own time) simultaneously defines and is defined by its *age*. In what ways does the weapon represent or in what ways is it represented by the struggle between The Resistance and the First Order? What is the significance of Rey’s innate ability to wield the weapon without any training? Of course, Starkiller Base (as the Death Stars before it) is also a weapon. McLuhan writes that, “The city, itself, is traditionally a military weapon, and is a collective shield or plate armor, an extension of the castle of our very skins” (454). Here we have an entire planet that has been weaponized. What might this say about contemporary globalism and neo-colonialism?

Thurs. 11/29 Conference Organization

Week Thirteen:
Presentations

⁴ Marshall McLuhan, “The Medium is the Message,” *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Ed. W. Terrence Gordon (Berkeley, CA: Gingko Press, 2015): p. 19.



Tue. 12/4 *Star Wars Episode VIII—The Last Jedi* (2018)

Thurs. 12/6 Presentations (5 minutes each)

Panels will be organized by topic/focus and will include three to four papers. Each panel will be given 15-20 minutes (individuals should plan on 5 minute presentations—Please practice your presentations to make sure you can achieve your goals in the time allotted to you). You should not simply read your essay, but present it to the audience. You may use audio/visuals to support your presentation, but it is not a requirement. The idea here is to share your research with a like-minded audience, and to help us see the ways in which *Star Wars* films represent the intersections between Imperialism, revolution, and identity politics.

Week Fourteen: Building Arguments//Editing an Anthology

Tue. 12/11 Presentations (5 minutes each) continued

The final draft of your article should present a revised and expanded version of Draft 2; take into account instructor and peer review comments as you work toward the final draft. The final essay is due by 5:00pm on Thursday, 12/7; as with your other drafts, the final essay should be carefully proofread and formatted according to correct MLA style.

Final Exam: Responding to Texts

Due: Wednesday, 12/13 by 5:00pm

Write an approximately 500-word response to a colleague's essay (which I will assign to you).

This response should have an argumentative claim that complicates or contests the author's thesis statement, and should employ support from

1. another of your colleague's essays,
2. any of the course theoretical texts,
3. and at least one *Star Wars* film.

Your response should be posted as a comment on the essay's [WordPress Page](#).